



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

**The Soldier's Life: Martial Virtues and Hegemonic Masculinity in the
Early Byzantine Empire**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

The University of Queensland in May 2012

School of History, Philosophy, Religion, and Classics

Abstract

This dissertation argues that martial virtues and images of the soldier's life represented an essential aspect of early Byzantine masculine ideology. It contends that in many of the visual and literary sources from the fourth to the seventh centuries CE, conceptualisations of the soldier's life and the ideal manly life were often the same. By taking this stance, the dissertation challenges the view found in many recent studies on Late Roman masculinity that a Christian ideal of manliness based on extreme ascetic virtues and pacifism had superseded militarism and courage as the dominant component of hegemonic masculine ideology. Though the study does not reject the relevance of Christian constructions of masculinity for helping one understand early Byzantine society and its diverse representations of masculinity, it seeks to balance these modern studies' often heavy emphasis on hagiographical Christian sources with the more customary attitudes we find in the secular, and indeed some Christian texts, praising military virtues as an essential aspect of Roman manliness. Indeed, the reader of this dissertation will find that the "manliness of war" is on display in much of the surviving early Byzantine literature, secular and Christian.

Chapter 1 examines how modern historians formulate and use "masculinity" as a tool of historical inquiry. It provides a brief summary of the growth of gender studies in the past forty years, and explores some of the current debates surrounding "masculinity" as a viable tool of historical enquiry. Chapter 2 focuses on the continuing relevance of martial virtues in Late Roman conceptualisations and representations of heroic manliness. The chapter provides a brief summary of the close link between the soldier's life and codes of manliness from the Republic to the Early Empire. It describes the supposed demilitarisation of the Roman upper classes and the use of non-Romans in the Roman army in the Later Empire. It closes with a discussion on how these shifts influenced representations of "true" manliness in both the ancient texts and in some modern works on Late Roman masculinity. Chapter 3 examines the seeming paradox, between the images of ideal martial manliness disseminated by the fifth-century Roman emperors and their supporters, and the reality of the increasing demilitarisation of a segment of the Roman leadership. It seeks to understand how the declining military role of the emperor after the death of Theodosius I in 395 influenced literary representations of idealised leadership that had long depended on the intimate connections between an emperor's courage, his manliness, and the well-being of the Empire. Chapter 4 disputes the thesis presented by several recent studies that a new Christian ideology had emerged as the hegemonic masculine ideal by the fourth century. It also rejects the idea found in some studies that

Christian intellectuals rejected militarism as a key component of its ideology. Chapter 5 concentrates on one early Byzantine historian, Procopius, and discusses the ways he utilised the field of battle to not only explain the reconquests of Justinian, but to comment on the role that courage, manliness and men's virtues played in determining events.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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Statement of Contributions to Jointly Authored Works Contained in the Thesis

No jointly-authored works.

Statement of Contributions by Others to the Thesis as a Whole

My advisor John Moorhead has helped with revisions of each of my chapters.

Statement of Parts of the Thesis Submitted to Qualify for the Award of Another Degree

None

Published Works by the Author Incorporated into the Thesis

Parts of chapter 5 were adapted from material found in my MA thesis, *Between Two Worlds: Men's Heroic Conduct in the Writings of Procopius* completed at San Diego State University in May 2003.

Additional Published Works by the Author Relevant to the Thesis but not Forming Part of it

None

Acknowledgements

When one's pursuit of one's academic dreams spans three decades and two continents, there are many people whom need to be thanked when the goal is achieved. First, none of this research would have been possible without the support of my loving wife Gina and my children John-David, Annabelle, and Sophie who put up with numerous nights of daddy typing away surrounded by a sea of books and notes. Thank you for highlighting sections of my expensive books that I would never have thought of highlighting. I would also like to pay special tribute to my mother, Anne Marie, who always shared her love of learning and academia with a son more interested in playing with his baseball cards. Your efforts were worth it. My dad Ted and his wife Pam were always there for moral support as well. To my big sister Jenny, thank you for all of your kindness over the years, gifts of precious books, and for all the unpaid editing.

I must give special thanks for valuable insights given on my topic, via either email, snail mail or personal comments, made by Averil Cameron, Anthony Kaldellis, Geoffrey Greatrex, and especially Conor Whately, who allowed me to see his research on Procopius before publication. San Diego State University provided me with the academic tools to tackle my topic. Alvin Coox, Joanne Ferraro, Harry McDeane, and Francis Bartholomew all shared their knowledge and love of teaching during my undergraduate years when I made the transition from journalism to history. Many other scholars have helped me over the past ten years of graduate study. I must offer special mention to Mathew Kuefler who shared with me his love of the medieval and ancient world. His insights and research on ancient masculinity and sexuality laid the foundation for this study. The one-on-one time he spent helping me develop and hone my writing and historiographical skills during my MA proved invaluable when I took on this larger project.

David Christian passed down to me his passion for looking at the larger picture when examining historical events. Elizabeth Cobbs-Hoffman gave me self-belief at a time in my academic career when I needed to make the decision if I wanted to tackle a PhD as a more "mature" student. Geoff Ginn, Kriston Rennie, Tom Stevenson, and Andrew Bonnell are amongst the many scholars at the University of Queensland who have provided me with insightful comments on my work and support during the past six years. Special thanks must also be given to the Greek instructors within Classics who allowed me to sit in many classes of intense, yet entertaining, sessions learning to read the prose of my ancient Greek authors. The biggest thank you for this project, however, must go to John Moorhead, who kindly met with a loquacious freshly-arrived immigrant with dreams of

pursuing a dissertation in sunny south-east Queensland. He always met my constant barrage of emails on a myriad of topics with sharp and pithy replies. His positive spirit kept me going on the days I wanted to give up, and his diligent perseverance allowed me to find my topic. During this period, he was not only a mentor and a colleague, but also a friend.

Keywords

Gender, masculinity, courage, martial, virtues, Byzantine, Roman, soldiers, Christianity, manliness

Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classifications (ANZSRC)

200205 Culture, Gender, and Sexuality 40%, 210306 Classical Greek and Roman history 35%, 220401 Christian Studies (incl. Biblical Studies and Church History) 25%

Fields of Research (FoR) Classification

FoR code: 2103, Historical Studies, 100%

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANCL</i>	Ante-Nicene Christian Library
<i>BAR</i>	British Archaeological Reports
<i>BCE</i>	Before the Common Era (or BC)
<i>BH</i>	Basileia Historia
<i>BMGS</i>	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
<i>CAH</i>	Cambridge Ancient History
<i>CCAJ</i>	The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian
<i>CE</i>	Common Era (or AD)
<i>HA</i>	Historia Augusta
<i>HE</i>	Historia Ecclesiastica
<i>JRS</i>	Journal of Roman Studies
<i>JHS</i>	Journal of the History of Sexuality
<i>JTS</i>	Journal of Theological Studies
<i>JWH</i>	Journal of Women's History
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>TTH</i>	Translated Texts for Historians

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

The two hundred and fifty years from 380 to 630 CE was a time of dramatic social and political upheaval for the Roman Empire. It is during this era that classical Rome fades away and a recognisable early Medieval Christian State takes its place. This dissertation examines this transformation by analysing masculine ideology in the Christian and secular texts of this period. It considers the ways these writers constructed as well as connected notions of courage and martial virtues to their ideas of what it meant to be a “true” man. This work seeks to answer three primary questions. First, to what degree did the supposed demilitarisation of the Late Roman upper classes influence traditional codes of masculinity related closely to the idealisation of the soldier’s life? Second, how valid are the claims made by several recent studies that social developments and the Empire’s military defeats in the fourth century led to the growth of a Christian ideology of masculinity based, in part, on a rejection of the secular world and non-martial attributes? Finally, how influential and revolutionary were these Christian codes of manly conduct in the early Byzantine Empire, and in what ways did they adopt, as well as challenge, traditional notions of Roman manliness founded on military virtues?

By answering these questions, this dissertation seeks to question the view found in many recent works on Late Roman and early Byzantine masculinity that suggests that, by the close of the fourth century, a Christian ideal of manliness based on extreme ascetic virtues had superseded military virtues and one’s courage in battle as an integral component of hegemonic Roman manliness. The idea proposed by modern academics that the rise in the fourth century of holy men, monks, and bishops represented the vanguard of a new masculine paradigm will be challenged. Though this study does not reject the relevance of Christian constructions of manliness for helping one understand early Byzantine masculinity, it seeks to balance the heavy emphasis found in many of these gender studies on the writings of devout and, at times, rigorist Christian theologians, with ancient secular and Christian texts that tell a different story. Indeed, we will see that the “manliness of war” represents a prominent theme in much of the early secular Byzantine literature that many of these modern studies largely ignore. Moreover, Roman intellectuals’ ability to articulate long-established martial ideals as a key barometer of ideal

manly conduct was vital in influencing, not only the formulisation and dissemination of early Byzantine masculine ideology, but also in helping to maintain the notion of a “Roman” identity based, in part, on a shared military ethos.

The period examined in this study extends roughly from the close of the fourth century to the opening of the seventh century; these two termini, however, are only approximate. Though it relies primarily on Greek writers from the Eastern Empire, at times it has been necessary to consult Latin sources from the Western half of the Empire. Ammianus’ Latin history represents a notable exception to the largely Greek sources explored in this dissertation. It plays a large role in chapter 3, in particular. As a native speaker of Greek, however, Ammianus appears to have largely transposed the terminology used by Julian, Libanius, and Eunapius from Greek into Latin, thus, I would argue making such an approach viable, and indeed valuable for understanding the cultural milieu in the Western and the Eastern halves of the Empire at the opening of the fifth century.¹ This flexibility was essential. To understand fully larger social and political trends in the early Byzantine Empire it is necessary to explore developments and writers from both earlier periods of Roman history, and Eastern and Western perspectives.

An example of this method is found in chapter 2, which focuses on the continuing relevance of what I describe as “martial” virtues in Late Roman conceptualisations and representations of heroic manliness. The chapter provides a brief summary of the close link between the soldier’s life and codes of manliness from the Republic to the Early Empire. It then describes the supposed demilitarisation of the Roman upper classes and the growing “barbarisation” of the Roman army in the Later Empire and discusses how these shifts influenced representations of “true” manliness in the ancient texts.

Chapter 3 examines the apparent contradiction between the images of ideal martial manliness disseminated by the fifth-century Roman emperors and their supporters, and the reality of the increasing demilitarisation of a segment of the Roman leadership. It seeks to understand how the declining military role of the emperor after the death of Theodosius I in 395 influenced literary representations of idealised leadership that had long depended on the intimate connections between an emperor’s courage, his manliness, and the well-being of the Empire.

Chapter 4 disputes the idea presented by several recent studies that a new Christian ideology had emerged as the hegemonic masculine ideal by the close of the fourth

¹ For these points, see Timothy Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 174-77.

century. It also rejects the idea found in some studies that the majority of Christian intellectuals had rejected militarism as a key component of “Church” ideology.

Chapter 5 turns its focus to one writer, the sixth-century classicising historian Procopius, and discusses how he utilised the field of battle not just to explain the reconquests of Justinian, but also to comment on the role that courage and manliness played in determining secular events. Indeed, the chapter suggests that the *Gothic Wars* allowed the historian to compare and contrast the martial and the manly virtues of two peoples the Romans and the Goths.

Terminology

First, some initial comments on the terminology used in this study. The dissertation utilises the terms “Eastern Roman Empire” and “early Byzantine Empire” interchangeably to describe what the classicising historians and their contemporaries thought of still as simply the “Roman Empire”. At times, I use “Later Roman Empire” to describe events in the Western and Eastern halves of the Empire in the third, fourth, and the early part of the fifth century, before division created what one scholar describes as “twin Roman Empires”.² I employ “early Byzantine historians” as the preferred expression to describe the secular and the ecclesiastical historians as a group, rather than the “Late Antique” or “Late classical” for secular writers like Ammianus, Priscus, Procopius, and Agathias preferred by some recent publications.³ I made this choice out of a desire for better precision, since “Late Antiquity” can now extend from the third to the ninth century and encompass lands and cultures outside of the Roman Empire. The term “early Byzantine” also reflects the Eastern origins of the majority the histories consulted, as well as the growing influence of Christianity on these intellectuals, Christian, and non-Christian. The dissertation avoids “Late classical” because of its links with an older historiographical tradition discussed later in this chapter. “Secular history” is a term also used at times. Secular history, a subcategory of the classicising model, was a by-product of the fourth-century Christianisation of the Empire, and I utilise this expression as a means to

² As used by Fergus Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 59.

³For the use of the category “Late classical historians” see, e.g. David Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002).

differentiate this literary genre from Church history and other Christian literary forms;⁴ the writers in this genre could be either Christian or non-Christian.⁵

When speaking of a “Christian or classical ideology” of masculinity, I do not suggest that the Christian or non-Christian writers analysed in this study held unitary views of these two categories; this study distinguishes between the opinions and ideas of individual writers. For instance, on an issue like Christian attitudes towards military service, strict theologians who preached a stringently pacifist approach, must be balanced with other Christian theologians who presented a more nuanced argument. Therefore, I avoid using expressions like “the Church believed” or “non-Christians or pagans believed”. With that said, one might reasonably speak both of a classical notion of masculinity, which arose from the interlinked literary and cultural traditions of Greece and Rome, and of a Christian ideology of masculinity, which was gradually articulated from the first to the sixth centuries.⁶

As I use them, the terms “pagan” and “non-Christian”, like many religious terms are somewhat problematic. Few individuals labelled in the ancient and the modern literature as pagans would have identified with this description. To attack their opponents, Christian writers used “pagan” [*paganus*] largely as a pejorative term. As a category for religious identification, both in Latin and in modern English, it remains somewhat vague.⁷ Ancient Christians utilised this term, in fact, to describe those who practiced one of the myriad of ancient religions found in the Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean region, someone with little or no religious beliefs, or even in some situations, Christians whom they perceived to be marginal or unorthodox. The Greek equivalent to pagan, “Hellene”, is equally imprecise, in that it could describe one’s religion, adherence to Greek philosophy, language or culture or someone from the geographical region of mainland Greece.⁸ Non-Christian represents a much less loaded term than pagan, but I use it when the exact religion of the individual is

⁴ For the term “secular history”, see J.A.S. Evans, *Procopius* (New York: Twayne, 1972), 40.

⁵ Ammianus, Eunapius, Olympiodorus and Zosimus were non-Christians, while Candidus, Malchus, Eustathius, Procopius, Agathias, and Theophylact were Christians. Priscus’ religious affiliation is unclear. Against this current consensus, Kaldellis argues that Procopius and Agathias were both non-Christians, see Anthony Kaldellis, “Things Are Not What They Are: Agathias Mythistoricus and the Last Laugh of Classical Culture”, *Classical Quarterly* 53 (2003): 295-300, Anthony Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁶ Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 10.

⁷ The term had only started taking on a religious meaning in the fourth century.

⁸ Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: the Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 184.

unknown. When we know a great deal about the type of non-Christian religion that is being practiced, I give it a more precise identity.⁹

“Manliness” and “courage” can be difficult values to differentiate from one another in ancient Greek. Because my goal is to reproduce faithfully early Byzantine masculine ideology, I try to take care when rendering the ancient meaning of the various Greek words that are translated commonly into English simply as “bravery” and “courage”. When possible, terms like ἀλκή, θάρσος, μένος, προθυμία, and τόλμα are given their more precise meanings. This precision is important because a term like θάρσος or θράσος, which scholars’ translate commonly as “courage” or “bravery”, is often better translated in English as “rashness”. Such exactness is particularly important for this dissertation since “rashness” could be seen by Greek and early Byzantine writers as a quality of an “unmanly” man. Moreover, one of the primary terms for Greco-Roman conceptualisations of manhood, ἀνδρεία, can mean either “manliness” or “courage”, depending on the context used by the ancient author. When providing or amending a translation, I will always try to adhere to the more specific meaning, though, at times; my choice must remain a personal preference.¹⁰ It is important, however, that even when “courage” seems the preferred translation for ἀνδρεία that one keep the ancient conceptualisation of “manliness” in mind.¹¹

When evaluating ancient writers’ use of masculine terminology I stick primarily to terminology linked to the Greek root for “man” [άνήρ] in the sense of adult male, rather than human being or for words with accepted gendered meanings.¹² For example, I look for terms or their cognates that in ancient Greek describe typical masculine traits, such as “manliness and courage” [άνδρεία], “masculine, manly, strong” [άρρην], “manly virtue” [άνδραγαθία], “strength or steadfastness” [άνδρικός]. Adding an alpha prefix (α), meaning “not”, to άνήρ creates “negative” terminology, such as “cowardice or unmanliness”

⁹ I avoid the recently fashionable “polytheist”. The reasoning behind this stance and an excellent summary on the term “pagan”, as well as the current debate concerning the use of the term in modern historiography, is discussed by Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25-32.

¹⁰ In Latin, *virtus*, etymologically linked to the Latin term for man, *vir*, could too be understood as “manliness”. Craig Williams argues that *virtus*, which “can be often translated as “valor” or even “virtue”, is “always implicitly gendered”. He concludes, “*Virtus*” is the ideal of masculine behavior that all men ought to embody, that some women have the good fortune of attaining, and that men derided as effeminate conspicuously fail to achieve”. Full discussion in Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 127-28.

¹¹ For this necessity, see Edward Cohen, “The High Cost of *Andreia* at Athens”, in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Boston: Brill, 2003), 145.

¹² The same method applies for “feminine” terminology.

[ἀνανδρία]. Of course, I recognise that these terms are not always linked specifically to one's anatomical sex. My account contains “manly women” and “effeminate men”. Yet I will argue that when an early Byzantine described a man as “womanish” it served to point out a defect in his character; on the other hand, when a woman was portrayed as “manly”, or she put on the “masculine temper”, it functioned commonly as a compliment.¹³

As noted above, Greek terminology describing manliness and unmanliness was not limited to words linked to the ἀνὴρ root. An entire cache of terms displays the gendered relationship between ideal and non-ideal behaviour. Some words clearly have gendered functions. The positive connotations of the “toughness” [ἀσφαλής] or “steadfastness” [βέβαιος] of men may be contrasted with the negative associations given to the terms describing the “softness” [μάλακία], and the “delicateness” [τρυφή] of women. When men displayed μάλακία, τρυφή or their cognates, these words became terms to describe weak or effeminate men. A lack of firmness or steadfastness also created unmanly men. Similar contrasts occur in Latin where masculine men display *fortitudo* (strength) while effeminate men and women display *mollitia* (softness).¹⁴ Appendix 3 contains a lexicon of some of the “gendered” and the “martial” virtues that I have found useful in this study.

The Study of Men as a Gender

I have chosen masculinity as a means to explore social changes in the early Byzantine world deliberately. In the historiographical tradition, one's gender was perceived as firmly rooted in biology; “one was born man or woman”.¹⁵ Scholars long regarded the borders between man and woman as firm and impassable. In the past thirty years, this paradigm has changed. Notions like gender have been shown to be susceptible to various interpretations and instability.¹⁶ Therefore, the cultural environment that one grows up in plays a fundamental role in shaping one's perception of the world around one.¹⁷

¹³ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.3-4: “τῆς δὲ φύσεως ἐς ἄγαν τὸ ἀρρενωπὸν ἐνδεικνυμένη”. The Greco-Roman idealisation of the “masculine” is discussed further in appendix 1.

¹⁴ For a discussion on these gendered associations in Latin, see Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 21-22.

¹⁵ Walter Pohl, “Gender and Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages”, in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 23.

¹⁶ John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 41-45.

¹⁷ Michael Ruse, *Homosexuality: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), Edward Stein, *The Mismeasure of Desire: the Science, Theory, and Ethics of Sexual Orientation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

The study of men as a gender developed in the wake of advances made in women's studies in the past forty years. Linked indelibly with the social upheaval of this time, few topics in contemporary academia have gained as much focus or generated as much enmity. Gender studies emerged from the women's movement of the 1960s-80s. Reacting to the dominance of men in historical writing, these works originally aimed to give woman a place in the evaluation of the past.¹⁸ Scholarship in this area suggested that the degraded social role that women played in much of history remained closely connected with the idealisation of the "universalised masculine". While the masculine was considered essential and perfect, the feminine was seen as insignificant and flawed.¹⁹

Somewhat ironically, building on the methods of these feminist scholars, researchers began to explore the construction of masculinity throughout history. Several of these studies noted that women represent only one of many groups that have been marginalised in the historical record. Ethnic minorities, slaves, and members of the lower classes have often been treated as the "equivalent to women because they were subordinated men".²⁰ While scholars like the philosopher Judith Butler recognise that men and women seldom make up homogeneous social groups, she suggests, "the feminine is always the outside and the outside is always feminine".²¹

Despite critiques of his work by some feminist scholars and classicists, the innovative research of Michel Foucault remains fundamental for modern works considering masculinity in the ancient Greek and Roman world.²² Foucault's proposal that concepts like sexuality both change over time and remain intimately connected with the symbiotic power relationships amongst all members of a society has influenced a generation of scholars.²³ Additionally, his work showed that the old contrast of the sexually promiscuous

¹⁸ Julia Smith, "Introduction: Gendering in the Early Medieval World", in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-5.

¹⁹ Mathew Kuefler, "How Does a Historian Study the History of Masculinity?" *Past, Present and Future* 3 (April 2006): 2.

²⁰ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 3.

²¹ Judith Butler, "Bodies That Matter," in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 48. For the example of African-American men, see Leonard Harris, "Honor: Emasculation and Empowerment", in *Rethinking Masculinity: Philosophical Explorations in Light of Feminism*, ed. Larry May and Robert Strikwerda (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992).

²² An excellent discussion on the continuing influence of Foucault's paradigms on modern scholarship is found in John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4-15.

²³ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, vol. 2. The Use of Pleasure* (trans. R. Hurley, New York: Vantage Press, 1985), 25-32.

“fun loving” pagan versus the chaste and “repressed” Christian was deeply flawed.²⁴ He pointed out as well, that ancient Greek and Roman forms of sexuality differed from modern concepts; Foucault argued that sexual orientation was an invention of nineteenth-century Western Europeans.²⁵ In a viewpoint particularly embraced by this study, for Foucault, masculine ideology remained at the core of ancient Greek and Roman morality. These systems, he explained, represented “an elaboration of masculine conduct carried out from the viewpoint of men in order to give form to *their* behaviour”.²⁶

Feminist scholars who continue to criticise the methodology of Foucault and/or the study of masculinity in general seem uncomfortable embracing a field that places men at the forefront of historical inquiry once more.²⁷ Accounts of aristocratic men certainly dominate the historical record. So then how, and perhaps more importantly, why study men as a gender? Unlike the obstacles that stand in the way of scholars trying to find a “historical voice” for marginalised groups like women or the lower classes, the sources for the analysis of masculine ideologies are readily available. Nevertheless, this very abundance makes finding “real” men in history somewhat problematic. When one looks at the portraits of men found in Roman and early Byzantine periods, quite often only stylised images emerge. This point is particularly relevant when examining the classicising and ecclesiastical historians of the Eastern Roman Empire. Similar to contemporary celluloid action-heroes and villains, the men depicted in these accounts frequently display rhetorical notions of ideal and non-ideal masculine conduct, producing men who often seem more like cartoon-characters than genuine human beings. Nonetheless, heroism itself serves as a sort of hyper-masculinity. What one finds in the texts explored in this study is primarily a “public” view of codes of ideal manly conduct. Just as the 1980s action-hero Rambo tells one about American notions of masculinity, foreigners, and the political environment of the Reagan era itself, the heroes, villains, and barbarians found in the early Byzantine literature divulge significant aspects of the Byzantine value system. This popularity does not mean that everyone in the Eastern Roman Empire adhered to the models of manliness

²⁴ Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 32.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1. *An Introduction* (trans. R. Hurley, New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 43. For Foucault’s ideas on the modern construction of homosexuality and the reaction of recent gender scholars to his work, see Mathew Kuefler, “The Boswell Thesis”, in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 9-11.

²⁶ Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 22-23.

²⁷ Colleen Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9.

and unmanliness found in these works. Yet, like the themes of hyper-masculinity and unmanliness seen in modern movies, these writings appealed to a diverse audience, and therefore reflect the values—of not only the hierarchy of the Empire, but also of a large segment of its population. Moreover, although classicising histories were published in relatively small quantities for a select audience, it was traditional to have sections of these writings recited in front of live audiences, suggesting that even illiterates may have been familiar with these works.²⁸

Of course, dissonances remained between men's expected social roles and the actual personalities of early Byzantine men. In the real world men consistently failed to live up to the stringent masculine ideal articulated in the literary sources of the day. The nature of the source material means that the private world of early Byzantine men remains mostly hidden. I would suggest, however, that at times we may get a glimpse beneath the cracks and see the different ways these men "proved" their manliness. Making use of the methods used in women's studies to find "real" women, this enquiry demonstrates that the social category of "man" differed from the personal identities of many Eastern Roman men. Just like their female counterparts, the cultural construction of "man" was often insufficient to contain individual "men".²⁹

Several other challenges confront the researcher attempting to separate the "real man" from the "constructed" one. Perhaps the most critical question is how does one define or study a topic as seemingly ambiguous as masculinity? By masculinity, scholars do not refer generally to the anatomical or biological features of the male body, which remain relatively constant among a range of societies and over time, but to the variety of meanings that these cultures place or have placed on persons with a male body. Therefore, a man may display "feminine" traits, yet remain biologically male. The "feminine" trait itself, however, may be transient and open to a wide range of interpretations. Behaviours that one culture, group or era labels as "masculine" might be called "womanly", unmanly" or effeminate" (all three of these expressions mean essentially the same thing) in another society, group or period.³⁰ For instance, excessive sexual

²⁸ R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981), 92-94, J. A. S. Evans, *Procopius* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), 37.

²⁹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 2. For an excellent example of this methodology in women's history, see Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, CA. 500-1100* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

³⁰ Dominic Montserrat, "Reading Gender in the Roman World", in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman World*, ed. Janet Huskinson (London: Routledge, 2000), 153-58.

encounters with women, which may be seen as a sign of manliness in contemporary western culture, commonly indicated “unmanliness” in the Roman world.³¹

Scholars call this concept the social construction of gender. Simply defined, social construction means that one’s knowledge of objects or ideas develops by interacting with the surrounding social order. Therefore, the cultural environment that one grows up in plays a fundamental role in shaping one’s perception of a flexible notion such as masculinity. As John Searle argues, a twenty-dollar note is by its nature a worthless piece of paper; it holds no intrinsic value except the worth a culture places upon it. It gains value (cultural meaning) because people communally experience money as having worth, and so come to attach value to it.³² Scholars apply this same argument to subjective constructions like masculinity and ethnicity. This is not to say that all human characteristics are socially constructed. This point is particularly true of sexual orientation, which may be non-voluntary and biologically orientated; nonetheless, how a culture understands and defines sexual orientation is socially constructed.³³

It is more challenging to ascertain the value systems of individuals who act outside the established boundaries of conventional society. Masculine ideology is not always defined by a dominant paradigm, but can also be shaped by an individual’s will and choice, which may be created through the effect of subcultures or other social groupings. Modern academics label these competing ideologies as subordinate masculinities.³⁴ The fact that this dissertation relies primarily on the classicising and ecclesiastical historians for its analysis of masculinity limits its scope. Since the majority of these writers owed their position to either the Church hierarchy or the emperor, how cutting edge or subversive could their writings be? For this reason, this study deals primarily with “hegemonic” masculine ideologies originating from the political elite and imposed upon the population. The hegemonic masculinity is the changeable yet dominant masculine paradigm by which “femininities and rival masculinities are marginalised or subordinated”.³⁵ It remains difficult to know whether holy men’s lives or classicising historians’ manly heroes and unmanly

³¹ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 143-44.

³² Searle, *Construction*, 41-45.

³³ A critique of social construction is found in Nancy Partner, “No Sex, No Gender”, *Speculum* 68 (1993): 419-43.

³⁴ Ruth Mazzo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 17-22.

³⁵ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

villains represented widespread notions of masculinity or even the views of other members of the upper class who did not leave a written record. Despite their limitations, however, one may use the classicising and ecclesiastical historians to find traces of individuals or subcultures that did not follow the mainstream masculine ideologies. Indeed, the very need for writers to praise or attack certain individuals for their ideal or non-ideal conduct might suggest that segments of the population did not follow such stringent codes.

It is also important to differentiate between modern and early Byzantine notions of masculinity. One must avoid seeing a world with numerous and rapidly changing masculinities like our own. The Eastern Roman Empire had far more stable and restricted views about masculinity, or indeed, about society in general, than is typically found in the modern world, where rapidly changing cultures and technologies have created far more adaptable and varied understandings of these concepts.³⁶ This point is particularly relevant in the writings of the ecclesiastical and classicising historians. Without a doubt, the classicising historians emulated the Greek prose and techniques of their classical models Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius. Hagiographers and ecclesiastical historians borrowed heavily from the Old and the New Testament and their predecessors such as Tertullian (ca. 160 – ca. 225), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160 – ca. 215), and Origen (184-253). As one scholar reminds us, Late Roman and early Byzantine writers “knew the ideas of, borrowed from, responded to, or distanced themselves from earlier writers (orthodox or heretical)”. They also remained well aware of ancient and contemporary secular writings.³⁷ Therefore, to better comprehend Late Roman and early Byzantine writers and their constructions of masculinity, it is essential to familiarise one’s self with these earlier works.

The knowledge and interest of early Byzantine readers in the Greek and Roman past has attracted some debate. Geoffrey Greatrex has recently argued that fifth-and sixth-century audiences who inhabited the increasingly autocratic Eastern Roman Empire were far more interested in accounts of earlier world empires like the Assyrians and Persians than of the more “democratic” periods of ancient history like the Roman republic or fifth-century BCE Athens.³⁸ Anthony Kaldellis asserts, however, that “Byzantines enjoyed crafting and detecting allusions to classical authors in their works” and consequently, to be

³⁶ Discussed in Myles McDonnell, “McDonnell on Kaster on M. McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic*”, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2007.03.38.

³⁷ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 8-10.

³⁸ Geoffrey Greatrex, “The Classical Past in the Classicising Historians”, in *The Reception of Classical Texts and Images* (Milton Keynes: Open University, 1996), 40-56.

understood, the classicising historians must be read with “constant reference to their classical models”.³⁹

The past twenty years has undeniably seen an upsurge of scholars highlighting the intertextuality of many of the early Byzantine historians. This trend is of particular interest for this study since several early Byzantine historians who play a vital role in this dissertation have been shown to depend heavily on their classical models for essential elements, allusions, and themes in their writings. For instance, the writings of the sixth-century early Byzantine historian Procopius that serve as a focal point for chapter 5 of this thesis have received extensive attention lately from classical scholars interested in examining the influence of earlier historians on his work. Thucydides, Herodotus, Polybius, Plato, Xenophon and most recently Homer, have all been shown to greater and lesser degrees to influence his writings.⁴⁰ Though I agree with these scholars that a thorough understanding of their ancient models is essential for comprehending these early Byzantine writers’ views on topics like battles, and concepts such as virtue, courage, and masculine ideology, there are some problems with this approach. Many of these academics seem to assume that Homer and Thucydides lived in similar worlds to Procopius, and that abstract concepts like barbarians, courage, heroism, and masculinity had remained static over the intervening centuries.⁴¹ Moreover, there is a danger of over-emphasising a writer like Procopius’ indebtedness to earlier authors, by overstating “hidden allusions” or marginalising the aspects of these early Byzantine histories that differ from their earlier models. By reading between the lines of these texts, these scholars have at times ignored evidence that contradicts their specialised reading or have simply expanded on their own ideas based simply on what they deduce the “concealed” message to be. This methodology has led to some thought provoking, yet I would argue ultimately

³⁹ Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 35.

⁴⁰ I am grateful to Conor Whately for providing me a copy of his dissertation, “Descriptions of Battle in the Wars of Procopius”, (Ph.D. diss., University of Warwick, 2009), 42-45. For Thucydides as a primary influence on Procopius, and in particular his representation of Belisarius, see Charles Pazdernik, “Procopius and Thucydides on the Labors of War: Belisarius and Brasidas in the Field”, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 2000 130: 149-87. For Homer’s influence on the *Gothic Wars*, see Whately, “Descriptions of Battles”. For Polybius as a primary model, see Evans, *Procopius*, 133. For the controversial idea that at its core *Wars* represents Platonic mimesis, see Kaldellis, *Procopius*, esp. 94-117, 254-55.

⁴¹ For the reshaping of the ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός of Homer in fifth-century Periclean Athens and the gradual shift in an important post-Homeric word for courage and manliness, ἀνδρεία, in the classical Greek world, see Karen Bassi, “The Semantics of Manliness in Ancient Greece”, in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Boston: Brill, 2003), 25-58.

wrong-headed, conclusions concerning Procopius' religious beliefs and the continuing viability of an organised pagan movement in sixth-century Constantinople.⁴²

There is also a risk of returning to the historiographical position taken by many nineteenth and early twentieth-century historians who, lamenting the "fall" of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the "Dark Ages," praised Procopius and Agathias as the last bastions of rationality in an increasingly backward and irrational world.⁴³ While Pazdernik's, and Kaldellis' well-written and researched works are not exactly a step back to this earlier period, their focus on intertextuality suggests that academics—especially those based in classics—continue to perceive early Byzantine secular historians like Agathias and Procopius as dying embers of a fading pagan age.⁴⁴

As a historian, I seek to focus in this work on change as much as continuity. This study will argue that despite the influence of their Greek models, the classicising historians thinking frequently reflected early Byzantine trends. So, while it is vital to look back into the classical past and forward into the Middle Ages in an attempt to achieve a better understanding of the early Byzantine mindset, just as imperative is looking at this era as a unique historical epoch. In other words, I agree with Averil Cameron's contention that it remains vital to see these early Byzantine intellectuals as individuals and products of their own cultural milieu.⁴⁵

Recent scholarship has also emphasised the importance of placing works within their proper genre. This approach, too, is particularly relevant for a study like this one that relies so heavily on the ecclesiastical and classicising historians for its conclusions. Scholars have shown the difficulty and dangers of differentiating writers' actual convictions from the constraints of their genre.⁴⁶ It is certainly important to understand that the ecclesiastical and classicising historians frequently conformed to strict styles of Greco-Roman rhetoric.

⁴² In his highly innovative, yet ultimately flawed work on Procopius, Kaldellis proposes that Procopius was not a Christian, but that he was at the centre of a pagan neo-Platonic revival in sixth-century Constantinople. Modern consensus has largely rejected his claims. For an overview of the response to Kaldellis' methodological approach to Procopius and other early Byzantine intellectuals, see Michael Whitby, "Religious Views of Procopius and Agathias", *Electrum* 13 (2007): 73-93.

⁴³ See, e.g. W.H. Parks, "Some Suggestions derived from a Comparison of the Histories of Thucydides and Procopius," in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 24 (1893), 41, quoted in Evans, *Procopius*, 132; J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire: From Arcadius to Irene 395 to 800*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1889), 178.

⁴⁴ On Agathias' indebtedness to Thucydides, see Katherine Adshead, "Thucydides and Agathias", in *History and Historians in Late Antiquity*, ed. B. Croke and A. M. Emmett (Sydney: Pergamon, 1983), 82-87; and for the influence of Homer on Agathias, see Whately, "Descriptions of Battle", esp. 101-15.

⁴⁵ Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1985), 32.

⁴⁶ Brubaker, "Sex, Lies and Textuality", 83-101.

For example, without careful analysis, Procopius' three works—the *Buildings*, the *Secret History*, and the *Wars*, may appear either to have different authors, or to be the work of one severely schizophrenic individual. In *Buildings*, Procopius extolled Justinian as God's messenger on earth, leading the Empire back to glory. In contrast, in the *Secret History* Justinian appeared as the "Lord of the Demons" [δαιμόνων ἄρχων] driving Byzantium to disaster.⁴⁷ The *Wars* took the middle ground, mixing negative and positive descriptions of the emperor. These discrepancies, however, merely reflect the nature and the limitations of the historical models that Procopius followed. The *Wars* was a work of secular history that focused on great men and great battles. The *Secret History* followed the literary genre of invective and satire, while the *Buildings* adhered to the restrictions of "the most artificial of all classical genres to modern taste, that of panegyric".⁴⁸ I agree, however, with Kaldellis' assertion that "Contrary to what is implied in recent scholarship, genres do not write books. Authors do".⁴⁹ One must read a work carefully—and as a whole—to grasp the author's major themes and views on topics like masculinity. If one takes this care, one may delve beneath the surface of the literary categories followed by writers like Eusebius and Procopius to uncover their "beliefs" about what kind of actions and manners made one "manly" or "unmanly".

There is of course no such thing as a truly objective or representative reporter, and this study is limited by the perceptions and prejudices of its sources. Whether these writers provide accurate portraits of events or individuals, however, is not as important as the constructions of masculinity themselves. A false depiction based on misconceptions or bias reveals as much about how these authors constructed a concept like gender as a "truthful" account. For example, Procopius' scathing portrayal of the empress Theodora as a "murderous former whore" and the emperor Justinian as a "moral pervert" may or may not be factual; however, the negative traits he attributes to the imperial couple provides insight into early Byzantine attitudes towards gender and masculinity.

Recent Historiographical Disputes

Investigations of masculinity often serve a political purpose. Some researchers delve into a topic such as "homosexuality" as a way of revealing how particular societies such as ancient Greece and Rome had greater tolerance towards same-partner sex than their

⁴⁷ Procopius, *Buildings* 1.1.16, Procopius, *Secret History* 30.34.

⁴⁸ Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 25, 60.

⁴⁹ Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 143.

modern counterparts. By showing that cultural views on masculinity are constantly evolving, these scholars seek to reveal how and why Christianity established a “hostile” ideology that condemned homosexuality, banned women in the clergy, and in the West prohibited the marriage of priests.⁵⁰ By using historical texts against the Catholic Church, these activists hope to influence the Church’s future platform towards these issues. They contend that the Church instituted these policies in reaction to the social concerns of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and for that reason, its stance on these matters should be adapted to reflect a more inclusive and more progressive modern world.⁵¹ For these academics, the study of history provides the opportunity not only to see the “way things were”, but also a chance for glimpsing “the way things might be”.⁵²

This agenda helps to explain why many studies on Late Antique masculinity focus on men as sexual beings. It might also account for the reluctance by some academics to accept social history as a legitimate historical tool. Some of the criticism is scathing. Warren Treadgold’s view is typical of these sceptics. He writes, “Byzantine thinking had little in common with today’s Postmodernism, which looks for truth in panegyrics and saints’ lives, for bias in historiography, everywhere for sexuality, and nowhere for religious faith”.⁵³ Even Peter Brown’s masterful *Body and Society* has been accused of portraying bodies as predominantly sexual vessels.⁵⁴ As John Behr warns, our modern preoccupation with sexuality has caused researchers like Brown to overstate the importance of this issue for our Late Antique writers.⁵⁵

Other critics of social history have accused many of its practitioners of using anachronistic methods in their research. In the field of ancient sexualities and masculinity, the debate between those labelled as Essentialists and Social Constructionists has been particularly visceral. The sceptics claim that many investigations on sexual difference in the Greco-Roman world are flawed because they project modern perceptions of sexuality and

⁵⁰ Although recent scholarship has rejected many of his ideas, an influential work in this field remains, John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980). For a more nuanced study, see Mark Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁵¹ Smith, “Gendering”, 3-4.

⁵² I am indebted to Mathew Kuefler for this quotation.

⁵³ Warren Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), preface 14.

⁵⁴ See, e.g. Andrew Louth’s excellent review of *The Body and Society*, *JTS* 41 (1990): 231-35.

⁵⁵ Behr, *Asceticism*, 11-15.

gender onto Greek and Roman societies where these concepts held greatly different meanings.⁵⁶ Moreover, many classicists have frowned on the “gendered” approach to understanding ancient Rome and Greece. These critics suggest that much of the work by social historians has misunderstood, mistranslated, or stretched the meanings of important Greek and Latin terminology to support their theories. They maintain, as well, that many of these studies by social historians have focused too heavily on rhetorical sources and too narrowly on private aspects of masculinity, particularly sexuality. In response, some social historians have reversed the charges by accusing their detractors of misinterpreting their work, and of using out-dated and anachronistic methods themselves. An example of this counter-attack may be seen in Bruce O’Brian’s contention that historians have always looked to the past to both illuminate contemporary concerns and to find “themselves” in the past. He argues that no historian can achieve complete detachment. He and other social historians submit that at least they are aware of the dangers of interpreting the past through modern eyes.⁵⁷

Despite the acrimony at times between the two schools, scholars in the past fifteen years have attempted to reconcile the disparate methods preferred by classicists and social historians. Political events in the first decade of the twenty-first century led to an increased awareness that concepts like heroism and manliness mean different things in different societies and change over time. The aftermath of the attacks on the twin towers in New York city on September 11, 2001, in particular, saw an increased interest by academics on how ancient thinkers formulated the abstract concepts of manliness and courage.⁵⁸ Some of these innovative studies have provided me with crucial insights for my own research. These investigations have combined traditional historical, philological, and archaeological analysis with gender and socio-linguistics studies to explore Roman masculinity by examining the semantic range and gendered meanings of terms and

⁵⁶ For a sample of the debate concerning the labeling of John Boswell and his disciples as “Essentialists” see David Halparin, “One Hundred Years of Homosexuality”, in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 15-46, Kuefler, “Boswell Thesis”, 1-25, Ralph Hexter, “John Boswell’s Gay Science: Prolegomenon to a Re-Reading”, in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 35-50.

⁵⁷ Bruce O’Brian, “R.W. Southern, John Boswell and the Sexuality of Anselm”, in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 172-74.

⁵⁸ For the influence of the events of 9/11 on the study of Greek and Roman masculinity, see Linda Rabieh, *Plato and the Virtue of Courage* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006), 2-4, Ineke Sluiter and Ralph Rosen, “General Introduction”, in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Boston: Brill, 2003), 1-2.

concepts like *virtus*, and ἀρετή. Using a methodology particularly embraced by this study, in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, a group of classical scholars explore “what the word *andreios* means, what it means to be *andreios* to an ancient Greek”. This study and others practicing a similar methodology have provided me with keen insights. Most importantly, they have shown me the fluidity of these concepts by revealing how “gendered” vocabulary like *virtus*, ἀνδρεία and ἀρετή have shifted meanings over time and, at times, meant different things to different people according to the context they were used.⁵⁹

Other researchers based in classics have borrowed some of the techniques developed in gender history to investigate how masculine ideologies of the Republic and early and Later Empire governed the public speech and behaviour of Roman men.⁶⁰ The focus by several of these studies on the importance of martial virtues in helping to define notions of “true” manliness throughout Roman history has proven particularly helpful for my own work. In *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic*, McDonnell examines the changing usage of the term *virtus* from the Early to the Late Roman Republic. Though outside of the period looked at in this dissertation, this study offers some intriguing insights on how terminology and abstract values like manliness shift over time. For McDonnell, the public notion of manliness as represented by the concept of *virtus* embodied the most important aspect of Republican Roman masculinity. Of special interest for this study is McDonnell’s contention that the military context of *virtus* reflected the intimate link between masculinity and militarism in the Republic. He stresses that in Republican Rome the “bond between the form of the state and the status of being a man was closer and more essential in Rome than in” other ancient cultures “because serving the Republic was the only way many Roman males could lay claim to being a man”.⁶¹ McDonnell proposes that in the first-century BCE social and political change caused a change in Roman masculine ideology away from martial courage. In a view that this dissertation partly challenges, McDonnell argues that the introduction of full-time soldiers who fought their wars primarily on the frontiers of the Empire Roman meant that men no longer needed to prove their

⁵⁹ Sluiter and Rosen, “General Introduction”, 4.

⁶⁰ See, e.g. Catherine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, Lin Foxhall and John Salmon, *When Men were Men: Masculinity, Power and Identity in the Classical Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1998), Angela Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero: Manliness and the Impersonal Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶¹ McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 11.

virtus on the battlefield. This development created a gulf “between the civilian and military sides of Roman society”. Consequently, he declares, that during the Principate the emperors monopolised “military glory and martial *virtus*” while an increasingly “emasculated Roman nobility was left to cultivate a private, Hellenic type of *virtus*”.⁶²

In *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*, Mathew Kuefler amalgamates more traditional historical methods with gendered approaches. His study argues that a Christian ideology of masculinity had risen to dominance in the fourth and fifth centuries. Martial virtues, in a metaphorical and actual sense, play an important role in Kuefler’s view of what he describes as the rise to dominance of a “new” Christian masculine ideal in the fourth and the fifth centuries. His study provided me with a springboard for my own topic. Though this dissertation challenges some of Kuefler’s more sweeping suggestions, it seeks to emulate his textual analysis as a means to understand how political and social change influenced masculine ideology in the early Byzantine Empire. Indeed, this study is partly my attempt to take up Kuefler’s challenge to see if his conclusions, which largely focused on the Western half of the Empire, might be applied to the early Byzantine Empire.⁶³

The disputes concerning the validity of social history and the limitations of classical studies for understanding historical shifts represent just one front in the larger debates circulating in the field of Late Roman history. At the heart of many of these arguments lie long-established controversies concerning the end of the classical world, the advent of Christianity, and “the fall of the Roman Empire”. In the historiographical tradition, these upheavals brought about both a decline in civilisation and the triumph of superstition over rationality.⁶⁴ The past forty years, however, has witnessed a surge of interest in seeing Late Antiquity as its own unique historical epoch. At the vanguard of this movement, Peter Brown’s, *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971), presented a more optimistic vision of the breakup of the Roman Empire. Instead of seeing this period as an era of decay, leading to the “backward” Greek Byzantine Empire and the barbarised kingdoms of Western Europe, Brown and his followers present Late Antiquity as a complex period of cultural germination. These researchers have argued that developments in this era—particularly the intellectual

⁶² McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 384-89.

⁶³ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 9.

⁶⁴ Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History A.D. 550-800: Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 230.

growth and spread of Christianity—have helped to shape the modern as well as the medieval world.

Because of the increased focus on this era, in the past forty years, the period known formerly as the “Dark Ages”, has become somewhat ‘brighter’. Scholars have reworked the model of Western Europe gradually crumbling into ignorance as the Empire retreated to the East and “barbarian” peoples flooded into the West. The entire relationship between Roman and barbarian as a contrast between civilised peoples and uncivilised peoples has been vigorously challenged. In the past few years, however, several studies have questioned this more optimistic vision of the end of the Ancient World and the advent of the Early Middle Ages.⁶⁵ As the historian James O’Donnell remarks, there continues to be a division among those scholars who see Late Antiquity as an era of decline, and those who see it as a period of cultural evolution:

Followers of Peter Brown and Averil Cameron tend to focus on the eastern half of the Empire and see late antiquity not as merely the end of the classical world, but as the first period of the middle ages. They tend to show more interest in religious and cultural history, and are open to methods used in other humanistic disciplines. Their debunkers prefer military and political history to the religious, and overall tend to distrust theory.⁶⁶

This dissertation attempts to bring these two worlds together. Its primary aim is to integrate these disparate secondary and primary sources to create a greater understanding of how early Byzantine secular and ecclesiastical writers linked representations of military valour to their notions of the qualities that made up “true” manliness.

Translations

This dissertation relies on a combination of my own and existing translations. References to the edition and translator are provided in the footnote when a translation is used for the first time, but not in subsequent references unless a different edition or translation is used. I will always note when either I alter certain vocabulary within a translation or when the rendition of passages or words from Latin or Greek into English are my own. However, when I modernise English words found in some of the older translations, no notation will be made.

⁶⁵ For just two recent monographs: Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire, a New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Bryan Ward Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also Kaldellis’ (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 1-60) criticisms of “students of late antiquity”.

⁶⁶ James O’Donnell, Bryn Mawr Classical Review <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2005/2005-07-69.html>.

Chapter II

The Soldier's Life: Martial Virtues, Masculinity, and the Late Roman Man



(Plate 1)



(Plate 2)



(Plate 3)

The same organization holds good for the State as in the family; the male element must defend and the female occupy itself with the care of the household within.

Synesius of Cyrene, *On Kingship* 14 (trans. Fitzgerald)

The ancient Romans admired the characteristics that they believed allowed them to establish hegemony over their rivals. It comes as little surprise then that the hyper-masculine qualities of the Roman soldier became the hyper-masculine standard by which many Roman men measured their own manliness. Indeed, like many cultures that rose to prominence primarily through military aggression, images of the soldier's life and the ideal manly life were often the same. Perusing the literary and visual sources from any period of Roman history draws attention to the importance of this connection, as well as an acceptance of the idea of a common Roman military ethos by which all citizens could bask in the glory of its armies.

Throughout its long history, the state's expansion and survival had depended on its men's ability to dominate the multiplicity of ethnic groups that lived along its borders. For Roman intellectuals, like the classical poet Vergil (70 BCE – 19 BCE), Rome's rise had depended upon its men's superior military *virtus*.¹ We find this militaristic ideology expressed in a famous passage from the poet's *Aeneid*, "Remember Rome, these are your skills: to rule over peoples, to impose morality, to spare your subjects and to war against

¹ S.J. Harrison, Vergil: *Aeneid* 10 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), introduction, 22.

the proud”.² During the era of the Roman Republic, legendary generals like Gaius Marius (157-86 BCE) and Julius Caesar (100-44 BCE) had faced and defeated large forces of foreign peoples. In the first and second centuries CE, the Roman emperors had consolidated these earlier military victories. The Late Roman historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, described this era as a time when the state had entered its “manhood” and “won laurels of victory in every part of the globe”.³ The third and fourth centuries CE saw an upsurge of attacks along the Empire’s boundaries; yet Roman military might had overcome even these threats.⁴ Like many earlier Roman intellectuals, Ammianus and his peers seemed convinced that these numerous victories over enemy forces had occurred, not only because they had better equipment and tactics, but, in Myles McDonnell’s words, “because they were better men”.⁵

As we will see in this chapter, and in those that follow, the majority of Romans in the early Byzantine era followed these convictions. Christians and non-Christians admired the attributes that they believed distinguished the typical Roman soldier from his civilian and foreign counterparts—physical and spiritual strength, courage, prudence, discipline, self-mastery, unselfishness, and camaraderie. This chapter focuses on the continuing relevance of these “martial” virtues in Late Roman conceptualisations and representations of heroic manliness. Certainly many intellectuals in the Later Empire agreed with the time-honoured consensus that Roman pre-eminence had been achieved because its early citizens had avoided the “life of effeminacy” [*vita mollitia*]⁶ brought on by wealth and the sedentary life and “fought in fierce wars” which allowed them to “[overcome] all obstacles by manliness [*virtute*]”.⁷ This linking of Roman greatness with the special martial virtues of

² Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.851-53 (my trans.): “Romane, memento (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, parcere subiectis et debellare superbos”. McDonnell (*Roman Manliness*, 152-3) and Williams (*Roman Homosexuality*, 135) discuss the martial and masculine aspects of this passage.

³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* (trans. John C. Rolfe, LCL, 3 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935-39, reprint 2000]) 14.6.3: “in iuvenem erectus et virum, ex omni plaga quam orbis ambit immensus, reportavit laureas et triumphos”. Relying on literary precedents, in this passage (14.6.3-5) Ammianus compared the history of the city of Rome to a human life, infancy, childhood, adulthood, and old age. Cf. the early fourth-century Christian theologian Lactantius’ (*Divine Institutes* 7.15.14-16), following Seneca, comparison of Roman secular history with the stages of a human life, from infancy to old age.

⁴ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 31.5.11-17.

⁵ McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 3, commenting on the intimate relationship between masculinity and *virtus* in Republican Rome, Myles McDonnell concludes, “*Virtus* is the special inheritance of the Roman people, and it was by this *virtus*, this ‘manliness,’ that Roman supremacy had been built”. See too Williams (*Roman Homosexuality*, 127) on the etymological connection between *virtus* and “manliness”.

⁶ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 31.5.14 (my trans.).

⁷ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 14.6.10. I have replaced the translator Rolfe’s “valour” for *virtute* with “manliness”. Cf. Herodian, *BH* (trans. C.R. Whittaker, LCL, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

its men is not surprising, considering that few other cultures have ever sent such a large percentage of their citizens to war.⁸ Yet, the Roman state of the fifth and sixth centuries had developed into an entity far different to that of the Late Republican hero, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (235–183 BC), or the Principate of Augustus (ruled 27 BCE-14 CE). One area of change had been a notable decline in the participation in warfare by the Roman upper classes, as well as an increased reliance upon non-Roman soldiers within the ranks and in the highest echelons of military command.⁹

Demilitarisation of the Roman Upper Classes

In the era of the Republic, the nobility had served as both political and military leaders. To be seen as “real” men, even the most affluent members of the aristocracy had needed to prove their virility on the battlefield. Provincial governors until the third century CE were typically men from the aristocracy who functioned as both civilian administrators and garrison commanders.¹⁰ It is no coincidence then that in this era a Roman man’s identity remained tightly entwined with the notion that “precarious manhood” was best demonstrated and won on the battlefield. As one recent study on Roman masculinity avers, serving the state as a soldier “was the only way many Roman males could lay claim

1969-70]) 2.2.4-6: “During the days of the Republic when the senate appointed army commanders to their posts, all Italians used to bear arms and gained control of lands and seas in wars against Greeks and barbarians”. Ambrose, *Ep.* 73.7, in *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, trans. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, TTH 43 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 82: “Trophies of victory derive not from the entrails of cattle but from the strength of warriors. It was with quite other disciplines that I subjugated the world. It was by fighting that Camillus brought back the standards that had been taken from the capital, after he had slain the Gauls who had triumphed over Tarpeian rock. Courage laid low those whom cults failed to repel”. Theophylact Simocatta, *History* (ed. C. de Boor, re-ed. P. Wirth [Stuttgart: Teubner, 1972]; (trans. Michael and Mary Whitby [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986]) 2.14.6: “How did the Romans advance to great power, and expand their tiny city-state to such great might? In my opinion, it was through their proud spirit, their seething desires, their innate daring [τολμητὰς] and love of danger, their belief that it was death not to die for glory”.

⁸ On this connection as a common theme in Roman literature, see Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 135-37. For the large percentage of Roman citizens serving within the armies of the Republic and the Early Empire, see Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 31-35.

⁹ For the increased reliance on non-Roman as both soldiers and officers in the Later Roman army: Pat Southern and Karen Ramsey Dixon, *The Late Roman Army* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 48-50, 67-73, J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 20-21. We do find, however, in the sixth-century Eastern Roman army a shift back to a force made up of predominantly citizen soldiers. For this development, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 670, John Teale, “The Barbarians in Justinian’s Armies”, *Speculum* 40 (1965): 294-322.

¹⁰ Walter Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: the Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 190.

to being a man”.¹¹ According to one ancient Roman historian, this egalitarian martial ethic represented the determining factor in their defeat of rivals more dependent on mercenaries such as the Carthaginians.¹² In many of the ancient sources, the lives of warrior-aristocrats like Scipio stood as examples of righteous and manly Roman behaviour at its apex.¹³ This association of the manliness of its elites with the establishment and maintenance of Rome’s *imperium* helps us to appreciate why Roman intellectuals, like the Stoic Seneca (ca. 4 BCE–65 CE), argued that there was no virtue or manliness if an enemy were lacking.¹⁴

In the second and the third centuries, however, Roman men’s military roles were being redefined. What scholars call the crisis of the third century played a part in this transformation. The twofold threats of external invasions and crippling civil wars ignited by rival claimants to the purple, challenged the Empire’s military capabilities and created the necessity for reform.¹⁵ Establishing control over the frequently rebellious Roman forces throughout the Empire represented a key step in quashing this chaos. Those in power entrusted the defence of the state to a professional army of mixed descent that fought its battles mostly on the Empire’s outer fringes.¹⁶ The imperial authorities also sought to curtail the threat presented by mutinous regional military commanders. The Emperor Diocletian (ruled 284-305), carved the provinces into smaller more manageable administrative units and increased the number of imperial leaders, first to two then to four. In a further effort to curb the threat of usurpation and create a more effective fighting force, the “senatorial amateurs”, who had often used their military commissions merely as an obligatory step in their political careers, were no longer required to fulfil their military

¹¹ McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 10-11.

¹² Polybius, *Histories* (trans. Mortimer Chambers [New York: Twayne, 1966]) 6.52.

¹³ See, e.g. Polybius, *Histories* 31.25, Cicero, *De officiis* (trans. Walter Miller, LCL, 29 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913-39, reprint 2005]) 3.1.4. For Scipio as a prime example of aristocratic excellence and martial manliness, see Arthur M. Eckstein, *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 28-30, 79-82.

¹⁴ Seneca, *De providentia* (trans. John W. Basore, LCL, 3 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928-35, reprint 2000]) 2.4, 2.7, 4.16.

¹⁵ For the combined military threat presented in the third century by a resurgent Persia in the East and the multiplicity of ethnic groupings along the Rhine and the Danube, see Stephen Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery* (London: Routledge, 1997), 25-35.

¹⁶ Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1037. The “demilitarization” of the Roman land owning elites is discussed in detail by J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, “The End of the Roman Army in the Western Empire”, in *War and Society in the Roman World*, ed. J. Rich and G. Shipley (New York: Routledge, 1993).

duties.¹⁷ In a law probably enacted during Diocletian's reign, serving in the army became hereditary, and the sons of soldiers and veterans were obligated to follow their fathers' example.¹⁸ Although not strictly enforced, another law created in 364 forbade all Roman civilians the use of weapons.¹⁹

Though men from the upper classes continued to serve as officers and provide a vital reserve of civil and military leadership upon whom the government could call in time of crisis, many of the increasingly wealthy aristocrats chose instead to pursue comfortable lives in one of the Empire's major cities or on their provincial estates.²⁰ In the fourth century, the roles of "elite" citizens in the military decreased even further, and to meet its recruitment needs the army, at times, depended on the enrolment of foreign troops.²¹ But one should not forget that non-Roman mercenaries had long played an important part in the Roman armies.²² Moreover, as several recent studies on the Late Roman army have warned, we should not take the concepts of "demilitarisation" of the Roman citizenry or the "barbarisation" of the Late Roman army too far. While it is notoriously difficult to determine with any certainty either the size of the Late Roman/ early Byzantine army or the percentage of Romans serving compared to non-Romans—particularly within the non-officer corps—the foreign component was never as high as some historians suggest. The majority of soldiers throughout the Byzantine period were Roman.²³ Using the most recent statistical analysis, A. D. Lee proposes that the non-Roman component in the Eastern Roman army the fourth and fifth centuries in positions of command held steady at "less

¹⁷ Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 81, 100.

¹⁸ Southern and Dixon, *Late Roman Army*, 67.

¹⁹ Codex Theodosianus, 15.15.

²⁰ Williams and Friell, *Empire at Bay*, 25.

²¹ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 7, 248. For the difficulty of determining whether these "barbarian" soldiers had been granted Roman citizenship, see Ralph Mathisen, "Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire", *American Historical Review* 3 (2006): 1011-40.

²² A thorough description of the recruitment of both Roman and non-Roman soldiers in the Late Roman army from the fourth to the sixth centuries is found in Southern and Dixon, *Late Roman Army*, 67-75. Some of these more traditional views on recruitment have been recently challenged. See, e.g. Michael Whitby, "Emperors and Armies", in *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire*, ed. Simon Swain and Mark Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 166-73; A. D. Lee, *War in Late Antiquity, A Social History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 79-85.

²³ Whitby, "Emperors and Armies", 167. Estimates vary on the numbers in the Late Roman and early Byzantine army. Lee (*War in Late Antiquity*, 76-7) suggests 500,000 as the total for the combined forces of the fourth-century army and 300,000 for the sixth-century Byzantine army.

than a third". After the fifth century, the foreign component of the Byzantine army declined to perhaps a fifth of the overall total. So too is it vital to remember that units such as the 8th Squadron of Vandals, that in the early part of the fourth century had originally comprised almost entirely of "Vandals", by the fifth century were made up primarily of Roman provincials.²⁴

The older assumption that military service had become increasingly unpopular amongst fourth-century Roman men from all classes has been challenged recently as well.²⁵ Revisionist scholars propose that desertion by Roman soldiers in the fourth and fifth centuries was no greater than that of earlier periods.²⁶ Moreover, as Michael Whitby has shown so clearly, the Late Roman army relied heavily on conscripts from the traditional recruiting grounds found in the rural and upland areas within the Empire.²⁷ The army also continued to offer citizens from more humble backgrounds an attractive career opportunity. To use the phrase of A. D. Lee, "there were genuine material benefits to be gained from military service".²⁸ To be sure, some urbanised elites perceived these citizen soldiers to be little better than barbarians and as potential threats to the "civilised" parts of the Empire. One fourth-century critic of the senatorial elites even tells us that some members of the nobility had rejected military service as "a squalid occupation unfitting for a free man".²⁹ Most current specialists on the Late Roman army agree, however, that this reluctance to serve had more to do with practical reasons, such as dislike of distant postings, dissatisfaction with the Late Roman government and reluctance on the part of landowners to give up tenants, than with "an extreme loathing or fear of military service on the part of the Roman citizenry".³⁰

It is true, as well, that from the reign of Arcadius (ruled 395-408) emperors had ceased to lead the army into battle personally. In the words of Walter Kaegi, "Some had

²⁴ Lee, *War in Late Antiquity*, 84-5.

²⁵ For the "problem" of desertion in the Late Roman army, see Ramsay MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 52-55.

²⁶ See, e.g. Williams and Friell, *Empire at Bay*, 211, Lee, *War in Late Antiquity*, 82-83.

²⁷ Whitby, "Emperors and Armies", 166.

²⁸ Lee, *War in Late Antiquity*, 82.

²⁹ Claudius Mamertinus, *Gratiarum actio suo Juliano imperatori* (ed. D. Lassandro [Turin: Pavarina, 1992]; trans. Samuel Lieu [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1986]) 20.1: "Militiae labor a nobilissimo quoque pro sordido et inliberali reiciebatur".

³⁰ Southern and Dixon, *Late Roman Army*, 68. Cf. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1062. Contra Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 40.

made a gesture of departing to campaign, but they had not really led the armies in the field”.³¹ Yet emperors without military backgrounds represented the exception not the rule throughout the period covered in this study. Marcian (ruled 450-457), Leo I (ruled 457-474,) Zeno (ruled 474-5, 476-91), Basiliscus (ruled 475/6), Justin I (ruled 518-27), Tiberius II (ruled 574-82), Maurice (ruled 582-602), and Phocas (ruled 602-10) had all begun their careers as soldiers. One may attribute this tendency to avoid campaigning to a number of interrelated factors, including these emperors’ age when they attained the purple, internal politics, and the stark lessons learned in the wake of the deaths of the fourth-century emperors Julian and Valens on campaign.³² For the reasons given above, we should not see the trend of emperors avoiding combat during their reign as evidence of a larger imperial and/or societal rejection of the traditional reverence for the emperor as an ideal military man.

A number of men from the Late Roman upper classes, undoubtedly, cultivated a more genteel lifestyle than their war-like ancestors from the Republic did. With the defence of the Empire firmly in the hands of a mostly effective regular army, the men of the fourth and fifth-century landowning classes often appeared, in the words of A.H.M. Jones, “blissfully unaware of the dangers that threatened the Empire”.³³ Some gender scholars submit that development like these helped to transform the notion that Roman men, regardless of social status, needed to prove their heroic qualities by serving as idealised warrior-elites.³⁴ From at least the first century CE, public displays of martial courage as a primary means of attaining a masculine identity had been complimented by alternative strategies of manliness based on non-martial pursuits. During the early years of the Principate, Stoic and Christian intellectuals had popularised codes of masculinity centred on self-control and a mastery over one’s passions such as anger and lust.³⁵ To be seen as a “true” man, one did not necessarily need to prove his courage and manliness in times of war, but could earn a masculine identity through private and public displays of self-control,

³¹ Walter Kaegi, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 68-69. In 611, the emperor Heraclius (ruled 610-42) broke with this precedent by leading the military campaign against the Persians.

³² Lee, *War in Late Antiquity*, 35.

³³ Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1062.

³⁴ For the upward social mobility military service continued to offer Late Roman men from the lower classes, Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 550-51.

³⁵ For the similarities and subtle, yet important differences, between Stoic and Christian ideals of renunciation and self-control, see Brown, *Body and Society*, esp. 30-31, 178-80.

endurance, and courage by fighting internalised “battles” with his body and emotions.³⁶ As Catherine Edwards puts it, “The Stoic wise man turned his body into a battlefield on which he might show his *virtus*, prove himself a *vir fortis*”.³⁷

Moreover, as the influential works of Maud Gleason have claimed, “the immense security of *Pax Romana*” allowed many educated elites from the privileged classes the time to undertake more “civilised” modes of male self-fashioning based upon the rhetorical skills that they increasingly utilised in the political and legal rivalries that filled their days. Public speaking and face-to-face verbal confrontations with political rivals provided an alternative means for privileged Roman men to display their verbal dexterity, as well as their manliness.³⁸ As Gleason puts it, “Rhetoric was callisthenics of manhood”. During these often-tense verbal confrontations, a man would be constantly judged not just by his “mastery of words”, but also on his ability to use the correct manly voice, keep hold of his emotions, and thus maintain the proper facial expressions and gestures. She continues by suggesting that from the second to the fifth century CE, “displays of *paideia* in public served to distinguish authentic members of the elite from other members of society, the gap between the educated and the uneducated came to be seen as no way arbitrary but the result of a nearly biological superiority”.³⁹ Somewhat more controversial is her proposal that the Roman elites had rejected athletics and warfare as an essential aspect of hegemonic masculine ideology. She writes:

Perhaps physical strength once had been the definitive criterion of masculine excellence on the semi-legendary playing fields of Ilion and Latium, but by Hellenistic and Roman times the sedentary elite of the ancient city had turned away from warfare and gymnastics as definitive agnostic activities, firmly redrawing the defining lines of competitive space so as to exclude those without wealth, education, or leisure.⁴⁰

³⁶ Coleen Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24-31.

³⁷ Catherine Edwards, “The Suffering Body: Philosophy and Pain in Seneca’s Letters”, in *Constructions of the Classical Body*, ed. James Porter (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 262.

³⁸ Gleason, *Making Men*. For advocates of Gleason’s thesis: Carlin Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Virginia Burrus, *Begotten Not Made: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), Joy Connolly, “Like the Labors of Heracles: *Andreia* and *Paideia* in Greek Culture Under Rome”, in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Boston: Brill, 2003).

³⁹ Gleason, *Making Men*, 22-3.

⁴⁰ Gleason, *Making Men*, 17.

Social historians have argued, developments like these “could not help but have serious consequences for men’s identity”.⁴¹ Yet, as even one advocate of Gleason’s thesis acknowledges, this reshaping of masculine self-fashioning, and seeming rejection of martial virtues as a key aspect of Roman manliness, “may be less an indication of the luxury of the secure than an instance of making a virtue out of necessity”.⁴² The remainder of this chapter examines some of these shifts and reflects on how they influenced the customary Roman belief in the integral relationship between physical prowess in battle and standards of manliness. Arguing against the standard view in gender studies, however, it suggests that despite these changes, and the adoption of these alternative strategies of masculinity, many Roman writers in the early Byzantine period continued to link notions of heroic manliness with the traditional ideals of manly virtue found in both visual and textual representations of the soldier’s life.

Vita Militaris

In the early years of the fifth century, a Roman or non-Roman man spending any time in one of the many major or minor cities scattered throughout the Western and Eastern halves of the Empire, would have quite literally found himself surrounded by visual reminders of what one modern scholar calls Rome’s masculine *imperium*.⁴³ Across its vast expanse, a remarkable homogeneity of material culture bound the state’s disparate cities.⁴⁴ A zealous militarism certainly represented a common theme in any city’s expression of its *Romanitas*.⁴⁵ Strolling along the colonnaded streets, or wandering through any of the many public areas that helped to define these population centres, one would have been constantly confronted by the Romans’ adulation of their military legacy as well as their continuing admiration of their soldiers’ martial virtues. One sixth-century source tells us that the city of Rome alone had 3,785 bronze statues of emperors and famous military commanders.⁴⁶ If only on a subconscious level, the marble and bronze

⁴¹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 39. Cf. Gleason, *Making Men*, 14, Burrus, *Begotten Not Made*, 19-22, 180, McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 384-89.

⁴² Burrus, *Begotten Not Made*, 21.

⁴³ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 135.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 1015; see also, Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of a Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 77-78.

⁴⁵ For the centrality of military success to the ideology of the fifth-century Christian Roman Empire, see Millar, *Greek Roman Empire*, 41-42.

⁴⁶ Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle* (trans. Robert R. Phoenix and Cornelia B. Horn, TTH 55 [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011]) 10.16.

statuary of bellicose-looking Roman emperors and other famous military heroes—living and dead—that adorned the cities, would have spoken clearly to both literates and illiterates about the integral relationship between the well-being of the local community and the militarism of its central leadership.⁴⁷

In the Empire's larger population centres, this message took on even more blatant forms. Funded by the substantial wealth of the imperial family and the upper crust of the aristocracy, magnificent state monuments designed to express current ideologies decorated the Empire's larger cities.⁴⁸ A variety of artistic mediums expressed the idea found in one sixth-century Eastern Roman historian that for Rome "to triumph forever over our enemies is our birthright and ancestral privilege".⁴⁹ Intricately carved marble reliefs on exterior walls, columns, and other memorials spoke to this faith by providing the onlooker with a continuous pictorial narrative of Roman victories over "barbarian" enemies.⁵⁰ Mosaics and paintings often complemented these sculpted forms, as the one in Milan described to us by the fifth-century Eastern Roman historian Priscus, showing Roman emperors "sitting upon golden thrones surrounded by dead barbarians at their feet".⁵¹ We see in fact from other ancient sources that commissioning these visual monuments for public consumption served as one of the first steps an emperor took after a military triumph.⁵²

Even the coins that one carried on their person to perform the simplest of transactions spoke to the Romans' sense of superiority over their foes, and served as well as a means of highlighting the integral link between the manly valour of the emperor and his soldiers in the establishment and maintenance of this dominion. On the obverse of a

⁴⁷ For a recent study on the use and meaning of sculpture in the city of Rome, see Joseph Geiger, *The First Hall of Fame: A Study of the Statues in the Forum Augustum. Mnemosyne Supplementa* 295. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008). On the prevalence of imperial statues in promoting the military function of the Emperor as the leader of the army, Jas Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art From the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 54-57. For the illiteracy of the majority of the Late Roman population, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 351.

⁴⁸ Heather, *Fall of the Roman Empire*, 38-39.

⁴⁹ Agathias, *Agathiae Myrinaei Historiarum* (ed. Rudolf Keydell [Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1967] trans. Joseph D. Frendo [New York: de Gruyter, 1975]) 2.12.2.

⁵⁰ Glenys Davies, "Greek and Roman Sculpture", in *The Oxford Companion to Classical History*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 651-52.

⁵¹ Priscus, frag. 22.3 (ed. and trans. R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, and Malchus*, vol. 2 [Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983]). Cf. Procopius, *Buildings* 1.10.10-20.

⁵² Herodian, *BH* 3.9.12.

coin, for instance, a fearsome headshot of the emperor often in military garb served as a customary design, while on the reverse, a favourite motif in the Later Empire was the representation of the emperor or his soldiers armed to the hilt standing over cowering barbarian captives with captions like: “The glory of the Romans [*Gloria Romano rum*]”, or “The return of happy times [*Fel Temp Reparatio*]”.⁵³ Behind all of this imagery, we can observe a long-held conviction held by many Greek and Roman intellectuals that history represented a process whereby the manly conquered the unmanly.⁵⁴

Such assertions represent more than the anachronistic whims of modern scholars interested in uncovering ancient masculinities. Another Eastern Roman historian, writing in the early years of the fifth century, informs us that imperial image-makers created these art forms with the express intent of impressing upon their visual audience the “manliness of the emperor and the might of his soldiers [ἀνδρείαν μὲν γὰρ βασιλέως ἢ ῥώμην στρατιωτῶν]”.⁵⁵ In a centralised governmental system like that found in the Later Roman Empire, imperial propaganda provided the emperors and their backers with a powerful tool to publicise their authority and manipulate popular opinion across the expanse of Empire.⁵⁶ The classically educated elites, who represented an essential audience for these media campaigns, would have understood the social significance of the ideology, and in particular, the militaristic symbolism intrinsic to these art forms. Raised in educational systems based on a steady diet of classical Latin authors, such as Sallust, Seneca the younger, and Vergil in the West and Greek authors like Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides in the East, the literate classes in both halves of the Empire remained intimately aware of the time-honoured idealisation of the military ethic as an essential aspect of both masculine ideology and Rome’s right to *imperium*.⁵⁷

⁵³ An excellent introduction and catalogue of imperial coinage issued from 27 BCE to 498 CE is found in David van Meter, *Handbook of Roman Imperial Coins: A Complete Guide to the History, Types and Values of Roman Imperial Coinage* (Utica, N.Y.: Laurion Press, 1991).

⁵⁴ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 49.

⁵⁵ Eunapius, frag. 68. I have changed the translator Blockley’s “courage” for ἀνδρείον to “manliness”.

⁵⁶ Peter Heather and David Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy and Empire in the Fourth Century: Select Orations of Themistius*, TTH 36 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), 35-37.

⁵⁷ For the familiarity of the Byzantine elites with these classical sources, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 1-2, 68-9. As Treadgold points out (*Byzantine Historians*, 372-75) we have more surviving Byzantine manuscripts of Thucydides’ history (97)—a good guide to ancient popularity—than the most popular early Byzantine classicising historian, Procopius’ *Wars* (54), or Greek versions of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* (24).

The Emperor as an Exemplar of Martial Manliness

As we have seen from the examples above, the idea of the emperor as the embodiment of Roman martial prowess and idealised manliness in the Later Empire was ubiquitous.⁵⁸ The links between masculinity, military virtues, and the emperors' divine right to rule were never far beneath the surface of this imagery.⁵⁹ By concentrating notions of heroic masculinity into the figure of the emperor, imperial ideology created a portrait of the ideal emperor as a model of "true" manliness for all aspiring men to emulate.⁶⁰ This paradigm reflected the increasing domination of state ideology by the imperial family and its direct supporters, and it helps to highlight the growing autocratic power of the Later Roman emperors. Though far from a move towards the "Oriental despotism" argued for in the older historiographical tradition, the reigns of Diocletian and his successors certainly witnessed the growth of a more elaborate court ceremonial, along with an increased promotion of the emperor in literary and visual portrayals as an authority reliant predominantly upon divine assistance (at first that of pagan divinities, and then the Christian God) for his authority.⁶¹

The lives of the emperors definitely serve as the focal point in many of the written sources that have come down to us from the Later Empire. A wide range of literary genres, including history, poetry, panegyric, biography, invective, and satire, utilised the lives of past and present emperors as didactic tools for their audiences.⁶² "Good" emperors, such as Trajan (ruled 97-117) and Marcus Aurelius (ruled 161-180), served as prime examples of virtue and masculinity, while "bad" emperors like Nero (ruled 54-68) and Domitian (81-96), illustrated the Greco-Roman belief in the connection between vice and unmanliness.⁶³ We find in the texts at our disposal that the deeply rooted Hellenic virtues of courage in battle, justice in politics and calm majesty in the face of defeat helped to

⁵⁸ For the use of this iconography as an essential component of imperial propaganda in the Later Empire, Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), esp. chaps 1-3.

⁵⁹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 26.

⁶⁰ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 39.

⁶¹ A thorough examination of the increased authority wielded by emperors in the fourth and fifth centuries Empire may be found in Sarah MacCormack, "The World of the Panegyrists," in *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), esp. 187-218.

⁶² On the role of these literary genres in the Later Empire, see Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau, ed. *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁶³ Colleen Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24.

define notions of ideal rulership.⁶⁴ For our Eastern authors, these qualities remained closely aligned to the four cardinal virtues: φρόνησις (prudence), δικαιοσύνη (justice), σωφροσύνη (temperance), and ἀνδρεία (manliness or courage), that served as vital components of the principle term for “goodness” and ideal manly behaviour in ancient Greek, ἀρετή.⁶⁵ Following concepts found in Plato’s descriptions of the ideal philosopher-king, a model Late Roman emperor needed to be both a φιλόλογος (lover of reason) and a φιλοπόλεμος (lover of war).⁶⁶ Efficiently juxtaposing these expected political and military virtues allowed the emperor to become an exemplar of not only ideal rulership, but of supreme manly conduct as well.⁶⁷

The flowery prose of the panegyrists, who flourished in this age, publicised the “excellence” of their targeted emperor by relating to their audience the leader’s adherence to these dual themes. As one Late Roman writer tells us, panegyrists sought to mould an image of the reigning emperor in a similar way to the artist who sculpted a beautiful statue.⁶⁸ Just as in sculpture, in this medium image meant everything. Since the authors of these speeches generally sought to present an idealised image of the reigning emperor, concrete facts seldom got in the way. Like the variety of solid materials available to the sculpture, a long list of established virtues acted as the moral substance out of which an author moulded his portrait.⁶⁹ “Courage”, in many of these representations, made up one of the foremost characteristics for an emperor to display, and according to one prominent fourth-century practitioner, the one virtue that served as a true “mark of royalty”.⁷⁰ As an

⁶⁴ Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 221.

⁶⁵ See, e.g. Menander, *Second Treatise* 373, “ἀρεταὶ δὲ τέσσαρες εἰσιν, ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, φρόνησις”. For the adoption of this Hellenic model into Roman intellectual culture, see McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 149. Cicero translated these four principle virtues into Latin as, *temperantia*, *prudencia*, *iustitia*, and *fortitudo*, Cicero, *De officiis* 1.5.15. Late Antique examples for the continuity of this concept include: Ammianus, *Res gestae* 22.4, and Ambrose, *De officiis* (ed. and trans. Ivor J. Davidson [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001]) 1.24.115.

⁶⁶ For these two traits as essential qualities for a model Late Roman emperor to display, see Themistius, *Or.* 4.54a. On Plato’s depiction in the *Republic* of the idealised philosopher-king: Plato, *Republic* 521d, 525b, 543a. For the influence of the *Republic* on Late Roman and early Byzantine intellectuals, see Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 106-17.

⁶⁷ For the Roman emperors as the personification of Roman manliness, see Montserrat, “Reading Gender”, 153-182, Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 26-29, Conway, *Behold the Man*, 45-47.

⁶⁸ Synesius, *On Kingship* 14 (trans. Augustine Fitzgerald [London: Humphrey Milford, 1930]).

⁶⁹ Carlos Norena, “The Ethics of Autocracy in the Roman World”, in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 273.

⁷⁰ Themistius, *Or.* 1.5c (trans. Heather and Moncur). See too, Ambrose *De officiis* 1.33.175, where he wrote that “courage [*fortitudo*] belongs on a higher scale than the other virtues”.

imperial virtue in the fourth and early fifth centuries, this “courage” (in Latin expressed as *fortitudo* or *virtus*, and in Greek usually as ἀνδρεία) usually refers to behaviour in battle.⁷¹ Courage in war differed from the “courage of spirit” (*animi fortitudo*) displayed by Hellenic philosophers or the “soldiers of Christ” (*militia Christi*) who were being popularised by the Christian and non-Christian intellectuals of the age.⁷² This promotion of physical courage typified the traditional view that an emperor’s bravery was less metaphorical, and thus needed to be applied in wartime to prove his ability to perform his primary role as the protector of the Roman realm.

Two early fourth-century panegyrics composed by anonymous authors in praise of the Emperor Constantine I (ruled 306-337) provide us with vivid example of these views. In the first, from 310, the author compliments Constantine for taking on the rigors of the soldier’s life. He wrote:

Fortune has placed you above all checks to the acquisition of glory, you wished to advance by serving as a soldier, and by confronting the dangers of war and by engaging the enemy even in single combat you have made yourself more notable among the nations, since you cannot become more noble.⁷³

“For it is a wonderful thing, beneficent gods, a heavenly miracle”, the author continued, “to have as Emperor a youth whose courage [*fortitudo*], which is even now very great, nonetheless is still increasing, and whose eyes flash and whose awe-inspiring yet agreeable majesty dazzles us at the same time as it invites our gaze”.⁷⁴

Another panegyric in 313 continued the personification of Constantine as an emblem of Roman victory and hyper-manliness, exalting, “Every kind of war, weapon, and enemy yields to you alone, the memorials of manliness [*virtutum*] preserved in writing from the memory of every age yield to you as well”.⁷⁵ Although these authors purposefully created cartoon-like descriptions of Constantine, they emphasise for us how standards of model

⁷¹ Norena, “Ethics of Autocracy”, 275.

⁷² Like the Stoics, many Christian theologians placed spiritual courage on a higher plane than physical bravery. Christian intellectuals such as Ambrose in *De officiis* 1.129 (trans. Davidson), however, found it important to point out in their writings the value of the physical courage (*fortitudo*) that led “people to protect the country in time of war”. The contrast between “physical courage” and “spiritual courage” is discussed in some detail by Ambrose, *De officiis* 1.34.193-96.

⁷³ *Panegyric of Constantine 6*, in “*In Praise of the Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini*”, (ed. and trans. C.E.V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994]) 3.3.

⁷⁴ *Panegyric of Constantine 6*, 17.1-2.

⁷⁵ *Panegyric of Constantine 12*, 24.3 (trans. Nixon and Rodgers; I have changed “valor” for *virtutum* to “manliness”).

leadership and manliness in the Later Empire remained closely bound to conventional notions of martial prowess and a continued adulation of the soldier's life.

We find further examples of these militaristic themes in the imperial biographies that thrived in this period. Several of these ancient studies, which one modern critic has labelled "mythhistoria" have come down to us.⁷⁶ Though of minimal historical worth, these portraits of the emperors provide us with essential insight into the types of behaviours that the Roman authors of the period considered worthy of praise or condemnation. In works such as the *Historia Augusta*, probably composed by an anonymous author in the last quarter of the fourth century (while pretending to be six different authors writing in the late third and early fourth centuries), and the *Liber de caesaribus* written by the Roman aristocrat Sextus Aurelius Victor (ca. 320-ca. 390), the supreme virtues of particular rulers could be contrasted to the supreme vice of others.⁷⁷ Similar to the depictions of celebrities found in modern gossip magazines, these commentaries on the emperors remained less concerned with providing accurate accounts of these men's lives than with looking back on these rulers, and by way of an array of titillating anecdotes "making moral judgments on them".⁷⁸

Military virtues in these sources too represented a prerequisite for any "good" and manly emperor to demonstrate, whilst their authors perceived a disinclination to fight as a typical trait of "bad" and unmanly rulers.⁷⁹ Praise of one's military prowess did not necessarily need to correspond to actual deeds on the battlefield. The *Historia Augusta*, for instance, described the mediocre Emperor Claudius II's (ruled 268-270) rather tepid military record as comparable to the triumphant Roman generals of the past, lauding the emperor for displaying "the 'valour' [*virtus*] of Trajan, the 'righteousness' [*pietas*] of Antoninus, the 'self-restraint' [*moderatio*] of Augustus".⁸⁰

Although more constrained by the tenets of their genre to provide their readers with accurate accounts of both men's characters and events, the more sophisticated histories of this era tended as well to concentrate on the deeds and the moral fibre of the

⁷⁶ Ronald Syme, "The Composition of the *Historia Augusta*: Recent Theories", *JRS* 62 (1972): 123.

⁷⁷ For the debate surrounding the date of the publication of the *Historia Augusta*, see Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 743-82.

⁷⁸ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 27.

⁷⁹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 26-29.

⁸⁰ HA, *Claudius II* (ed. and trans. David Magie, LCL, 3 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921-32]) 2.3.

emperors.⁸¹ The classicising historians assumed that “great” men made history, and that a leader’s manly or unmanly conduct often determined the well-being of the Empire.⁸² It is therefore not surprising to find that these writers, who focused on great wars and the personalities of a few major characters as the primary shapers of events, paid so much attention to the moral and martial qualities of the emperor in their accounts. A passage from Eunapius’ *Universal History* provides us with evidence of this tendency in the Later Empire:

It was clear to all that if the Roman state rejected luxury [τρυφήν] and embraced war, it would conquer and enslave all the world. But God has set a deadly trait in human nature, like the poisonous gall in a lobster or thorns on a rose. For in high authority he has implanted love of pleasure [τὴν ἡδονήν] and ease [ῥαθυμίαν], with the result that, while they have all the means with which to unite mankind into one polity, our Emperors in their concern for the transient turn to pleasure [τὸ ἥδῦ] while neither pursuing nor showing interest in the immortality which is brought by glory [τῆς δόξης].⁸³

We can see from the excerpt above that the conservative historian believed that “soft” and unmanly Roman emperors who had abandoned their martial role threatened the survival of the state. This equation of the military life with idealised manliness and the state’s well-being on the one hand, and civilised luxury with effeminacy and decline on the other hand, represented a standard theme in the Greco-Roman literary tradition.⁸⁴

For modern critics, the Later Roman writers’ reliance on well-trodden virtues and vices hinders our ability to explore the “real” personalities of these men in any great depth.⁸⁵ Although it is true that these ancient authors remained somewhat constrained by both the limitations their genres and their intense focus on literary style, their use of these stock behaviours to describe the character of the emperor represents more than just an example of these authors blurring the lines between literature and history by relying on empty rhetoric procured haphazardly from their classical models. It is always vital to keep in mind that rhetoric frequently functioned for these early Byzantine historians as a way to

⁸¹ For an ancient discussion of these restrictions, see Agathias, *Histories* preface, 1-21.

⁸² For this emphasis in the classicising historians: Kenneth Sacks, “The Meaning of Eunapius’ History”, *History and Theory* 25 (Feb, 1986): 52-67, David Rohrabacher, *Historians of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 70, Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 20, Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 21.

⁸³ Eunapius, frag. 55.5-10. (trans. Blockley).

⁸⁴ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 139.

⁸⁵ This is a criticism made of Procopius by Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1985), 148-49.

comment on current events.⁸⁶ As Alan Cameron points out in his study of imperial society at the turn of the fifth century, the notion of an emperor actively avoiding a life of luxury and taking on the rigors of the martial life held a particular appeal for those intellectuals writing during the reigns of Theodosius I's heirs, Arcadius and Honorius—emperors who had largely eschewed their expected roles in state and military affairs.⁸⁷

Synesius of Cyrene

To back up this contention, let us look at an Eastern writer from the late fourth and early fifth century, Synesius of Cyrene (ca. 370 –ca. 414), whose personal and public writings centred on martial metaphors as a means to comment on contemporary events.⁸⁸ A brief survey of some of the themes found in his writings will give way to a more detailed analysis of the classicising and ecclesiastical historians' views on Late Roman men's militarism as an essential aspect of men's heroic conduct and masculine self-fashioning in the chapters to follow. As a Christian from the Eastern provincial elite who served both as a soldier and as a local bishop, Synesius provides an ideal focus for our discussion on the continued vibrancy of classical martial virtues as an essential component of the emperor's, and indeed every Roman man's, masculine identity. His life also serves as a reminder that not all Christian Roman aristocrats had abandoned their civilian and military roles within the Late Roman administration.

Though largely fictitious, the following excerpt from his purported speech to the Emperor Arcadius provides us with a poignant example of how depictions of virtuous and manly emperors remained tied to the military ethos.⁸⁹ Relying upon conventional imagery regarding the unmanliness of peoples from the Eastern Mediterranean, Synesius opened his discussion on ideal leadership with an anecdote about a Persian embassy arriving at the military camp of the Emperor Carinus (ruled 283-285) to sue for peace.⁹⁰ Accustomed

⁸⁶ Anthony Kaldellis, who criticises postmodernist attempts to see all Roman historical writing as “fundamentally a form of fiction”, makes this point in Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 6-16.

⁸⁷ Alan Cameron, Jacqueline Long, and Lee Sherry, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4.

⁸⁸ For a detailed study on Synesius, see Denis Roques, *Synésius de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire* (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1987).

⁸⁹ The political and social circumstances surrounding this address are reconstructed by Cameron, *Barbarians and Politics*, esp.103-142. Cf., however, the overly revisionist views of Wolfgang Hagl, *Arcadius Apis Imperator: Synesios von Kyrene und sein Beitrag zum Herrscherideal der Spätantike*. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997).

⁹⁰ For the depiction of peoples from the Eastern Mediterranean as unmanly in the Classical tradition, Sarah E. Harrell, “Marvelous *Andreia*: Politics, Geography, and Ethnicity in Herodotus' *Histories*”, in *Andreia*:

to the lavish and unmanly lifestyle “typical” in the Persian court, the ambassadors entered the emperor’s camp expecting to find similar pomp and ceremony. Synesius painted, however, a scene of egalitarianism typical in conventional Roman literary depictions of manly military men.⁹¹ He wrote:

A tunic in purple was lying in the grass, and for repast, he had a soup of yesterday’s peas, and in some bits of salted pork that had grown old in the service. Now when he saw them [the Persians], according to the story, he did not spring up, nor did he change anything; but he called out to these men from the very spot and said he knew that they had come to see him, for he was Carinus; and he bade them tell the young king [Barham II] that very day, that unless he conducted himself wisely, he might expect the whole of their forest and plain would be in a single month barer than the head of Carinus. And as he spoke, they say he took off his cap and showed his head, which was no more hairy than the helmet lying at his side. And he gave them leave if they were hungry to attack the stew-pot with him, but if not in need, he ordered them to depart at once. Now it is said that when the messages were reported to the rank and file and to the leader of the enemy, namely all that had been seen and heard, at once—as might be expected—shuddering and fear fell upon everyone at the thought of fighting men like these, whose very king was neither ashamed of being king nor being bald, and who offering them a stew-pot, invited them to share a meal. And their braggart king arrived in terror and was ready to yield in everything, he of the tiara and robes, to one in a simple woollen tunic and cap.⁹²

It was probably no accident that in an address to an emperor he later denigrates for being unwarlike and “living the life of a jellyfish”, Synesius promoted the conventional lifestyle of an archetypical Roman warrior-emperor shunning the luxurious life of the imperial court for the rigors of the soldier’s life. Persian despotism and the unmanliness of Barham II appear to parallel the conditions he found in the court of Arcadius.⁹³ Synesius’ audience would have been immediately struck by the stark contrast of the ascetic manliness of Carinus with the current rulers’ abandonment of the martial life for the “softer” and more unmanly lifestyle of the palace.

This spoken and unspoken criticism of the existing regime leads the reader to the most memorable part of the speech, where Synesius recommended the removal of all barbarians from high office and the army. Synesius relied heavily upon gendered

Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity, ed. Ralph Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Boston: Brill, 2003), Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 47.

⁹¹ For the linking of the austere life of the soldier with codes of ideal Roman masculine conduct, see McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 4-50, Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 62-80, Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 42-3.

⁹² Synesius, *On Kingship* 12.

⁹³ Synesius, *On Kingship* 14. For similar contemporary Roman perceptions of Arcadius, see Kenneth Holum, *Theodosian Emperors: Women and Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982), 50.

metaphors tightly bound to traditional manly martial virtues to condemn the demilitarisation of the Romans from all levels of society. Once again, Synesius' own words are worth quoting in full:

The same organization holds good for the State as in the family; the male element must defend and the female occupy itself with the care of the household within. How then can you endure that the male element should be foreign? Is it not disgraceful that the empire richest in men should yield the crown of glory in war to aliens? For my own part, however many victories such men might win for us, I should be ashamed of the aid so received. This very thing, 'well I know, I do opine' (for it is obvious to any sensible man) that when the male and female of which we speak do not happen to be brother and sister, or in any other way related, the armed portion of them will need but a slight excuse to demand mastery of the civilians, and then the unwarlike will be pitted against those inured to the shock of arms. Before matters have come to this pass, one to which they are now tending, we should recover courage worthy of Romans, and accustom ourselves to winning our own victories, admitting no fellowship with these foreigners, but disowning their participation in any rank. But first let all be excluded from magistracies and kept away from the privileges of the council who are ashamed of all that has been sacred to the Romans from olden times, and has been so esteemed.⁹⁴

We can sense in the passage above, the author's conviction that Roman males' time-honoured role as soldiers had led to the state's dominion over foreigners, and by abandoning their role as soldiers Roman men threatened the survival of the state. These sentiments seemed to represent more than just traditional rhetoric to Synesius. We know in fact that when "barbarians" invaded Synesius' own lands in 406, he responded by recruiting and leading his own soldiers into battle.⁹⁵

So too may Synesius' insistence on the nexus between political rule and masculine virtues represent a contemporary conservative reaction against the increasing independent authority of Theodosian women within Arcadius' court, particularly the empress Aelia Eudoxia.⁹⁶ Indeed, as Liz James and others have shown, the early Byzantine period had witnessed an increase in the empresses' political influence. Christianity played a part in this change. At the beginning of each emperor's reign, elaborate court rituals were performed that emphasised the link between the dual power of the imperial couple. Since these ceremonies portrayed the emperor as God's

⁹⁴ Synesius, *On Kingship* 14.

⁹⁵ Synesius, "Letter 132", (ed. and French trans. Antonio Garzya and Denis Roques, Synésius de Cyrène, *Correspondence* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres 3 vols. 2000]; English trans. Augustine Fitzgerald [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926]).

⁹⁶ Cf. Eunapius, frag. 72, Socrates, HE 16.5. Eudoxia was the daughter of Flavius Bauto, a Romanised Frank who served as *magister militum* in the Western Roman army during the 380s.

representative on earth, it was natural for his partner to attain an aura of authority as well.⁹⁷

Some of Synesius' concern over the "independent" political power of women appears connected to older gendered rhetoric that sought to limit feminine power. Greco-Roman literature had a long tradition of criticising influential women for over-stepping the boundaries of "accepted" feminine political roles. Yet it is important to emphasise that women from the upper classes had long played a role in Roman politics.⁹⁸ Even though Roman and early Byzantine societies were patriarchal and dominated by men, aristocratic women in these periods could influence their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons as wives, daughters, mothers and sisters. Ideal mothers often served as guides seeking to protect and further the ambitions of their male relatives, and this influence continued even when the boys reached maturity. In contrast to fathers or other male relatives who could become potential political rivals, mothers and sisters could be depended on to support their sons or brothers' political goals. Their political duties remained, however, highly regulated. The system permitted women to hold significant power, but it tended to exclude them from overtly participating in society to promote their personal aspirations. In fact, if she spoke out on her own behalf she risked being condemned as egotistical, licentious, greedy, and unwomanly.⁹⁹ Given this paradigm, it should come as no surprise that empresses like Eudoxia and Theodora remained vulnerable to criticisms from "traditionalists" like Synesius and Procopius. Indeed, despite the significant roles that women from all social classes played in the early Byzantine world, the strict gender hierarchy of men over women proved persistent. Men's domination of the political hierarchy of the Eastern and Western Churches serves as a timely reminder of the "ceiling" placed upon women in Late Antiquity.

In the next part of his address, Synesius depended upon traditional Roman rhetorical prejudice that suggested that, like other marginalised groups such as women and slaves, foreigners remained best suited for submissive roles in both the public and private realms

⁹⁷ Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 164-5. The actual authority wielded by these "Theodosian women" has attracted some debate. Holum (*Theodosian Empresses*) sees a great deal of influence, whilst, R.W. Burgess suggests that women from the Theodosian imperial family had far less authority and/or influence over internal and external politics. See R.W. Burgess, "The Accession of Marcian in the Light of the Chalcedonian Apologetic and Monophysite Polemic", *Byzantion* 86/7 (1993/4): 47-48.

⁹⁸ For this authority in the early Roman period, see Judith Hallett, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society: Women and the Elite Family* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁹⁹ Mary R. Lefkowitz, "Influential Women," in *Images of Women in Late Antiquity*, eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 59.

of Roman society. Synesius, below, relates the age-old Roman belief in intimate connection between notions of proper masculine conduct and Roman men's right to dominion:

For my part, I wonder at many other things, but not least at this our absurd conduct. All this is in the face that every house, however humble, has a Scythian [Goths] for a slave. The butler, the cook, the water-carrier, all are Scythians, and as to retinue, the slaves who bend under the burden of the low couches on their shoulders that their masters may recline in the streets, these are all Scythians also; for it has been proved of old that theirs is the most useful race, and the fittest to serve the Romans. But that these fair-haired men who arrange their locks like the Euboeans should be slaves in private to the same men whom they govern in public, this is strange, perhaps the most incredible of the spectacle, and I know not what sort of a thing the so-called riddle may be, if this is not one.¹⁰⁰

Like many within the predominantly conservative nobility of the day, Synesius made it clear that Roman *imperium* depended upon its men's ability to assert their authority in the public and the private arenas. We see further evidence of this conviction when Synesius concluded this part of his harangue by asserting that Roman men's "strong arm" and "their will" had earned them the right to "govern all men with whom they come in contact". It is probable that from Synesius' vantage point, by treating these "barbarians" on near equal terms with the "god-like" Romans of the senatorial classes, Theodosius I and his heirs had upset the natural hierarchal order whereby women were inferior to men, slaves to freeborn, the low-born to the nobility, and non-Romans to Romans.¹⁰¹

As one specialist on the period has noted, Synesius' impractical suggestion to eliminate all barbarians from the army and political office probably represents more "emotive rhetoric" than a "serious political suggestion".¹⁰² When read along with Synesius' personal letters where he praised the courage and manliness of those Romans like himself who took up arms to defend their lands from barbarian raiders, while condemning those who refused to fight as cowardly and unmanly (including his own brother), it points to the continued relevance of martial virtues as an essential part of conceptualisations of heroic Roman manliness.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Synesius, *On Kingship* 15. The comparison to the Euboeans is probably a reference to Synesius' literary model the second-century sophist Dio Chrysostom's (*Discourse 7, the Euboean* 151-52) condemnation of pederastic behaviour because it "humiliated future leaders".

¹⁰¹ For the prevalence of this anxiety amongst the nobility during the reigns of Theodosius I and his heirs, see Williams and Friell, *Empire at Bay*, 34-35.

¹⁰² Cameron and Long, *Barbarians and Politics*, 136.

¹⁰³ See, e.g. Synesius, *Letters*, esp. 94, 104, 113 130, 132. Synesius condemned those like his brother who fled these raids in what he saw as a cowardly and unmanly panic. He was also highly critical of certain

Moreover, while his address was probably never delivered in front of Arcadius,¹⁰⁴ it neatly sums up the attitudes of many elite Roman men frustrated with a political situation whereby select generalissimos and eunuch advisors had increasingly monopolised access to the imperial family and, for some, represented the true power behind the feeble and “effeminate” sons of Theodosius I.¹⁰⁵ This negative attitude towards “unwarlike” emperors and their closest advisors is common in the literary sources from the Later Empire. Part of this disdain seems to reflect the upper classes’ frustration at being cut off progressively from access to the emperor’s confidence and political power. One recent study on Late Roman masculinity even claims that the “minor political role” that the men from the aristocracy had in the Later Empire played an essential part in the reshaping of these men’s masculine identity, and the creation of a “new” Christian masculine ideal.¹⁰⁶

Though we should remain sceptical of such sweeping generalisations, without a doubt, many Late Roman authors, who largely hailed from the aristocracy and bureaucracy, appeared uncomfortable with the growing autocracy of the Later Empire.¹⁰⁷ This stance is not startling, considering that the classical texts that made up much of the foundation of these men’s early education stressed the importance of free will for men seeking to achieve “true” manliness.¹⁰⁸ These established ideals preached that “manly freedom and nobility” depended upon a man’s propensity to challenge and reject despotic rule.¹⁰⁹ The Eastern Roman historians in their works adhered to the traditional Hellenistic distrust of despotism, and tended to link servility to effeminacy.¹¹⁰ With these thoughts in mind, let us conclude this chapter by briefly examining how the growing dominance of the emperor and his supporters influenced the masculine identity of those within the ruling hierarchy, as well as the Roman nobility, who as we have seen were playing less

commanders of the Roman military, and somewhat scornful of the supposed military might of both the allied and enemy “barbarians”.

¹⁰⁴ Contra Jones (*Later Roman Empire*, 1037). Alan Cameron (*Barbarians and Politics*, 128) rejects the idea that this speech was ever given in front of Arcadius.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g. Eunapius, frag. 62, 65.

¹⁰⁶ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 49-69.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 137.

¹⁰⁸ E.g., Herodotus, *Histories* 7.107, Plato, *Republic* 579a.

¹⁰⁹ Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 142.

¹¹⁰ For the use of these *topoi* in Eunapius: Sacks, “Eunapius’ History”, 63; and for Procopius, see Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 145.

significant roles within the military and administrative branches of the Later Roman government.

Military Aristocracy

Scholars have long understood that the Later Empire experienced the growing accumulation of political power into the hands of the imperial family and their allies, Roman and non-Roman.¹¹¹ This process, which one historian labels the “personalization of late Roman politics” led to the breakdown of the three-tiered system of Roman society that had allowed the leisured classes to coexist “with a professional class of officials and soldiers whose primary purpose was to maintain the smooth working and safety of the Empire”.¹¹² The internal court politics discussed earlier in this chapter played a part in these developments. Threatened by their rivals from within the Roman aristocracy, emperors in this period increased their independent authority by taking steps to protect themselves by gathering at the higher levels of public service a cadre of relatives, foreign mercenaries, and eunuchs who frequently owed their survival to the ruling regime.¹¹³ As a reward for their loyalty, the emperor regularly appointed many of these “new men” into the rapidly expanded fourth-century senatorial orders in Rome and Constantinople.¹¹⁴

These measures meant that many Romans from the nobility became more isolated from intimate contact with the emperor and the upper echelons of imperial service. Throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, eunuchs, monks, barbarian generals, and the emperors’ female relatives took on positions of influence held traditionally by these men.¹¹⁵ Although the upper-crust of Roman society continued to be esteemed for its noble heritage, vast wealth, and refined lifestyle, members of the leisured class like the Roman senator Symmachus (ca. 340 – ca. 405), became increasingly cut off from taking an active role in the administration and the day-to-day decision-making that shaped the policy of the Empire. Those in power increasingly assigned these important political roles to those

¹¹¹ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 194-95, 234-35.

¹¹² Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 234.

¹¹³ Eunuchs and “barbarians” in positions of prominence were particularly vulnerable to execution during political crises or regime changes. For the expendability of eunuchs, see Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 176-96, and for the vulnerability of senior “barbarian” military commanders, Williams and Friell, *Empire at Bay*, 148.

¹¹⁴ A thorough discussion of the expansion of the senatorial orders in the West and the East is found in Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 523-62.

¹¹⁵ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 50-55.

within the imperial inner-circle, men who hailed from the military and the increasingly powerful Christian Church.¹¹⁶

By accumulating such power into his hands, the emperor, along with members of his family and the Roman army under his control, increasingly monopolised military glory and martial excellence, while the increasingly demilitarised land owning classes focused on more intellectual forms of men's self-fashioning.¹¹⁷ As stressed earlier, however, the separation of the upper classes from the highest levels of military service and the corridors of political power was never complete.¹¹⁸ The careers of military men who hailed from the upper classes like the Eastern Roman generals Sebastianus and Victor in the latter half of the fourth century, and fifth-century Western Roman generals such as Aëtius and Boniface, stand as reminders that men from the Late Roman aristocracy continued to hold positions of authority within the civil and military administration of the Later Empire.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, the rise of a long series of emperors in the fourth and fifth centuries who owed their elevation to military or dynastic connections, and not to their rapport with the aristocracy, helped to create an inner circle of ruling elites dependent upon their own interpersonal relationships for their positions of power.¹²⁰ The growing dominance of these alliances also contributed to the formation in this era of what some specialists call a "separate military aristocracy", based not so much on ethnicity or class, but on ties of loyalty and good old-fashioned martial virtues.¹²¹ This new hierarchy welcomed successful barbarians, who had commonly risen from within the ranks of the army.¹²²

¹¹⁶ For example, when discussing Symmachus' famous dispute with the bishop Ambrose over the removal of the Altar of Victory from Rome, Peter Heather (*Politics and Philosophy*, 35) suggests that the real decision making occurred behind the scenes, a place from which these pagan aristocrats found themselves increasingly cut off.

¹¹⁷ An excellent discussion on the Roman nobility of the Late Roman era cultivating less martial pursuits is found in S.J.B. Barnish, "Transformation and Survival in the Western Senatorial Aristocracy, c. A.D. 400-700", *Papers of the British School at Rome* 56 (1988): 120-55.

¹¹⁸ On the continuing power wielded by the Eastern aristocracy, see Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 3-34, and for the West: John Mathews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, A.D. 364-425* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, 1-3, 30, 50. Cf. the remarks of Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 50.

¹¹⁹ For a list of Later Roman officeholders from the aristocracy, as well as a discussion of their participation in the civilian and military administration in the fourth century, Timothy Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), esp. 49-102, Ramsey MacMullen, *Corruption and Decline of Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), Appendix A.

¹²⁰ For the connections between the imperial family and these military strongmen, see Mathews, *Western Aristocracies*, 32-55, 88-100, and John Michael O'Flynn, *Generalissimos of the Western Roman Empire* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983).

¹²¹ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 191. In his account of the rise of a military aristocracy, Goffart relies heavily on the work of Alexander Demandt, "The Osmosis of Late Roman and Germanic Aristocracies", in *Das Reich und die Barbaren*, ed. E. Chrysos and A. Swartz (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 75-86.

Of course, like most “barbarians” in the Later Empire, these men remained far removed from the fur-clad wild marauders portrayed frequently in the ancient and modern historiographical tradition. Barbarian elites serving in the Late Roman army often dressed in contemporary Roman fashions and possessed magnificent villas decorated with the latest mosaic floors and furnishings.¹²³ As one study on the Late Roman army puts it, “the Germans who attained positions of authority in the army and the civilian office were more Roman than the Romans, attuned to Roman civilisation and attuned to Roman life”.¹²⁴

These men too could hope to attain marriage alliances with the imperial family and foreign dynasties, and if they could not aspire to become emperors themselves, they could dream to have their sons become contenders for the purple.¹²⁵ By 399, in fact, all three Eastern *magistri militum* (top-level commanders) were Goths—Alaric, Gainas, and Fravitta—while in the West, the son of a Roman mother and a Vandal father, Stilicho, served as the commander-in-chief of the Western army, and as guardian and the true power behind the titular Western emperor, Honorius. Even though, early in the fifth century, the ruling classes in the Eastern half of the Empire took steps to curb this dependence on these foreigners by curtailing the power of the military and reducing the size of the force, throughout the fifth century, foreigners continued to hold important civil and military positions within both the Eastern and Western administrations.¹²⁶ Certainly, the Roman and non-Roman associates of this “military aristocracy” represent the primary players and representatives of ideal manly conduct in the secular texts that have survived from the early Byzantine period.

¹²² Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27.

¹²³ Late Romans too began to embrace “barbarian” modes of dress. For the merging of Roman and “barbarian” customs during the Later Empire, see Mary Harlow, “*Clothes Maketh the Man: Power Dressing and Elite Masculinity in the Later Roman World*,” in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 44-69.

¹²⁴ Southern and Dixon, *Late Roman Army*, 50.

¹²⁵ These alliances were also open to foreign leaders. For some examples from the Later Empire, see Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 195-96.

¹²⁶ On these reforms, see Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 248. Note, however, some convincing insights and criticisms made by Walter Goffart (*Barbarian Tides*, 299, n. 72) rejecting Liebeschuetz’s contention that the Eastern Empire survived because of these reforms and that the Western Empire declined because of its continued reliance on non-Roman military generalissimos. As Goffart points out, we must remember that the Alanic general Aspar and his family played dominant roles during the reigns of Theodosius II, Marcian and Leo I. So too did the fifth-century army in the West depend heavily on Roman military commanders such as Castinus, Felix, Boniface, and Aëtius.

Though the sources from this era maintained a generally hostile attitude towards the foreigners in the imperial service,¹²⁷ it is important to remember that it usually only took a “barbarian” two generations to become “Roman”.¹²⁸ A “heroic man” [ἄνθρωπος ἡρωικός] in this age could be either a “native” or a “barbarian” serving in the Western or Eastern Roman armies.¹²⁹ There seems to be a contradiction between the xenophobia we find in some of the Late Roman sources, and the reality of increased accommodation. On this paradox, Walter Goffart comments:

Hostility to barbarians was built into the language; almost by definition, barbarians stood for what imperial citizens shunned. But literature does not directly mirror everyday reality. Sheer aversion was not a practical attitude in an age of rapid social and cultural change. The admission of elite barbarians into the Roman military elite was an established fact in the third century and only increased as time went on.¹³⁰

To be sure, the boundaries between Roman and foreigner had always been surmountable. In contrast to the Greeks, the Romans’ multiracial Empire, along with their tradition of inclusion, had contributed to a somewhat more nuanced notion of foreigners’ “otherness”. From the era of the Republic, the growth of Rome had depended upon its soldier’s ability to conquer foreign lands and make Romans out of barbarians.¹³¹ Although one should not discount all the negative attitudes towards foreigners in the Roman service, visions of a “pure” Roman state like those found in Synesius and Eunapius appear to be based on traditional prejudicial attitudes of the upper classes, particular political crises, and rhetorical practices, as much as a conviction that all of these foreigners needed to be eliminated from the armies. In reality, even a staunch critic of foreigners, like Eunapius, could praise a “barbarian” such as Fravitta for his martial virtues, “proper” religious views,

¹²⁷ For the general hostility of the majority of Romans towards the appointment of these non-Romans to positions of high command, see Alan Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 371.

¹²⁸ A point made in Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 77.

¹²⁹ See, e.g. Olympiodorus, frag. 40.

¹³⁰ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 192.

¹³¹ For a selection of essays on Greek attitudes towards barbarians, from the classical period to the later Middle Ages, Thomas Harrison, ed. *Greeks and Barbarians* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Romans, like the Augustan geographer, Strabo (63/64 BC – ca. AD 24), stressed that barbarism was an escapable condition. In his writings (e.g., *Geography*, 2.5.26, 3.38) he showed that by bringing good government and civilisation to barbarian peoples, Roman imperialism could overcome some of the environmental and social factors that had contributed to these non-Roman peoples’ “savage” personalities. For these views in Strabo’s writings, see Michael Maas, “Strabo and Procopius”, in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, ed. Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romney (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 71-75.

and proven loyalty to the Roman state.¹³² Undeniably, in the aftermath of the disastrous military defeat at Adrianople in 378, that saw the near annihilation of the Eastern Roman army and the death of the Eastern Emperor Valens, those in power realised that the security of the state depended on the institution of a more conciliatory policy towards foreign peoples than former emperors had had the luxury to employ.¹³³

One finds, as well, that even conservative intellectuals in the fourth and fifth centuries supported the separation of the civilian and military branches of the imperial administration.¹³⁴ In his famous debate with a “Greek” expatriate who had joined the Huns, the fifth-century diplomat and historian, Priscus of Panium, countered the former citizen’s claim that the Roman state had fallen into decline because of its citizens’ rejection of their martial legacy. The Greek explained that, because of his wealth, after his capture when the Huns sacked his *polis* he was allowed to prove his worth in combat, and, having proven his “valour” [ἀριστεύσαντα], was granted his freedom. The Huns accepted him as an “elite” person and permitted him to marry and to have a family. The Greek then contrasts the choice he had under the Huns with what he saw as the plight of many Roman men within the Late Empire. Like earlier Roman historians, the Greek hinted that many Roman men had been enervated by their inability to protect themselves and the Empire from both internal and external threats. He blamed the Eastern Empire’s current troubles (early in the 440s) on the emperors’ ban on men carrying weapons and therefore allowing a professional army to fight for the Romans’ freedom:

But amongst the Romans, since on account of their tyrants not all men carry weapons, they place their hope of safety in others and are thus easily destroyed in war. Moreover, those who do use arms are endangered still more by the cowardice [κακία] of their generals, who are unable to sustain a war.¹³⁵

In response, Priscus supported the status quo by extolling the benefits of a division of labour within the Empire. In his mind, the “wise and good men” of the Roman polity had “ordained that some should be guardians of the laws and that others should attend to weaponry and undergo military training, with their sole object that they be ready for battle

¹³² Eunapius, frag. 69.2. Fravitta’s support of Hellenic religious practices for Eunapius showed his “Roman-ness,” whilst the dispatching of his fellow Goth, Gainas, proved his loyalty. Cf. a similar view of Fravitta by the largely anti-barbarian ecclesiastical historian Socrates (*HE* 6.1).

¹³³ For the political reasoning behind Theodosius I’s policy of “appeasement” towards the Goths and other foreign peoples after 378, see Williams and Friell, *Empire at Bay*, 23-35.

¹³⁴ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 21.16.3.

¹³⁵ Full debate in Priscus, frag. 11.2.405-510

and go out confidently to war as if some familiar exercise". Stressing his primary point that not all Roman men needed to prove their prowess on the battlefield, Priscus surmised that battles were best left in the hands of those trained to fight. Priscus, in fact, criticised the Huns for forcing an "inexperienced man" to fight in battle, claiming, "The Romans are wont to treat even their household slaves better".¹³⁶ The dialogue ends with the weeping Greek agreeing, "The laws were fair and the Roman Polity was good, but that the authorities were ruining it by not taking the same thought for it as those of old".¹³⁷

Though some scholars question the historical accuracy of this exchange, it provides us with further evidence that Romans from the educated classes had come to terms with having a professional army made up of Romans and non-Romans. This sentiment, however, does not suggest that men like Priscus rejected the importance of martial virtues for both the well-being of the Empire and the shaping of heroic codes of manliness. The opposite actually seems true. Throughout the fragments that survive, Priscus expressed his admiration of the courage and manliness of soldiers who stood up to barbarians like the Huns. He goes to great lengths, in fact, to contrast those he considered effeminate appeasers, with the courageous, and manly conduct of those who faced the Huns in diplomacy and in battle with traditional Roman élan.¹³⁸

We may also question the argument made by one recent study on Late Roman masculinity that the barbarisation of the Late Roman army led to its decreased efficiency and reliability.¹³⁹ The non-Romans who served within the Late Roman armies did so, on the whole, with remarkable loyalty and reliability, even when fighting peoples from their own ethnic grouping. As A.H.M. Jones noted nearly half a century ago, this dependability is not surprising considering their high level of assimilation to Roman ideals, and the reality that the multiplicity of ethnic groups who served in the Roman forces shared little sense of tribal loyalty.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ This is a reference to the traditional Roman prohibition on slaves joining the army, a ban that was only ignored in dire circumstances.

¹³⁷ Priscus, frag. 11.2.405-53. In what remains of his reply, Priscus failed to dispute the Greek's accusations concerning the cowardice and unwarlike qualities of Theodosius II and his generals, suggesting he agreed that the current political turmoil was due to these men's poor military record, rather than an indication of larger failure of the Roman military and political system.

¹³⁸ For the cowardice and the unmanliness of Theodosius II and his generals: Priscus, frag. 1.3, 3.3.10-15. For the martial qualities of the emperor Marcian, Eastern Roman soldiers, the Asimuntians, and Attila: Priscus, frag. 5.18-20, 9.3. 40-80.

¹³⁹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 43-49.

¹⁴⁰ For these points: Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 621-622, Southern and Dixon, *Late Roman Army*, 50, 69-71.

Finally, we must reject the idea proposed by Mathew Kuefler that Late Roman men saw the disasters of the fifth century as evidence that the barbarian enemies who threatened the Empire had become better soldiers, or as Kuefler puts it, “manlier than the Romans”.¹⁴¹ Depictions of the Later Empire like those found in Kuefler bring to mind the image of cowed unmanly Roman aristocrats handing over their lands to “magnificently armoured barbarians” that so angers scholars like Walter Goffart. As Goffart reminds us, “The ‘fall’ of the West Roman Empire is not now (perhaps not ever) envisioned as a military defeat by brave barbarians of enervated troops that had lost the will to fight”.¹⁴²

Most scholarship on the Late Roman army agree with this assessment, contending that when properly led, the Eastern and the Western Roman armies continued to maintain a distinct advantage in direct confrontations with their foreign enemies.¹⁴³ Ancient and modern historians have observed that, with few notable exceptions, the supposed “martial spirit” and superior manliness of the foreign barbarians proved “no match for the disciplined military face of Rome”.¹⁴⁴ Some Late Romans could dismiss even the supposed physical advantage that these barbarian soldiers held over their Roman counterparts as insignificant.¹⁴⁵ In his discussion on the Goths who settled within the Empire, Eunapius claimed that many Romans mocked them because of “their physique, which was excessively tall, too heavy for their feet to bear and pinched at the waists like the insects Aristotle describes”.¹⁴⁶

Laudatory accounts of military men certainly fill the pages of the secular sources that have survived from this age.¹⁴⁷ As we will see in the chapters that follow, much of the early

¹⁴¹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 48.

¹⁴² Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 28.

¹⁴³ Southern and Dixon, *Later Roman Army*, 177; see also Heather, *Fall of the Roman Empire*, 446, who argues that the dual problems of the Hunnic invasions combined with political infighting in the fifth-century Western Empire led to a perfect storm of calamity, whereby “the barbarian peoples had just enough military might to carve out their enclaves”.

¹⁴⁴ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 25.

¹⁴⁵ On the perceived superior physicality of the barbarians in comparison to the Romans, see Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 49. With the large percentage of non-Roman soldiers and mercenaries in the Late and Eastern Roman army, one might interpret this contrast as another rhetorical commonplace.

¹⁴⁶ Eunapius, frag. 37.

¹⁴⁷ The fifth-century historian Socrates (*HE* 5.25.11-12.), for instance, expressed his belief in the superiority of the “native” Roman soldiers in Theodosius I’s army in comparison to those Roman and enemy troops he considered barbarians. As has been argued in recent studies, and will be discussed in chapter 5, Procopius on the whole saw the Eastern Roman soldiers as not only better and more organised fighters than their Gothic enemies, but in most cases more courageous and manlier.

Byzantine literature that survives from the fourth to the sixth centuries articulates long-held notions of heroism and masculinity, whereby Roman military men like the Late fourth-century general Sebastianus and the sixth-century commander Belisarius represented true exemplars of Roman virtue and manliness. So while the Christianisation of the Roman Empire remains arguably the most important event in Late Antiquity, it is a mistake to conclude its establishment led to the immediate decline of traditional notions of masculinity based, in part, on martial virtues and the xenophobic belief in the right for Roman masculine dominion over non-Romans. Contrary to the arguments made by some recent social historians, most Roman men in the early Byzantine Empire did not have the luxury or the desire to contemplate whether Christians fighting spiritual battles or aristocratic intellectuals were more courageous or “manlier” than actual Roman soldiers fighting in the “real” world. In fact, despite the military challenges faced by the Eastern Roman army throughout the early Byzantine period, and the disappearance of the Western army in the fifth century, many Byzantines continued to believe in the superior manliness and courage of their soldiers.¹⁴⁸ We can therefore question one recent scholar’s assertion that, along with the emperor, “the holy man and the bishop were the most powerful and evocative figures in Late Antiquity”.¹⁴⁹ As scholars like Warren Treadgold have suggested, sentiments like the one expressed in the preceding passage are not surprising considering that many recent studies on the period tend to rely heavily on Christian panegyrics and hagiographies for their conclusions, while largely ignoring ancient secular texts that offer a far more jaded view of monks, bishops, and holy men.¹⁵⁰

Though I would not go as far as Treadgold in rejecting the relevance of these Christian “heroes” for contributing to our understanding of early Byzantine society and its diverse constructions of masculinity, it is vital to balance these often hagiographical Christian accounts with the more customary attitudes we find in the secular, and indeed some Christian sources, praising military virtues as an essential aspect of Roman heroic manliness. It was, in fact, the Eastern Roman intellectuals’ ability to continue to communicate long-established martial ideals as a key barometer of ideal manly conduct

¹⁴⁸ In doing so, I align myself with recent scholarship refuting Gleason’s assertion that Roman elites had abandoned physical prowess centred on ἀνδρεία in battle as “a major source of masculine identity”. See, e.g. Onno van Nijf, “Athletics, *Andreia*, and the Askesis-Culture”, in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Boston: Brill, 2003), 263-86.

¹⁴⁹ Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 3.

¹⁵⁰ Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, preface, 8-9. For similar attitudes, see Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 1-60, Ward-Perkins, *Fall*, 1-12.

that helped to maintain a continuing sense of *Romanitas* throughout the Byzantine era. Empire itself was based on traditional themes like these.

Chapter III

The Manly Emperor: Conceptualisations of Manliness, Courage, and Ideal Leadership at the Turn of the Fourth and the Fifth Century



(Plate 4)

When you were born fierce *Germania* trembled along the Rhine's full course,
Caucasus shook his forests in fear, and the people of Meroë, confessing your
divinity, laid aside their quivers and drew the useless arrows from their hair.

Claudian, *Panegyric on the Third Consulship of Honorius* (trans. Maurice Platnauer)

The diptych above depicts the Emperor Honorius (ruled 393-423) as an ideal Roman military leader and man.¹ Decked out in ornate armour and holding a labarum in his right hand, which proclaims, "In the name of Christ, may you always be victorious (*IN NOMINE XRI VINCAS SEMPER*)", the young leader appears as a model Christian emperor living the *vita militaris*.² Literary propaganda originating from the Western court in Ravenna focused as well on propagating the young emperor's martial reputation. The court's chief

¹ Alan Cameron suggests that this diptych depicts a Roman military victory in 406 over a Gothic band, led by the pagan Radagaisus, see Alan Cameron, "The Probus Diptych and Christian Apologetic," in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, ed. Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romney (Leuven: Peeters, 2007).

² For the melding of Christian and classical "triumphal" elements in Late Roman imperial imagery, see Jas Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 84-87, Joseph D. Alchermes, "Art and Architecture in the Age of Justinian", in *CCAG*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 343-45.

propagandist the poet Claudian, for example, praised a juvenile Honorius for his hunger to enter “in the bloody storm of battle” and to trample “upon the slaughtered bodies of his foes”.³ Yet, despite the visual and literary representations of military valour found in the examples above, Honorius never fought in battle, and his forces faced frequent setbacks at the hands of both external and internal enemies. Indeed, sixth-century Byzantine intellectuals attempting to explain the fifth-century disasters that had led to the loss of nearly two-thirds of Roman territory laid the blame squarely on the “negligence” of Honorius and what they describe as the “effeminate upbringing” of his Western imperial successors.⁴

This seeming paradox between the images of ideal martial manliness disseminated by the fifth-century Roman emperors and their supporters, and the reality of the increasing demilitarisation of the Roman leadership, serves as a focal point for this chapter and the next. Though we avoid entering into the centuries old debate of why, or even whether, “Rome” fell, these chapters seek to understand how the declining military role of the emperor after the death of Theodosius I in 395 influenced literary representations of idealised leadership that had long depended on the intimate connections between an emperor’s courage, his manliness, and the well-being of the Empire. In particular, we investigate how the classicising and ecclesiastical historians, chiefly from the Eastern half of the Empire, utilised an essential Greek term for manliness and courage, ἀνδρεία, in their depictions of the Later Roman emperors. The chapter opens by examining how secular historians writing at the opening of the fifth century depicted the defeat at Adrianople in 378 as a symptom of a crisis of Roman manliness. It then assesses the ways these and other Roman intellectuals represented the Emperor Julian as a prototypical “manly emperor” (ἀνδρεῖος βασιλεύς). The discussion revolves around these primary questions: first, how did these secular historians use Hellenic notions of ἀνδρεία as a means of promoting classical notions of manliness and leadership that would appeal to both Christians and non-Christians members of their select reading audience? Secondly, how were depictions of virtue and vice linked to these writers’ perceptions of manly or unmanly conduct? Finally, how valid are some recent studies that suggest that the demilitarisation of the position of emperor in the fifth century and the rapid Christianisation of the Empire in

³ Claudian, “Panegyric on the Third Consulship of The Emperor Honorius (396 CE)”, in *The Poems of Claudian*, vol. 1 (ed. and trans. Maurice Platnauer, LCL, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921-32]).

⁴ On the “effeminate upbringing” [θηλυς παιδεία] and “laziness” [ράθυμία] of the last Western emperors as a causation for the barbarians’ victories: Procopius, *Wars* 3.3.9-16, Zosimus, *New History* 4.50, Justinian, *Nov.*, 30. 11, John Lydus, *On Powers* 2.11.

this era led to a decreased emphasis on martial and typically masculine qualities like ἀνδρεία, and an increased focus on non-gendered ideology based on “Christian” personal qualities like piety (εὐσεβία, *pietas*)?⁵

Adrianople and the Revival of Classical Historiography

On a sweltering August day in 378, a Roman army led by the Eastern emperor Valens (ruled 364-378) found itself surrounded by a large force of Goths. Wearied after a long march out from the gates of the Thracian city of Adrianople in the blistering summer sun, and let down by the Roman cavalry’s failure to break the Gothic lines, the fatigued Romans nevertheless pressed forward to meet the advance of a confident and well-rested enemy. The last great Roman historian writing in Latin, Ammianus provides a vivid account of what happened next:

The ground covered with streams of blood whirled their slippery foothold from under them, so they could only strain every nerve to sell their lives dearly; and they opposed the onrushing foe with such great resolution that some fell by the weapons of their own comrades. Finally, when the whole scene was discoloured with the hue of dark blood, and wherever men turned their eyes heaps of slain met them, they trod upon the bodies of the dead without mercy.⁶

In Ammianus’ telling, the Romans faced their deaths with typical Roman courage; yet, as the sun set the triumphant Goths cut down Valens and the remainder of the Roman soldiers who had not fled. As a result, in a single afternoon, sixteen regiments constituting two thirds of the core of the Eastern Roman army fell, including a large number of its elite officer corps.⁷ Reflecting upon this defeat, Ammianus lamented, “The annals record no such massacre of a battle except the one at Cannae”.⁸

Modern scholars too point to Adrianople as a key turning point in Roman history, claiming that this battle challenged the Romans’ “assumption of ultimate military superiority over the barbarians”.⁹ Although it is important not to overstate the long-term military impact of the battle, the deep impression the defeat left on many Roman intellectuals of the day is clear. Certainly several early Byzantine historians agreed with their modern counterparts

⁵ Holum, *Theodosian Emperresses*, 79, 90-95, Heather and Moncur, *Philosophy and Empire*, 230-33.

⁶ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 31.1.6 (trans. Rolfe).

⁷ Heather and Moncur, *Philosophy and Empire*, 205.

⁸ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 31.13.18 (trans. Rolfe).

⁹ Mathews, *Western Aristocracies*, 99.

concerning the importance of this battle, but their reasoning for the defeat, as well as their understanding of the realities it reflected differ somewhat from current academics. An analysis of the tactical and the strategic errors made by the Roman military leadership played a role in their narratives. So too do traditional Greco-Roman expositions on the manly virtues and unmanly vices of the Roman leadership and its soldiers make up a key part of their analysis. These ancient writers tended to depict the setback at Adrianople, as well as the other political and social challenges faced by the Empire at the turn of the fifth century, as failures of Roman courage and manliness on the part of certain members of the Late Roman imperial leadership and the aristocracy. Whereas the ecclesiastical historians of this era typically attributed the military misfortunes of the Western and Eastern halves of the Empire on the failure by some to follow “correct Christian belief”,¹⁰ many of the secular histories produced from the late fourth to the second half of the sixth century present these setbacks as an indication that certain members of the Roman populace had failed to live up to the stringent codes of masculine behaviour that had long defined ideal leaders and manly men.

Eunapius and Ammianus

To illustrate the pervasiveness of this paradigm in the writings of the early Byzantine classicising historians, I begin by investigating how two important practitioners of this genre, Ammianus and Eunapius, depicted the events leading to Adrianople as a reflection of a crisis of Roman manliness.¹¹ Ammianus, a native of Antioch and a former soldier in the Eastern Roman army, composed in his adopted city of Rome a grand history in classical Latin depicting events from 96 CE to Valens death at Adrianople. Eunapius, born to aristocratic parents in Sardis in Western Anatolia, helped to revive a quiescent Greek classical historiographical tradition by writing in Attic Greek a history of the Roman world from 270 to 404.¹² The two historians shared more than just a similar drive to revive classical historiography as a means of commenting on contemporary affairs. Both authors

¹⁰ See, e.g. Theodoret, *HE* 6.40, Sozomen, *HE* 6.40, Socrates, *HE* 4.37, Rufinus, *HE* 2.13.

¹¹ Timothy Barnes, *The Sources of the Historiae Augusta* (Brussels: Latomus, 1978), 117-20, and John Mathews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 164-79, Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 669-671, contend that Eunapius' history was published before Ammianus' work, and used by him as a source. Treadgold (*Byzantine Historians*, 77), and Francois Paschoud, *Eunape, Olympiodore, Zosime: Scripta Minora* (Bari, 2006), 153-99, argue against both of these points. For this theme in Eunapius, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 86.

¹² The circumstances of their compositions, as well as the current historiographical debates concerning these two histories are summarised in Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 47-89.

first published their histories in the tumultuous last decade of the fourth century, and their conservative perspective on Late Roman society seems to have appealed to a similarly select reading audience, a group whose social influence far outweighed its relatively small numbers.¹³ Though Eunapius' largely anti-Christian history has never been noted for its objectivity, originality or attention to detail, for our purposes its emphasis on the qualities of a few leading men as the primary movers of events provides important material by which to observe the views of a segment of the population disillusioned with the direction the Empire had taken in the decades before and after Adrianople.¹⁴

Warning their privileged reading audiences from the senatorial and curial ranks about the dangers of abandoning the manly virtues that the historians believed had made Rome great appears to have served as an important aim for both writers. As one recent study argues, Ammianus had composed his history as a way to shame the men of the city of Rome to reform their unmanly ways.¹⁵ We can go further. Although Ammianus reserved his harshest criticisms for individuals from the highest echelons of Roman society, I would suggest that the historian aimed this gendered warning at his cultivated readers throughout the Empire.¹⁶ For such a purpose, the defeat at Adrianople made a fitting climax. Indeed, in the opening to his narrative of the battle, Ammianus cautions his audience about the dangers of the "effeminate life" [*vitae mollitie*], a licentious lifestyle, which the historian claimed had become typical of many of his contemporaries from the Roman upper classes.¹⁷ This "debauched" way of life, according to Ammianus, made a

¹³ For the social background of the classicising historians' reading audiences, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 71, 376. According to A.H.M. Jones, by the close of the fourth century, the entire Empire had around 2,000 senators and 250,000 *curiales*. A.H.M. Jones, "The Caste System of the Later Roman Empire", *Eirene* (1970): 79-96.

¹⁴ Most modern historians, e.g. Walter Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 77-86, Blockley, *Classicising Historians I*, 18-20, Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 89, agree with the ninth-century Byzantine intellectual Photius' declaration (Eunapius frag. 1) that Eunapius' history took a strong stance against Christianity and the Christian emperors. Though cf. Sacks, "Meaning", who argues for a more even handed approach towards Christians and non-Christians on the part of Eunapius in both editions of his history, and even Treadgold (*Byzantine Historians*, 83) who claims that Eunapius eliminated much of the anti-Christian sentiment found in the first edition of history in the second edition, published around 404, with the aim of "reaching a wider audience".

¹⁵ Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 70.

¹⁶ Copies of Ammianus' history were available in the Eastern half of the Empire. In opposition to Treadgold (*Byzantine Historians*, 70), I take Ammianus' suggestion that his history might never find an audience as a ritualised gesture common in classicising histories, and in reality his assertion seems to be another dig at the Roman upper classes, whose libraries, the historian claimed (*Res gestae* 14.6.18) were "shut up forever like tombs".

¹⁷ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 31.5.14 (my trans.).

Roman recovery from such defeat all the more difficult.¹⁸ In the past, proclaimed the historian, Romans “high and low alike” had overcome “calamitous losses” as devastating as Adrianople through a combination of their “communal ardour” [*unanimanti ardore*], “valour” [*virtus*], and a willingness to die protecting the state.¹⁹ Wishing to contrast this golden past with a gloomy present, the historian described what he saw as the increasingly unmanly makeup of the typical Roman aristocrat. In stark comparison to their “austere” and “warlike” ancestors, many men from the aristocracy observed by the historian in Rome had seemed more interested in attending extravagant feasts and parading around the city in ostentatious clothing while surrounded by throngs of grovelling servants.²⁰ The Romans had long seen these types of behaviours as typical of women and unmanly men.²¹ Ammianus lamented that whereas their forefathers had acted “as skilful directors of battles” leading their brave and manly soldiers, many of the nobility of his day instead spent their time arranging banquets and assembling bands of eunuchs, which he disparaged as “troops of mutilated men”.²² Having abandoned the political and military offices that had helped them to both hone and express their own manliness, these unmanly aristocrats could no longer be expected to lead real soldiers into battle, but merely command eunuchs, described by Ammianus’ contemporary, Claudian, as an “unhappy band. . . whom the male sex has discarded and the female will not adopt”.²³

Like other literary sources published in Rome at this time, Ammianus in this digression and others seemed to be making a connection between the increasing

¹⁸ Gavin Kelly (*Ammianus*, 27-8) suggests that this passage, and others like it in his history, reflect Ammianus’ dissatisfaction with the military response by the imperial leadership in the decades after Adrianople. I agree with this assessment, but reject his further contention that Ammianus’ castigation of the Roman nobility and the imperial leadership after Julian represents an attack on the rapid Christianisation of the Empire.

¹⁹ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 31.5.14 (my trans.).

²⁰ The Romans had no exact equivalent for the English term “aristocracy”; when describing these men from the upper crust of Roman society, Ammianus used the more specific terms of *nobiles* (14.6.21, 14.6.24) and *nobilitas* (28.4.6). For the highly stratified social structure of the Later Roman Empire in the West, see Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 11, 354.

²¹ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 16.6. 7-12. On the traditional Roman connection of “lavish” dressing on the part of men with effeminacy, see Harlow, *Clothes Maketh the Man*, 46-69.

²² Ammianus, *Res gestae* 14.6.17 (trans. Hamilton).

²³ Claudian, *In Eutropium* (ed. J. Hall [Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1985]; trans. Maurice Platnauer LCL, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922]) 1.466-7.

prevalence of eunuchs and the growth of Roman decadence and unmanliness.²⁴ As Kathryn Ringrose explains in her recent study on eunuchs in the Byzantine Empire, “The appearance and behaviour of eunuchs represented the antithesis of appropriate male behaviour. The eunuch was scorned as shameful, neither man nor woman, a monstrosity, an outsider, and pitifully womanlike”.²⁵ The very ease by which a man could quite literally be cut off from the “source” of his sexual identity troubled many Late Roman writers. Claudian quipped that the knife makes “males womanish”.²⁶ It seemed a very simple process indeed for a man to become a non-man. As Peter Brown remarks, “The physical appearance and the reputed character of eunuchs acted as constant reminders that the male body was a fearsomely plastic thing”.²⁷

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Late Roman literature expressed much of its hostility towards eunuchs in gendered terms.²⁸ Moreover, as Kuefler points out, any Roman ruler or aristocrat who relied on eunuchs, whether officials within the imperial bureaucracy, or as personal servants within a private household, left himself open to attacks on his own manliness.²⁹ It is probable then that Ammianus used the anecdote above, as well as others in his history about eunuchs, as edifying tales to expose what he saw as the increasing emasculation of some members of the Roman nobility.

Of course the Romans’ adulation of their past guaranteed that contemporary achievements would often pale in comparison with the “heroic” deeds of their ancestors. Ammianus followed a long line of Roman historians who rebuked members of the land owning classes for failing to match the standards of their pugnacious ancestors.³⁰ Roman

²⁴ See, e.g. Claudian, *In Eutropium* 112-41, 335-41, 409. For Ammianus’ attitude towards eunuchs, see G. Sidéris, “La comédie des castrats, Ammien Marcellin et les eunuques, entre eunocophobie et admiration”, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire* 78 (2000): 681-717.

²⁵ Kathryn Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 12. On how the increased prevalence of eunuchs in both halves of the Empire during the fourth and fifth centuries provided writers with a means to comment on a perceived crisis of masculinity, see Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 31-36.

²⁶ Claudian, *In Eutropium* 1.48.

²⁷ Brown, *Body and Society*, 10.

²⁸ We begin to see a more positive attitude towards eunuchs in the literature of the sixth century. For this shift in the Early and Middle Byzantine Empire, see Shaun Tougher, “Social Transformation, Gender Transformation?” in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 70-82.

²⁹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 63-4.

³⁰ See, e.g. Polybius, *Histories* 31.25, Herodian, *BH* 2.2. 3-6.

literature had a tradition of presenting Roman masculinity in a perpetual state of crisis.³¹ As already noted, for the ancient Romans the dichotomy between virtue and vice was often a gendered one. The traits and actions depicted in the *exempla* above certainly include many of the stock behaviours found in typical Roman literary depictions of “unmanly” [*muliebris, semivir, enervatus*] or “effeminate” [*effeminatus, femineo, mollis*] men (for the ancient Romans these two concepts were often interchangeable).³² Military metaphors imagining the ideal manly Roman man as a soldier, intellectual or a public official, and the typical unmanly Roman man as a non-martial, uneducated, politically disengaged citizen basking in the lap of civilised luxury, had long served as stock element in Roman invective.³³ In fact, current scholarly consensus largely rejects Ammianus’ depiction of the Late Roman Western aristocracy as a lethargic group of men shut off from political power.³⁴ It is probable then that some of this negative attitude towards members of the Roman *nobilitas* reflect the conservative historian’s reliance on such ritualised themes. His history unquestionably provides examples of men from the Roman upper classes leading soldiers, acting courageously, and displaying the political and military virtues that had long epitomised manliness in a highly male-centric culture.³⁵ We also see elsewhere in his history Ammianus praising the rigid separation of the civil and the military administration.³⁶

³¹ Burrus, *Begotten Not Made*, 19.

³² Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 25.

³³ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 3, 55-61. Cf. Sozomen (*HE* 9.6.5-6) attributing Alaric’s sack of Rome in 410 on “divine anger that was retribution for their [Romans] great luxury and licentiousness”.

³⁴ John Mathew’s masterful work (*Western Aristocracies*) is particularly instructive on the Western Roman aristocracy at the turn of the fifth century, though compare his work with some of the revisionist views found in Michele Renee Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002). Intent on presenting the Roman elites as an “unmanly” group of men threatened and ultimately overcome by virile and manlier barbarian enemies, Kuefler (*Manly Eunuch*, 48-50) naturally rejects or ignores many of Mathew’s conclusions.

³⁵ Though it must be noted that the majority of these “ideal” men achieved their rank thorough their political and military achievements and they hailed, like the historian, primarily from the more modest levels of the land owning classes. See, e.g. Ammianus’ descriptions of his patron, Ursicinus, master of cavalry in the East (15.13, 18.6-8), and Eastern Roman military commanders such as Sebastianus (30.10, 31.11-13) and Victor (25.5, 26.5, 27.5, 30.2).

³⁶ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 21.16.3: “Valdeque raro contigerat, ut militarium aliquis ad civilian regenda transiret”.

This reality does not mean that we should reject Ammianus' numerous accounts of men's unmanly conduct as mere rhetorical flourish. These authors tended to conform to a Late Roman style of rhetoric for their portrayals of non-Roman peoples, and therefore the modern historian must use them with prudence. Quite often, the descriptions of non-Roman peoples found in these sources were not based on reality, but on contemporary or classical preconceptions of how barbarian peoples should behave.³⁷ I would suggest, however, that even rhetorical constructions might provide one with a more detailed picture of how Late Roman men saw both foreigners and themselves. For while this dependence on literary devices might hinder any attempt to uncover a foreign people's actual mores, these portrayals can provide a scholar with vital material by which to explore Roman notions of socially constructed concepts such as ethnicity and masculinity".³⁸ Ammianus, in fact, based many of these negative characterisations on his own experiences in his civilian and military life, and the majority of his descriptions were of men he knew, and as such, probably reveal observed behaviours and accurately relate the former soldier's uneasiness about the "frivolous" lifestyle of many upper-crust Romans. Ammianus throughout his history unquestionably reveals a deep inner resentment and hostility towards men from the highest levels of the Roman aristocracy.³⁹ These sentiments, however, were not based on the Christian religion of these men, as suggested by one recent analysis of Ammianus' history, but on the conservative intellectual's equation of the virtues of the soldier's or the statesman's life with his traditional perception of an ideal Roman man's masculine identity. To be sure, the former member of the elite officer corps of the *protectores domestici* provides his reader with a largely positive view of those Roman elites⁴⁰ and emperors, both Christian and non-Christian, who took on active roles in either the military or the political realms of Roman society.⁴¹

Eunapius too used his analysis of the battle of Adrianople to relate to his readers what he saw as the failings of the Empire's leadership after the fall of his hero, the

³⁷ It is important to note that this propensity to rely upon rhetorical models was not, however, universal, and one sees in the fifth and sixth-century histories of Priscus, Procopius and Menander, for example, more accurate ethnographies.

³⁸ Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 354.

³⁹ Mathews, *Ammianus*, 414-21.

⁴⁰ I use the more general term "elites" to denote those Romans who were wealthy enough to have received a secondary education.

⁴¹ See, e.g. Ammianus' (*Res gestae* 30.7.11) praise of the warlike qualities of the Christian emperor Valentinian I, an emperor whom the historian generally characterises negatively.

Emperor Julian.⁴² While only a small portion of Eunapius' history has survived, in what remains, it is clear that he saw the manliness or the unmanliness of the emperors and their soldiers as a key influence on the outcome of worldly events and the well-being of the Empire.⁴³

The surviving fragments of Eunapius' history suggest that he primarily attributed the defeat at Adrianople on the Emperor Valens and on those he considered to be the less hawkish members of the Eastern Roman military high command. To the historian, the decision by these men to “allow” a large group of Goths to settle on Roman lands in 376 triggered the disaster.⁴⁴ Eunapius explained that those in charge had not sanctioned this immigration with the well-being of the Empire in mind, but for their own selfish desires. To emphasise his point, Eunapius contrasted the virtuous and courageous Roman military men who wanted to uphold the “conventional” Roman foreign policy of forcefully blocking foreign peoples from freely settling onto Roman lands, and the more passive policy undertaken by Valens and his successors of letting the Goths settle on their own terms.⁴⁵

Eunapius claimed that Valens had granted the Goths “permission” to cross into Roman lands in order to supplement his own armies. In the historian's mind, at least the Eastern emperor had acted on a “jealous” desire to match his Western imperial rivals by bolstering the Eastern Roman army with Gothic recruits. Eunapius saved his harshest vitriol for those “pacifists” in the high command who had used the barbarian migration as an excuse to enrich themselves, while at the same time satisfying “their own lust” with their ill-gotten Gothic captives, both male and female. When describing the behaviour by some Roman commanders during the resettlement of the Goths within the borders of the Empire, Eunapius decried:

But one was smitten by a fair and pretty boy, another was taken by the beautiful wife of one of the captives, another was captivated by some maiden. . . . Quite simply, each of them decided that he would fill his house with domestics and his farm with

⁴² A.B. Breebaart, “Eunapius of Sardis and the Writing of History”, *Mnemosyne* 32 (1979): 373, suggests that for Eunapius, “after Julian's death deterioration (in the Roman Empire) set in and ἀρετή was in decline.

⁴³ The difficulty in creating “lost” histories from later citations is discussed in P.A. Brunt, “On Historical Fragments and Epitomes”, *Classical Quarterly* 30 (1980): 477-94. For the pivotal role of τρυφή (effeminacy, softness, luxury)—a common trait of unmanly men in Greek literature—in Eunapius' history, see Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 655-58.

⁴⁴ Cf. the similar sentiments Ammianus expressed in *Res gestae* 31.4.6 (trans. Rolfe): “With such stormy eagerness on the part of insistent men was the ruin of the Roman world brought in”. For modern historians' view of this migration and its impact upon the Empire, see Cameron, *Claudian*, 72-3, Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*, 16-17.

⁴⁵ Eunapius, frag. 42.

herdsman and sate his mad lust [ἐρωτικὴν λύσσαν] through the licence, which he enjoyed. Overpowered in this criminal and disgraceful manner, they received them (the Goths) with their weapons as if they were some long-standing benefactors or saviours.⁴⁶

Most of his fifth-century readers would have readily understood the gendered implications found in the attack above. By highlighting these officers' "mad lust", fondness for catamites, and uncontrolled avarice, Eunapius, I contend, sought to highlight these soldiers' unmanliness. Such gendered criticism should not surprise in a culture that often saw fighting and leadership skills as intrinsically masculine characteristics.⁴⁷ Ancient Greco-Roman moralists had long seen men's unrestrained sexual desire and/or activity towards both males and females as a sign of an effeminate lack of self-control.⁴⁸ Furthermore, as other studies on Greco-Roman masculinity have shown, classical sources frequently depicted the vice of avarice as a further tell-tale sign of an unmanly lack of self-mastery.⁴⁹

Later Stoic and Christian thinkers often conformed to these older models of masculinity. We certainly find much of the Late Roman literature articulating the notion that a man's ability to restrain his sexual desires towards either gender, as well as a mastery of other "natural" impulses, such as avarice, represented a means of attaining a "true" masculine identity.⁵⁰ As modern specialists on Later Roman sexuality have stressed, by the end of the fourth century, the tendency to equate a man's sexual restraint with notions of his manliness had grown even more pronounced.⁵¹ In this period, Christian and non-

⁴⁶ Eunapius, frag. 42. 31-40.

⁴⁷ Leslie Brubaker, "Sex and Gender in the Age of Justinian", in *CCAG*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 428.

⁴⁸ In ancient Mediterranean societies, men's sexual relations were not distinguished by the sex of their partners and Greek and Roman cultures permitted sexual relations between men in some circumstances. But like all sexual behavior, it was highly regulated, and each culture differentiated between "active" and "passive" partners. Moreover, as Craig Williams has shown (*Roman Homosexuality*) sexual relations between adult Roman men were frowned upon, as were pederastic relationships between Roman citizens. Adult Roman men were only "permitted" to have pederastic relationships with non-citizens. For a thorough discussion of the varied modern views on Roman sexual morality, see Dale B. Martin, "Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-32", in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), esp. 135-38. On the links between excessive womanising and effeminacy in the Late Roman world, see Burrus, *Begotten Not Made*, 24-5.

⁴⁹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 25-6.

⁵⁰ Brubaker, "Sex and Gender", 431.

⁵¹ On the growing prominence of the ideal of sexual renunciation in late fourth and early fifth-century Christian intellectual circles, see Brown, *Body and Society*, Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 170, Brubaker, "Gender and Society", 430.

Christian moralists increasingly attacked and condemned even formerly “acceptable” Greco-Roman sexual practices such as pederasty.⁵²

We find further possible evidence of Eunapius’ reliance on gendered invective in a passage from Zosimus that closely mirrors both the vocabulary and the content of extant fragment from Eunapius.⁵³ In this section of his history, Zosimus condemned the manly virtues of Valens’ army, claiming that under the emperor’s watch, lax discipline and flawed training had led “the tribunes and soldiers” to be prepared only for retreat “and for effeminate [γύναι] and unworthy desires”. Luckily, according to surviving accounts found in Eunapius and Zosimus, an ideal Roman soldier entered the scene and immediately took steps to salvage a military situation made critical by Valens’ poor guidance.⁵⁴ Sebastianus, a Roman general who had formerly served under Julian, entered into Valens’ service after “escaping” vicious eunuch advisors in what Eunapius and Zosimus both described as a corrupt Western regime.⁵⁵ In order to begin restoring the military discipline and “manliness” of Valens’ army, Sebastianus chose a small group of two-thousand soldiers to enter his specialised boot camp.⁵⁶ Through a combination of a strict training regime and Sebastianus’ own manly example, as Zosimus put it, Sebastianus’ soldiers had attained “manliness out of effeminacy” [ἀρρενωπὸν ἐκ τοῦ θήλεος].⁵⁷ Given Zosimus’ obvious debt to Eunapius, it is likely that this passage derived from one in Eunapius that expressed similar gendered sentiments.

Utilising such gendered rhetoric would have helped to reassure Eunapius’ readers. By placing much of the blame for the defeat at Adrianople on Valens’ vice and select officers’ lack of manly self-control, Eunapius avoided denigrating the Roman army as a whole by making the uncomfortable suggestion that the “barbarian” Goths may have overcome the Romans at Adrianople because of their better tactics and superior military

⁵² See, e.g. Ammianus’ (*Res gestae* 31.9.5) commentary on the pederasty of the Taifali. For the increasingly negative attitude towards pederasty in the Later Roman Empire, see Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 168-69.

⁵³ Eunapius, frag. 44.1-4. For the close relationship between this section of Zosimus’ history and Eunapius’ history, see Blockley, 142 (n. 103).

⁵⁴ See, e.g. Eunapius (frag. 44.1) where the historian describes Sebastianus as an “exemplar of virtue” whose ἀρετὴ matched that of the ancient Roman heroes.

⁵⁵ Eunapius, frag. 44.3.

⁵⁶ Eunapius, frag. 44.4.

⁵⁷ Zosimus, *New History* 4.23 (my trans.). According to Zosimus (*New History* 4.23-4), Valens shortly after the “retraining” of some of his army at the behest of his advisors, failed to heed Sebastianus’ “sound” military advice to avoid a direct confrontation with the Goths, a move that led to both men’s death in the fateful battle.

might. For the conservative historian, the moral failings of a dead emperor and the “depraved” and unmanly behaviour by some members of the Eastern military hierarchy help explain the unthinkable.

In having such a negative view towards the leadership of the twin regimes, Eunapius may be seen as a spokesman for Eastern opinion opposed to the more conciliatory and—as the modern scholarly paradigm contends—more realistic foreign policies of the imperial regimes of the latter part of the fourth century.⁵⁸ During this era, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the Romans to dictate terms to the barbarian enemy on the battlefield. Many authors in this period, however, continued to base their understanding of foreign affairs on older military realities and literary models—models that were often based on prejudicial gendered rhetoric.⁵⁹ As we observed in the previous chapter, the long-held material and strategic advantages that the Roman armies traditionally held over these foreign peoples represented for many ancient authors only part of the explanation for Roman supremacy. Indeed, several recent studies on ancient Roman masculinity have convincingly demonstrated that the ancient literature regularly laid out the relationship between Romans and non-Romans along gendered lines.⁶⁰ For if in many ways, woman represented the biological antithesis of man then barbarians often personified the social inversion of Romans. Writers from the Republic to the Later Empire tended to equate the struggle between Romans and non-Romans—particularly Easterners—as a battle between the manly and the unmanly. Craig Williams associates this binarism with Roman attitudes towards masculinity. He writes:

A common theme in the sources of this period [from the second century BCE to the fourth century CE] is that true Roman men, who possess *virtus* by birthright, rightfully exercise their dominion or *imperium* not only over women but also over foreigners, themselves implicitly likened to women. An obvious implication is that non-Roman peoples were destined to submit to Rome’s masculine *imperium*.⁶¹

Conservative intellectuals like Eunapius unquestionably appeared sceptical about the effectiveness of diplomacy when dealing with foreign peoples. One finds in Eunapius’ history, the conventional idea that these “barbarians” needed to be defeated in battle, and

⁵⁸ Peter Heather, *Goths and Romans, 332-489* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 128-35.

⁵⁹ Harlow, “Clothes Maketh the Man”, 45-7.

⁶⁰ See, e.g. Arthur M. Eckstein, *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 119-125, Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 132-37, Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 47-49, 285-86, McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 159-61, Conway, *Behold the Man*, 14.

⁶¹ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 135.

if not destroyed, at least cowed by the might of Roman arms before settling on Roman lands. Moreover, this belief in the masculine supremacy of elite Roman men over their foreign rivals helps to explain why Eunapius, and other writers from this age, tended to depict many barbarian uprisings or invasions not as political or Roman military failures but as acts of betrayal by Roman commanders, or the direct consequences of the moral failings and unmanliness of certain emperors and/or their inner-circle.⁶² By utilising this familiar narrative, the conservative historian may have hoped to channel his audience's frustration with the way things were going into an antipathy towards the Theodosian emperors and the imperial inner-circle.

Ammianus and Eunapius, like many of the classicising historians that came after them, tend to take a critical view of the Roman emperors who ruled in the years before and after Adrianople.⁶³ Emperors from the pagan Carinus to the seminal Christian emperors, Constantine I and Theodosius I attracted Eunapius' scorn.⁶⁴ Though Ammianus took a more balanced approach to his characterisations of the emperors, he too seemed to focus primarily on what he saw as the negative traits of rulers such as Diocletian, Constantius II, Valentinian I, and Valens.⁶⁵ For both historians, however, the apostate Emperor Julian offers a notable exception to this tendency. Julian's premature death on a military campaign in Persia in 363 for these historians marked the beginning of a difficult period of Roman history and served as another key event on the road to defeat at Adrianople and the Empire's subsequent misfortunes. For these historians and some other Late Roman intellectuals, Julian is an exemplar of both Late Roman leadership and heroic courage and manliness. These depictions of Julian will be explored in more detail below.

⁶² Cameron, *Claudian*, 74.

⁶³ Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 366-7.

⁶⁴ As Sacks ("Meaning", 57) points out Eunapius' criticisms of non-Christian emperors like Carinus, (frag. 1.5.1) and positive description of the Christian Emperor Valentinian II, whom he described as "manly and just" [ἀρρενωπὸν καὶ δίκαιον, 3.58.1], give us room to question the general historical consensus in regards to Eunapius' anti-Christian stance. In fact, even in their highly negative portrait of Theodosius I, Eunapius/ Zosimus recognised the emperor's ability to at times throw off his love of the hedonistic lifestyle and become an able military leader.

⁶⁵ Note the inclusion of both Christian and non-Christian emperors on this list. On Ammianus' characterisations of the Later Roman Emperors, see Hagit Amirav, "Ammianus Stoicus? Reflections on Rulership, Tyranny, and Power in the *Res Gestae*," in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, ed. Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 85-105.

The Emperor Julian

As the last pagan Roman emperor, Julian has elicited both enormous interest and sharply divided attitudes amongst both ancient and modern historians. The ancient gap between his non-Christian supporters and his Christian enemies has been matched by a similar polarisation among modern scholars concerning his religious policies and military and political acumen.⁶⁶ Scholars have long recognised that non-Christian intellectuals like Ammianus and Eunapius frequently depicted Julian as both a model emperor and man.⁶⁷ We find, for instance, that in contrast to his own age, Eunapius remembered Julian's reign fondly "as one of sweetness and gold".⁶⁸ Ammianus, too, in his largely laudatory characterisation of Julian, seemed to cross the line from historian to panegyrist.⁶⁹ As one modern historian suggests, this glorification of the last pagan emperor is not difficult to understand coming as it does from these "pagan" conservative writers to whom Julian's reign represented "the last flowering of a pagan heritage in what had since become a Christian world".⁷⁰ Yet there are objections to this standard view. As even supporters of this position have recognised, the histories of Eunapius, Ammianus—and even more surprisingly—the early sixth-century Byzantine historian, Zosimus,⁷¹ appear to have paid scant attention to Julian's religious policies, but concentrate instead on the apostate's use of his many virtues during his military campaigns.⁷² Of course, the simplest answer we

⁶⁶ For some influential studies on Julian: J. Bidez, *La vie de l'empereur Julien* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1930), Robert Browning, *The Emperor Julian* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), G.W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (London: Duckworth, 1978), R. Braun and J. Richer, ed. *L'Empereur Julien: De l'histoire à la légende* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978), Polymnia Athanassiadi, *Julian an Intellectual Biography* (London: Routledge, 1992), Rowland Smith, *Julian's Gods: Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate* (London: Routledge, 1995), Shaun Tougher, *Julian the Apostate* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

⁶⁷ Eunapius, frag. 1. For Ammianus' and Eunapius' heroic presentation of Julian in their writings, see Breebaart, "Eunapius", 364, Tougher, *Julian the Apostate*, 8, Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, 70-1, 85. However, compare these accounts with Sack's ("Meaning", 55-6) arguments suggesting that Eunapius, like Ammianus, was at times critical of Julian.

⁶⁸ Eunapius, frag. 2.15.

⁶⁹ On the influence of panegyric in Ammianus' portrait of Julian, see H. Gartner, "Panegyrik und zu Ammians Charakteristik des Kaisers Julian", in *AbhMainz, Geistes- und Sozialwiss. K1*. 10 (1968): 499-529.

⁷⁰ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 20.

⁷¹ For this point in Zosimus and Ammianus, see Ridley, 169, n. 1, 173 n. 39. Zosimus compared his work to that of Polybius; however, where Polybius studied Rome's rise, Zosimus attempted to understand its fall. Zosimus argued that the Empire had deteriorated because it had abandoned paganism and allowed the barbarians to infiltrate its borders and take control of its armies, Zosimus *New History* (ed. and French trans. Francois Paschoud, *Zosime, Histoire Nouvelle* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres 3 vols., 1971-89]; English trans. Ron Ridley]1.57.

⁷² Writing in the years during and shortly after Julian's reign, Libanius in his letters and orations revealed a greater interest in Julian's religious policies. Isabella Sandwell (*Religious Identity in Late*

might give to queries about this omission is that the classicising historians made it a point to avoid religious issues, which were seen as inappropriate for a genre based on classical historiography. Ammianus and Eunapius may have found it dangerous to praise Julian's paganism when writing under staunch Christian emperors.⁷³ It is important to point out that this reluctance, however, did not keep Eunapius—and through him Zosimus—from attacking the religious policies of Christian emperors such as Constantine I and Theodosius I.⁷⁴

We must understand, as well, that Julian's eccentric brand of Neoplatonic Hellenism seemed to hold little appeal for most Late Roman elites.⁷⁵ Even Julian's "admirers" at times criticised what they saw as the apostate's over-zealous Hellenism. Ammianus labelled him "superstitious rather than truly religious", remarking that he gave too much regard "to omens and portents". The historian seemed to be only half joking when he quipped that Julian's addiction to animal sacrifice would have led to a "scarcity of cattle" if the emperor had survived his doomed Persian campaign. Ammianus also labelled as "harsh" Julian's ban on Christians teaching rhetoric and grammar.⁷⁶ Eutropius, a fourth-century non-Christian author of an abbreviated history of Rome from 753 BCE to 364 CE, who mostly praised Julian for his unique combination of military and intellectual virtues, also admonished the dead emperor for his persecution of "the Christian religion".⁷⁷

I would suggest that in creating their idealised portraits of Julian, these historians were not so much interested in reinforcing a divide between Christians and non-Christians, but in reiterating traditional ideals of martial manliness, leadership, and tolerance that would have appealed to the majority of their classically educated Roman audience, regardless of religious convictions.⁷⁸ In taking this stance, I follow current revisionist

Antiquity: Greeks, Jews, and Christians in Antioch [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 218-24), however, proposes that Libanius was a sycophant who put his career before his religion.

⁷³ Treadgold (*Byzantine Historians*, 74) while suggesting that some modern historians have overstated the dangers of writing negative portraits of living emperors, still suggests that Ammianus' positive views on Theodosius I and his father may be proof that he was writing his history during Theodosius I's reign.

⁷⁴ See, e.g. Zosimus, *New History* 2.29-38.

⁷⁵ Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 382.

⁷⁶ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 25.4.16-20.

⁷⁷ Eutropius, *Breviarium* (ed. and trans. H.W. Bird, TTH 14 [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993]) 10.16.

⁷⁸ Contra Treadgold, (*Byzantine Historians*, 72), who, while admitting that Ammianus often disapproved of Julian's religious views, still insists that the historian's approval of the emperor was based on what Treadgold describes as their shared paganism.

scholarship that proposes that the traditional belief of a great gulf between pagans and Christians in the age of Ammianus and Eunapius has been overstated. Peter Brown and Alan Cameron have convincingly shown that, by the opening of the fifth century, the common ground between pagans and Christians—based largely on their similar educational background and shared cultural heritage—was more significant than the difficulties brought on by religious divide.⁷⁹ In addition, I also ally myself with those historians who reject the notion of Ammianus as a militant pagan.⁸⁰ With this in mind, I would argue that these ancient historians' depictions of Julian as a prototypical manly Roman emperor—an ἀνδρεῖος βασιλεύς—would have been understood and largely approved of by early Byzantine Christians and non-Christians who had taken the time to read these intricate histories written in archaic prose.

For their characterisations of Julian, early Byzantine writers relied heavily upon the models of virtue and vice found in the classical literature that made up the foundations of these men's education. Mirroring the emperor's own propaganda,⁸¹ many of Julian's supporters made it clear in their writings that the apostate's ability to master the disparate virtues that had long defined the character of manly men and ideal leaders, helped to ally him with the other heroes of the Greek and Roman past. This praise of the "philosopher king" Julian is similar to that of seminal "good" emperor in Late Antiquity, the emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose reputation was built around his meditations and rather inflated assessments of his military and domestic policies.⁸² The examples below should suffice to demonstrate how positive literary depictions of Julian closely adhered to categories of virtue and manliness extolled by the Stoic and Neo-platonic schools of philosophy familiar to literate Christians and non-Christians in Later Roman society.

Writing shortly after the emperor's death, Julian's friend, the esteemed Hellenic sophist, Libanius (ca. 314-ca. 394), proclaimed that the emperor was more "restrained" [σωφρονέστερος] than Hippolyctus, as "just" [δίκαιος] as Rhadamanthys, more "intelligent"

⁷⁹ See, e.g. the persuasive arguments found in Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, Alan Cameron, *Last Pagans*.

⁸⁰ Ammianus' attitude towards Christianity continues to provoke considerable scholarly debate. For the notion of Ammianus as a "militant pagan", see Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 80, Gavin Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus the Allusive Historian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), 3. For Ammianus as a moderate and tolerant pagan, see Ronald Syme, *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 137-38, Mathews, *Ammianus*, 436-45.

⁸¹ On the use by Eunapius and Ammianus of Julian's personal account of his Western military campaigns in their histories, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 46.

⁸² Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 27-9.

[συνετώτερος] than Themistocles and more “courageous” [ἀνδρειότερος] than Brasidas”.⁸³ Most likely relying upon a lost section of Eunapius’ history, Zosimus explained that, similar to other famous military leaders from the Roman past, Julian’s soldiers had admired him for “the simplicity of his private life, his courage in war [πολέμους ἀνδρείον], his self-control with regard to wealth [χρηματισμὸν ἐγκρατές]” and his mastery of all “the other virtues” [ἄλλας ἀρετάς].⁸⁴ Julian’s ability to juxtapose these intellectual and martial virtues induced even some of his Christian critics to acknowledge his ability to combine a sharp intellect with martial courage. The fifth-century ecclesiastical historian Socrates, for instance, called Julian “eminently distinguished for his learning”, and praised him for his ability “to infuse a fighting spirit [προθυμία]” into the Roman soldiers.⁸⁵

Even Ammianus’ more sober account of the ruler finds the historian claiming that Julian had mastered the cardinal “internal” and “external” virtues, traits that, according to these ancient philosophical schools, defined both ideal masculinity and human excellence.⁸⁶ He lauded:

Julian must be reckoned a man [*vir*] of heroic [*heroicis*] stature, conspicuous for his glorious deeds and his innate majesty. Philosophers tell us that there are four cardinal virtues [*virtutes*]: self-control [*temperantia*], wisdom [*prudentia*], justice [*iustitia*], and courage [*fortitudo*]; and in addition to these certain practical gifts: military skill [*scientia rei militaris*], authority [*auctoritas*], good fortune [*felicitas*], and liberality [*liberalitas*]. All these Julian cultivated both singly and as a whole with the utmost care.⁸⁷

⁸³ Libanius, *Or.* 18. 281 (my trans.).

⁸⁴ Zosimus, *New History* 3.5.3. For the viability of extracting Eunapius’ history and views from Zosimus, see Blockley, *Classicising Historians*, 97-106, Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 82. Most historians accept Photius’ view (Bibl. Cod. 98. 2) that Zosimus merely condensed Eunapius’ history, and that Zosimus’ “criticisms of the pious [Christian] Emperors”, stuck closely to Eunapius’ depictions.

⁸⁵ Socrates, *HE* 3.1. I have changed the translator’s “courage” for προθυμία, to the more literal “fighting spirit”. For Socrates’ surprisingly understanding attitude towards Julian, see Theresa Urbainczyk, “Vice and Virtue in Socrates and Sozomen”, in *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of the Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Mary Whitby (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 313-15.

⁸⁶ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 16.1. In addition to criticising Julian’s zealous Hellenism, Ammianus (*Res gestae* 25.4.17-18) considered Julian excessively verbose, and too eager for “the applause of the mob”. He also censured Julian (*Res gestae* 27.3) for what he considered unjust executions of his enemies after becoming emperor.

⁸⁷ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 25.4.1. (trans. Hamilton; I have changed Hamilton’s “dignity” for *auctoritas* to “authority”, his “prosperity” for *felicitas* to “good fortune, and his “generosity” for *liberalitas* to “liberality”).

Julian's restraint also attracted Ammianus' praise. Building upon Stoic codes that had long equated sexual modesty (*pudicitia*)⁸⁸ with manly self-mastery, the punctilious historian⁸⁹ emphasised that Julian's "inviolate chastity" after the death of his wife reflected the "mature strength of his manhood".⁹⁰ Libanius went further, claiming that the Christian hermits and Cynic philosophers' self-mastery paled in comparison to that of Julian.⁹¹ The austerity depicted in the passages above would have appealed to Late Roman readers, no matter their religious persuasion. In an age that regularly equated one's virtue and manliness with one's ability to contain sexual and emotional urges, this manly self-control highlighted for both Christians and non-Christians alike, Julian's merit, masculinity, and right to dominion.⁹²

Particularly in the histories of Ammianus and Eunapius, however, Julian the military man and leader takes centre stage. This emphasis is probably due to a combination of factors. First, as noted above, for their own portraits of the emperor, both historians consulted Julian's own accounts of his military campaigns in Gaul; a report in which, even Eunapius admits, Julian seems to have gone a bit over the top in promoting his own military exploits.⁹³ Furthermore, Eunapius relied upon Julian's physician Oribasius' "detailed memorandum of the deeds of the emperor".⁹⁴ This account, which the physician had composed expressly for Eunapius' use in his history, seems to have also concentrated mostly on Julian's heroic characteristics displayed in his military campaigns. Finally, and most importantly, these conservative historians were simply following the conventional Roman literary attitude of praising "good" and "manly" emperors who excelled in performing their primary duties of either adding to "the realm of the Roman imperium" or

⁸⁸ As Rebecca Langlands (*Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 3), points out, "*pudicitia* is a peculiarly Roman concept; there is no direct ancient Greek equivalent, in contrast to many Roman moral concepts, so it develops separately from the Greek philosophical tradition, although related to the Greek concepts of *sophrosyne* (self-control) and *aidos* (shame)".

⁸⁹ For Ammianus' writings reflecting stricter views of "male *pudicitia*" than his Early Roman predecessors, Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 90-1.

⁹⁰ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 25.4.2-6. Further praise of Julian's chastity is found in Socrates, *HE* 3.1, Libanius, *Or.* 18. 179.

⁹¹ Libanius, *Or.* 18.171.

⁹² Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 78. Libanius (*Or.* 18. 301), for example, argued that Julian's superior virtues made it natural for him to rule over those "less well endowed".

⁹³ Eunapius, frag. 17.

⁹⁴ Eunapius, frag. 15.

protecting the Empire from barbarian incursions.⁹⁵ As we saw in the previous chapter, focusing on and applauding an emperor's martial prowess and deeds performed in battle had long served as a common and necessary motif in literary presentations of both model leadership and ideal manly conduct.

In many contemporary sources, Julian's ability to hone his manly virtues for the primary purpose of destroying the barbarian peoples who refused to submit to Rome's *imperium* represented one of Julian's foremost virtues. Ammianus, for example, commended Julian for using "his inborn vigour" [*genuino vigore*] to constantly dream "of the din of battle and the slaughter of barbarians". So too did Libanius give nodding approval to Julian's thirst for barbarian blood.⁹⁶ Julian himself wrote, "An emperor delights in war".⁹⁷ Zosimus went so far as to compare Julian's victory at the battle of Strasbourg in 357 with the triumph of Alexander over the Persians.⁹⁸ In fact, some fifth and sixth-century sources argued that Julian's death had led to the "barbarian onslaughts during the reigns of his successors".⁹⁹ Julian's refusal "to call upon the Goths for assistance" to fight the Empire's battles also attracted acclaim.¹⁰⁰

Julian's adherence to these customary martial and manly ideals, according to his devotees, earned him the respect of both Romans and foreigners. As Libanius put it, Julian "was a hard man to his enemies and a hard man to those of his own troops who did not know how to conquer or die".¹⁰¹ We see evidence of Julian's "tough love" attitude with his soldiers in an anecdote found in Zosimus (again, most likely borrowed from Eunapius). In it, Julian punished the cowardice of some of his soldiers in battle by marching them through camp dressed in women's clothing. Zosimus believed that "for manly soldiers" [στρατιώταις ἀνδράσι] this was a punishment worse than *decimatio* (the traditional Roman response to cowardice).¹⁰² Indeed, we find that Zosimus and Eunapius, like other early

⁹⁵ Themistius, *Letter of the Emperor Constantius* 18c (trans. Moncur).

⁹⁶ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 16.1.1 (my trans.), Libanius *Or.* 13.29.

⁹⁷ Julian, frag. 5.

⁹⁸ Zosimus, *New History* 3.3.3.

⁹⁹ Libanius, *Or.* 18.290, Zosimus, *New History* 3.32.5. Though some of his detractors, Christian and non-Christian, argued the opposite: Themistius, *Or.* 5.66, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Against Julian* 5.15.

¹⁰⁰ Libanius, *Or.* 18.169. Though, as Ammianus reveals (*Res gestae* 20.8.1), a Gothic contingent served in Julian's forces.

¹⁰¹ Libanius, *Or.* 18.229.

¹⁰² Zosimus, *New History* 3.3.5.

Byzantine writers, emphasised in their works both the military and gendered aspect of ἀνδρεία. Following their ancient role models, ἀνδρεία served for these early Byzantine historians as a concept that could be opposed to femininity.

Of course, sentiments like those found in the examples above represented literary devices for these authors, but this reality does not mean that men like Ammianus, Libanius, Eunapius, and Zosimus did believe in the basic moral lessons behind such anecdotes. Living in an age where leaders such as Arcadius and Honorius mostly conducted their lives behind the secluded walls of imperial palaces while letting “barbarian soldiers” fight their wars, it is not difficult to understand why these historians may have found Julian’s ability to instil manly courage into his soldiers and take a tough stance towards these “barbarians” admirable.

To many of these same Late Roman intellectuals, a “passive” attitude at the top trickled down to the men they led in the Roman military. For example, in sharp contrast to their portrayal of the “war loving” Julian, Ammianus, Libanius, and Zosimus portrayed his rival Constantius II as unwarlike, and thus unmanly. In these men’s mind, during Constantius II’s watch the Empire became easy prey to barbarians. These writers repeatedly depicted Constantius II as cowardly, unmanly, and “soft” on barbarians.¹⁰³ Libanius made it clear that while Constantius II drained the ἀνδρεία of the Roman soldiers, Julian helped to restore it.¹⁰⁴ Libanius claimed that, in contrast to Julian, who loaded his camels with “weapons and books”, Constantius II loaded his camels “with wine, unguents, and soft bedding”.¹⁰⁵ Of Constantius II’s soldiers, Julian famously said, “they knew only how to pray”.¹⁰⁶ I would suggest that this sentiment on the part of Julian (and repeated on the pages of Zosimus’ history)¹⁰⁷ did not mean to suggest that good soldiers could not be Christians (a good number of Julian’s soldiers were surely Christians), only that a zealous emphasis on religious ritual instead of military training led to decline in a soldier’s efficiency, and even more dangerously, his masculine ἀνδρεία.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Libanius, *Or.* 18.113, Ammianus, *Res gestae* 14.10, Zosimus, *New History* 2.55, 3.1.

¹⁰⁴ Libanius, *Or.* 18.209-11.

¹⁰⁵ Libanius, *Or.* 62.17.

¹⁰⁶ Julian, frag. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Zosimus, *New History* 3.3.2.

¹⁰⁸ Note that Ammianus criticised the Eastern Roman cavalry commander Sebinian for being an inept commander because he wasted too much time on Christian rituals, while other more “reserved” Christian generals such as Jovinus (master of cavalry, 361-9), and Victor (commander in Julian’s Persian campaign) are depicted positively. As we noted earlier, Ammianus saw Julian’s excess focus on his religious rituals as

In the minds of many early Byzantine intellectuals, a combination of a leader's virtues and divine support led to the success of one's cause. On this concept Libanius wrote, "If you force a naturally virtuous [ἀρετῆς] man to live among drunken revelry, his goodness deserts him and he learns these vices instead of the honourable [τῶν καλῶν], and he lives with pleasure in them and loathes his previous life, and so habit becomes the ruin of his character".¹⁰⁹ Libanius went on to explain that it was a mélange of Julian's own manly influences, and the support of the pagan gods, which had contributed to the commitment of the Roman troops to victory at Strasbourg:

Did Julian turn them into heroes from being natural cowards [φύσει κακοὺς], like some deity infusing them with valour [βελτίους]? Then what can surpass superhuman ability? Or had their courage [χρηστὰς] been rendered unavailing by the cowardice [κακία] of their commanders? Then what is more glorious to induce good men [ἀγαθοὺς] to demonstrate their staunchness? Or was it some god behind the scenes that caused our success? Then to fight with the gods on our side is surely the proudest boast of all.¹¹⁰

Of course, we find nothing new in Libanius' conviction that the manly or unmanly conduct of the emperor or military leadership had a direct connection to the manliness or unmanliness of his subordinates. For the ancient Romans, manliness was something that could easily be lost, but just as quickly restored. Anthropologists have shown how in many cultures manhood is not a status attained by entering "adulthood" but an elusive category that constantly must be demonstrated or won.¹¹¹ The transitory nature of masculinity worked both ways: If "soft" living could quickly cause a Roman man to lose his masculine edge, then with a bit of effort on his part, as well as some prodding by "real" Roman men, courage, manliness and ultimately, Rome's masculine *imperium* could be restored.

An emperor's courage and ability to defeat an enemy on the field of battle, however, represented only an aspect of ideal leadership and true manliness. We find evidence of this when Eunapius has Julian in a set-speech to his troops explain to both his men and the literary audience the qualities that separated the true manly Roman leader from a merely courageous military commander or barbarian king. Echoing sentiments found in

one of the emperor's serious flaws, suggesting that Ammianus disliked any type of ceremony, Christian or non-Christian, that he saw as a waste of time.

¹⁰⁹ Libanius, *Or.* 18.209. I have changed the translator Norman's "good" for ἀρετῆς to "virtuous" and his "glories of virtue" for τῶν καλῶν to "the honourable".

¹¹⁰ Libanius, *Or.* 18.65.

¹¹¹ David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

Julian's own writings, Eunapius praised the emperor for his perfect blend of force and restraint.¹¹² In Eunapius' telling, Julian treated the barbarian enemy firmly yet fairly. Though Julian recognised that "courage [ἀνδρεία], strength [ρώμη] and physical force [κράτος]" played a vital role on the battlefield, he concluded that "justice [δικαιοσύνη] combined with authority was like a fountainhead of virtues [ἀρετῶν], which made even those far away manageable and obedient".¹¹³

Though the sentiments related above follow well-trodden classical ideals, and exaggerate Julian's military achievements somewhat, they are useful for our purposes because they show how Eunapius and many other contemporaries felt an ideal Roman emperor and soldier should behave towards barbarians in war and in peace. This is a line of argument repeated regularly in the classicising historians—the manly Roman uses his superior ἀνδρεία to first dominate the barbarian on the battlefield, but once victory has been achieved, however, the conquered enemy could be shown mercy, and if they recognised Roman "justice", allowed to join the Roman army or to settle onto Roman territory. Unless properly supervised, however, the barbarians could easily fall back into "savagery". Therefore, one should not allow them to maintain either their life way (especially pastoralism) or their pagan religion, but force them to adapt to Roman culture. In this way, a Roman could use his manly resolve and self-controlled adherence to justice to tame the "wild beasts".¹¹⁴

Despite the panegyric views of the apostate by his supporters found above, it is clear not everyone in the Later Roman Empire saw Julian as an ideal military leader or man. Ammianus recorded several instances where Julian faced questions concerning his manliness and right to rule. On one occasion, Ammianus related with some irony, how Julian's enemies (which included many of Constantius II's eunuch advisors) within Constantius' court denigrated him as "Greek dilettante" [*litterionem Graecum*] whose exaggerated military exploits covered up his sedentary and timid nature.¹¹⁵ In another episode, when food fell scarce in 358, Julian's own soldiers in Gaul ridiculed the future

¹¹² Following rhetorical tradition, Julian claimed (*Letter to Alypius* 404) the most virtuous of men combined "gentleness [πραότητα] and moderation [σωφροσύνην] with courage [ἀνδρεία] and strength [ρώμη]".

¹¹³ Eunapius, frag. 3.18.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Procopius' account of the attempted Romanisation of the Tzani (*Wars* 1.15.25).

¹¹⁵ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 17. 11 (trans. Hamilton). As Ammianus explains in this same section, the "most glorious actions" of great military men like Scipio Aemilianus and Pompey tended to attract the envy of less accomplished men.

emperor as “a degenerate Greek from Asia and a liar and a fool who pretended to be wise”.¹¹⁶ It is probably no coincidence that many of these attacks remain aligned to typical Roman gendered prejudice. Indeed, these jibes appear to expose real contemporary concerns and the prejudices of soldiers who had long believed in the effeminacy of Easterners and the “softness” of the educated elite within the Empire.¹¹⁷ Yet, Ammianus, who emphasised his own Greek identity¹¹⁸ as well as his exploits as a soldier, made it clear to his readers that Julian quickly proved these detractors wrong.¹¹⁹

It is also important to point out that Julian’s martial exploits, and victories over the barbarians came as somewhat of a surprise to most Romans of the period, and even to Julian.¹²⁰ Contemporaries reported that Constantius II had sent Julian to Gaul with the expectation of his quick demise.¹²¹ Some of these doubts concerning Julian’s untested martial virtues appear related to existing teachings that contended that men who engaged in the higher echelons of intellectual endeavours needed to remove themselves from the concerns of the mundane world. Philosophers of the period, like many other Late Roman elites, were not expected to participate in warfare. In fact, despite the adulation of “philosopher kings” like Marcus Aurelius, in the ancient sources “true” philosophers were expected to avoid political lives. According to tradition, this independence allowed them to speak “truths” that others protecting their careers feared.¹²² This reality may explain why Julian and his backers took such pains to portray him as reluctantly abandoning his intellectual pursuits to take on his military duties in Gaul and later the purple.¹²³

¹¹⁶ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 17.9.3 (trans. Hamilton): “Asianum appellans Graeculum et fallacem, et specie sapientiae stolidum”. Cf. the criticisms of Julian by the citizens of Antioch: Julian, *Misopogon* 37, 364C, Libanius, *Or.* 16.30.

¹¹⁷ See, e.g. *Panegyric of Constantine* 12 24.1, where the panegyrist contrasts Constantine I’s victories over Western Roman rivals and Western barbarians with Licinius’ victory in the Eastern half of the Empire over Maximinus “It is easy to conquer timid creatures unfit for war, such as the pleasant regions of the Greece and the charms of the Orient produce, who can barely tolerate a light cloak, and silken garments to keep off the sun, and who if they ever get into danger forget freedom and beg to be slaves”.

¹¹⁸ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 20.3.4, 23.6.20, 25.2.5.

¹¹⁹ The method of a biographer highlighting an emperor’s sexual restraint and martial virtues against opponents’ gendered attacks had a long tradition in imperial biography. For this topoi in first-century biographers of Augustus see Conway, *Behold the Man*, 37-45.

¹²⁰ Libanius, *Or.* 18.32.

¹²¹ Eunapius, frag. 14.1-2.

¹²² Sacks, “Meaning”, 65.

¹²³ Libanius, *Or.* 18.31, Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 476. Julian complained in a letter to former school friends in Athens about his having to abandon the pure delight “of pursuing philosophy at one’s

Though Julian had received some military training in his youth, his military acumen before his assignment to Gaul in 355 remained untested.¹²⁴ His devotees, however, made it clear to their audience that Julian was not only able to overcome such obstacles, but was inordinately adept at applying the alternative, yet positive, masculine attributes he had attained as a “philosopher” in his new political role. According to Eunapius, Julian’s philosophical training at the Academy in Athens had come in handy during his subsequent political career, and had helped Julian to subdue unmanly¹²⁵ passions such as “the royal anger” [τὸν βασιλικὸν θυμὸν] that often undermined the reigns of less educated emperors.¹²⁶ When describing Julian’s intellectual and martial virtues, Libanius highlighted what he saw as the apostate’s intrinsic advantage over less educated military commanders or emperors, commenting, “For he always had in his hands either books or arms, for he considered warfare to be greatly helped by philosophy, and that in an emperor ability to use his wits was more effective than belligerency”.¹²⁷

Such praise of Julian’s easy juxtaposition of these martial and intellectual talents probably represents more than just stock imperial rhetoric. It is important to point out that Roman intellectuals had long professed that one’s education represented an essential step in one’s “masculine formation”. From at least the second century, wise instructors who functioned as conduits to masculinity played vital roles in the creation of manly Roman men.¹²⁸ Many of these same moralists advised that manliness and courage could be absorbed in the classroom. Even an intrinsically male characteristic like ἀνδρεία might be developed and honed by the instructor in the lecture hall. Indeed, as Karen Bassi notes, ἀνδρεία represented “something that manly fathers seem particularly incapable of passing

leisure without interruption”. He only half joked in a letter, that after four years of living a “barbarian’s life” in Gaul it was a wonder he could still understand Greek at all. Julian, *Letter to Eumenius and Pharianus* 441.

¹²⁴ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 16.5.10.

¹²⁵ Many ancient writers perceived a passion like “anger” (Latin *ira*) as an indication of a weak intellect, and consequently as a trait more common in the uneducated, barbarians and women. Ammianus (*Res gestae* 27.7.4), for example, gave the following definition of *ira*: “the philosophers define anger [*ira*] as a long continued, sometimes permanent, ulcer of the mind, usually caused by weakness [*mollitia*] of the intellect; and they give for their opinion the plausible ground that the sickly are more inclined to anger than the sound, women to men, the old to the young, and the wretched to the fortunate”. Cf. Seneca, *De Ira* 1.13.5, 1.20.3, 2.19.4. As Colleen Conway explains (*Behold the Man*, 26-27), however, some Greco-Roman moralists did perceive anger “as an active display of one’s convictions—a manly act”.

¹²⁶ Eunapius, frag. 25.3. Cf. Eunapius’ (frag. 44.5) description of Valens’ “frenzied rage” [ἐκβαχεύω] when he ordered his soldiers to “unwisely” attack the Goths at the battle of Adrianople.

¹²⁷ Libanius, *Or.* 18.72.

¹²⁸ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 34.

down to their biological sons”.¹²⁹ These convictions help us to understand why some Late Roman writers insisted that a literary education could serve as an essential component of a military leader’s training.¹³⁰ Furthermore, we find Eunapius and Libanius explaining in their writings that an understanding of history provided a leader with the “blueprint” for success when fighting actual battles.¹³¹ We do know that Julian utilised his literary education to help him mimic the speeches of “generals of old” to motivate his own soldiers before battle.¹³²

Although the accounts above may have exaggerated Julian’s military prowess, I would argue that they represent some deeply felt Late Roman convictions concerning both idealised leadership and hyper-masculinity. By emphasising Julian’s ἀνδρεία, as well as his intolerance for ἀνανδρία, his defenders were able to overcome accusations of unmanliness hurled at the Julian by his naysayers, but also demonstrate to their literary audience the type of manly leader that was required to restore the Empire to its former glory. Traditional *topoi* centred on accepted categories of manly and unmanly behaviour, and therefore served to provide these writers with the means to depict Julian as both an ideal emperor and man.

These idealised portraits by Ammianus and Eunapius of Julian as a typical ἀνδρεῖος βασιλεύς also serve as another reminder that Late Roman intellectuals continued to esteem martial virtues as essential components of Roman masculinity and ideal leadership. Like the modern American politicians who can appreciate, and at times appropriate, the über-masculine image of the American soldier for their own political needs, the majority of the demilitarised Late Roman elites who read these accounts—if not necessarily wanting to emulate them on the field of battle—would certainly have appreciated Julian’s mastery of many of the traditional martial and intellectual virtues that had long defined ultimate manliness in the Roman world. We should bear in mind as well that the Christian elites of the fifth century readily accepted such traditional secular themes. Moreover, as Alan Cameron has recently shown, by the time Eunapius and Ammianus published their histories, paganism was a spent force. Indeed, by the close of the fourth century, the spread and the ascendancy of Christianity in both halves of the

¹²⁹ Bassi, “Semantics of Manliness”, 200, 351.

¹³⁰ For Ammianus’ tendency to attribute some of Valens’ vices on his lack of a proper education, see Amirav, *Ammianus Stoicus*, 102.

¹³¹ Eunapius, frag. 44, Libanius, *Or.* 18.39.

¹³² Libanius, *Or.* 18.53.

Empire was irreversible.¹³³ As Cameron remarks, paganism had “died a natural death, and was already mortally ill before Theodosius (I) embarked on his final campaign”.¹³⁴

Consequently, the “golden age” of Julian is represented by these secular writers not so much in religious terms, but as a time when a “real” Roman man whisked out of the Academy in Athens unexpectedly stood up to the challenges presented by the Empire's internal and external foes. This message served as powerful propaganda for Julian in his own lifetime. Furthermore, as the histories of Eunapius and Ammianus reveal, this praise of Julian's militarism was an ideology that continued to resonate for late fourth and early fifth-century Roman reading audiences wearied by a long line of Roman military failures, and feeble, unwarlike, and unmanly emperors. So, even if strident Christians might attack Julian for his uncompromising religious beliefs, as well as the circumstances behind his premature death, the less ardent Christian, or more recent convert, probably would have admired Julian for his ability to combine virile displays of renunciation with traditional martial deeds that had long served as essential aspect of ideal leadership and manliness.

Evidence of this reality is reflected in Eunapius' claim that Julian's exploits had earned him “universal high repute” amongst the Romans who came to manhood in the generation after his death in 363, and the in fact that Church historians writing in the century after Julian's death still felt it necessary to undermine the apostate's lingering reputation for wisdom and manly courage.¹³⁵ The early Byzantine readers of these histories could not help but be reminded how far the majority of Julian's successors had fallen short of his manly standard.

¹³³ See too Sack's assertion (“Meaning”, 65) that Eunapius lived in a time when for most non-Christians confidence had “faded that paganism would soon be restored by official sanction”.

¹³⁴ Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 131. The most important part of Cameron's argument for my viewpoint is his thorough rejection that Eugenius' conflict with Theodosius I represented a pagan revival undertaken on the behalf of an increasingly persecuted pagan senatorial elite in the West.

¹³⁵ See, e.g. Socrates, *HE* 7.22.7-8, Theodoret, *HE* 3.21.

CHAPTER IV

The Wars Most Peaceful: Militarism, Piety, and Constructions of Christian Manliness in the Theodosian Age



(Plate 5)

It is the struggles of the athletes of piety [εὐσεβείας ἀθλητῶν] and their courage [ἀνδρείας] that endured so much, trophies won from demons, and over invisible enemies, and the crowns at the end of all, that will endure.

Eusebius, *HE* 5.1.4 (my trans.).

No single model of idealised manliness characterised early Byzantine constructions of men's heroic conduct. This point becomes readily apparent when one considers the diverse portraits of secular and religious heroes found in the early Byzantine scholarly tradition. At first glance, the courage and piety of the Christian martyrs described in the quotation above, or of a holy man, such as Daniel the Stylite (409-493), or of powerful bishops like Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339-397) and John Chrysostom (ca. 349–407) found in an early Byzantine Church history may seem far removed from the acts of masculine bravery of the secular military heroes such as Sebastianus and the Emperor Julian discussed in the previous chapter. Yet, as several recent studies on early Christian and Greco-Roman masculinity have convincingly argued, the examples of idealised behaviour displayed by these men were all created by authors of a similar educational and cultural background, and consequently, though their portraits of idealised men differed, they observed some of the same basic principles of heroic and manly conduct based, in part, on one's self-mastery and displays of "courage" in the face of adversity.¹ From their

¹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, esp. 175-184, Jennifer Larson, "Paul's Masculinity", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004): 85-97, Stephen Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, ed. *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

religion's earliest days, Christian writers had necessarily engaged with the predominant gender ideologies of the Roman Empire, and especially, an ascendant Greco-Roman masculinity that by the first and second centuries had increasingly accommodated multifaceted, and at times formerly more marginalised, pathways to a "true" masculine identity. This chapter explores some of the "revolutionary", aspects of what some modern academics describe as the rise and the growing dominance by the end of the fourth century of a new Christian masculine ideal.²

Though it remains outside the scope of this study to retell in detail the Christianisation of the Empire, the rise of extreme asceticism, or the growing power and influence of holy men, monks and bishops, the chapter opens by tracing the evolution of the Christian "hero" in the fourth century and his growing popularity in later Christian sources from the fourth and the fifth centuries. It seeks to demonstrate why some modern studies have attributed shifts in hegemonic Roman masculine ideology to these social and political developments. The chapter then turns once again to the figure of the emperor as a means of exploring continuity and change in early Byzantine gender ideology. In particular, we look at how the fifth-century ecclesiastical and secular historians constructed images of the Emperors Theodosius I and Theodosius II that reflect traditional as well as "innovative" strategies of leadership and manliness. This chapter will contend that while many of these influential modern studies have correctly uncovered how early Christian intellectuals both interacted and cleverly inverted dominant Greco-Roman masculinities, they have, at times, overstated the impact, as well as the innovative nature of Christian masculine ideology in this era. Moreover, despite the claims found in many of these same studies that martial virtues no longer played an essential role in shaping notions of heroic manliness in the fifth century, we will see once again, that the waging of war and the acts of masculine bravery best demonstrated by Roman soldiers in "real" battles, remained an essential aspect of hegemonic masculinity in the Theodosian age.

God's Manliest Warriors

To appreciate the influence of the Christian heroic ideal on the fifth-century Eastern Roman Empire, it is necessary to outline briefly the evolution of the idealised Christian in the fourth century. Until this time, most Christian men and women had established their superiority by martyrdom. The martyrs (Greek for "witnesses") became the first Christian saints and heroes, both for their willingness to challenge the authority of the local pagan

² Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 286.

leaders and their eagerness to give up their lives for their religious convictions. Emulating the Greco-Roman literary genre of biography that related the deeds of great philosophers, Roman political leaders and military commanders Christian writers in the second century began recording the deeds of these “saintly heroes”.³ These early works were the first examples of hagiography; their notions of ideal Christian conduct would have a tremendous impact in not only Late Antiquity, but also well into the Middle Ages.⁴

Despite a strong pacifist theme in much of the early Christian literature, the authors of these early saints’ lives liked to compare the courage of martyrs with that of Roman soldiers.⁵ The earliest martyr stories focused regularly on the military aspects of their subject’s execution.⁶ One finds, for example, in the second-century *Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp*, God seemingly taking the place of the military commander by exhorting the Bishop Polycarp (69-155) when he entered the arena to face his execution: “Be strong Polycarp and play the man” [ἰσχυε, Πολύκαρπε, καὶ ἀνδρίζου].⁷ The author presented Polycarp’s death as heroic in the best Roman tradition.⁸ For a religion that faced repeated persecutions and accusations of cowardice against its followers from the pagan establishment, these Christian examples of bravery served as a unifying force and a symbol of Christian courage and manliness.⁹

³ Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 5-6. For the continuing popularity of Plutarch’s (ca. 46 – 120 CE) biographies from the Roman and early Byzantine era, see Tim Duff, *Plutarch’s Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4-5.

⁴ Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head, introduction to *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saint’s Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 22-30.

⁵ A good overview of early Christians’ pacifism is presented by John Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War* (New York: Seabury, 1919, reprint 1982), Michael Whitby, “Deus Nobiscum: Christianity, Warfare and Morale in Late Antiquity”, in *Modus Operandi: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Rickman*. (London: Institute of Classical Studies School of Advanced Study, University of London, 1998). Cf., however, Conway (*Behold the Man*, 160-74), for examples of militant ideology in the New Testament, especially Revelations. For the idea that a more militant and “more” violent Christianity was a particular feature of the post-Constantinian Church, see Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*. Divinations: Rereading Late Antique Religion. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

⁶ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 110.

⁷ I use the version of the second-century *Life* found in Eusebius, *HE* (trans. Kirsopp Lake and J.E.I. Oulton, LCL, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926-32, reprint 2000]) 4.15.17. Cf. Eusebius, *HE* 6.8.7.

⁸ Greek and Roman secular historians used similar vocabulary in their depictions of military leaders’ speeches to their troops before battle. See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 6.23.32, 5.28.13, 6.12.20, 6.23.31.

⁹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 112.

The fourth century also witnessed the birth of the genre of ecclesiastical history.¹⁰ The seminal Church historian, Eusebius (ca. 260-339) found it necessary to find alternatives to the pagan Roman Empire's reliance on secular literature and its cadre of non-Christian heroes.¹¹ It is critical always to keep in mind that early fourth-century Christian theologians like Eusebius were attempting to persuade a still largely non-Christian governing class that needed convincing. Michele Salzman summarises the situation: "A religion whose texts taught love for one's neighbors and humility, with strictures on wealth and notions of equality, did not, generally speaking, appeal to aristocrats". So, partially as a means of appeal to prospective or recent converts from the Roman upper classes fourth-century Church leaders "fashioned the rhetoric of Christianity to make it pleasing to educated elite listeners".¹²

We find evidence of this adaptation in Christian accounts of the martyrs. Since most Late Roman elites expected their heroes to be "unyielding and warlike",¹³ it helps to explain why an idealised Christian had similar qualities—if, at times, only in a metaphorical sense. Against this background, we can understand why Eusebius, who essentially founded the genre of Church history, littered his writings with heroic Christians who showed his audience that through martyrdom Christians could act as gallantly and as bravely as any Roman legionary facing death on the battlefield. It is of course notoriously difficult to know the popularity or to pin down the exact makeup of the readership for this type of Christian literature.¹⁴ Though one might assume that Eusebius created his history primarily for fellow devout Christians, evidence from his introduction suggests that the bishop was addressing a more diverse group—one consisting of readers of more traditional secular history, potential converts, and even non-Christians critical of the genre of Church history.¹⁵ As Brian Croke reminds us, the audience for ecclesiastical history was not limited to devout Christians, but seems to have been comprised of a larger and more

¹⁰ Good basic surveys of the Byzantine Church historians are found in Glenn Chesnut, *The First Church Historians: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius*, (Macon, Mercer University Press, 1986), Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 23-46, 121-75.

¹¹ Eusebius, *HE* 5.1.1-4.

¹² Salzman, *Christian Aristocracy*, 2, 201.

¹³ Julian, *Against the Galilaeans* 116 A.

¹⁴ The difficulty of pinpointing the size and the exact makeup of the readership of the Early Church historians is discussed by Urbainczyk, (*Socrates*, 64-7); she concludes that they were intended for a wider circulation than their secular counterparts. Cameron (*Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 116) and Kaldellis (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 235) suggest that Procopius had read Eusebius' history, which would give us further evidence that not only devout Christians were interested in ecclesiastical history.

¹⁵ Eusebius, *HE* 1.1.6, 1.2.1.

diverse audience of “the cultural elite and a wider group of less educated but still relatively literate civil and military officials and others” who liked to read all forms of history.¹⁶

Eusebius certainly found it important to emphasise in his account the writings of earlier Christian theologians who had sought to refute claims by those labelled the “heathens” that the Christians facing public execution were “ignoble and unmanly” [ἀγεννεις καὶ ἀνανδροι].¹⁷ In fact, Christian peoples’ propensity for “piety” [εὐσεβείας] and the “courageous life” [καρτερία βίου], in the eyes of Eusebius and his sources, contributed to their excelling in “manly virtue” [καὶ ἀρετῆς ἀνδρεία].¹⁸ He insisted that one could compare the courage of the martyrs to any individuals immortalised for their ἀνδρεία “by Greeks or barbarians”.¹⁹ Roman intellectuals had long seen one’s ability to handle pain with courage as a tell-tale sign of “true” manliness.²⁰ So when Eusebius or his source emphasised the martyrs’ propensity to face dismemberment and worse with bravery typical of manly soldiers, they relied on an aspect of traditional hegemonic masculinity readily understood by their Christian and non-Christian audience.²¹

In these spiritual battles, which Eusebius described as “the wars most peaceful” (5.1.4) even a woman could become a “noble athlete” [γενναῖος ἀθλητής, 5.1.19] or behave like God’s “manliest warrior” [ὁ ἀνδρειότατος ὅπλομαχος, 6.41.16].²² Although, Eusebius followed the common discriminatory attitude of the time that perceived women as the inferior sex, in certain instances he believed that women’s zeal and faith in God could break down these gender barriers. By suffering the same contests as men, Eusebius argued that female martyrs “showed themselves no less manly than the men”.²³

¹⁶ Brian Croke, “Uncovering Byzantium’s Historiographical Audience”, in *History as Literature in Byzantium*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Ashgate: Burlington, VT., 2010), 33-34.

¹⁷ Eusebius, *HE* 5.1.34.

¹⁸ Eusebius, *HE* 1.4.7. I have modified the translator Lake’s “courageous virtue” for ἀρετῆς ἀνδρεία to “manly virtue”.

¹⁹ Eusebius, *HE* 8.6.1: “Πάντων δὲ ὅσοι τῶν πώποτε ἀνυμνοῦνται θαυμάσιοι καὶ ἐπ’ ἀνδρεία βεβοημένοι εἴτε παρὰ Ἑλλήσιν εἴτε παρὰ βαρβάροις”. We know too that Eusebius was familiar with these traditional models, see Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.10.

²⁰ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 29-30.

²¹ See, e.g. Ammianus (*Res gestae* 22.10.11) where the former soldier, who could be critical of Christians, expressed admiration for the Christian martyrs’ courage.

²² I have changed the translator Oulton’s “brave” for ἀνδρειότατος to “manliest”.

²³ Eusebius, *HE* 8.14.13. Unlike, male martyrs, Eusebius often emphasised the heroism of women who sacrificed their lives in order to protect their chastity (e.g. *HE* 8.14.14-18).

Still, as Averil Cameron warns, there is a danger of looking for signs of “early Christian feminism” within texts composed by Late Roman elites like Eusebius that remain highly misogynistic and often demand that women “must deny their sex” or “be like a man” to achieve sanctity.²⁴ As has been often times remarked, Roman intellectuals had long clashed over the idea that men and women possessed distinctive virtues. Particularly during the first and second centuries, many Stoic and Christian thinkers, influenced by ideas of symmetry, concluded that women remained just as capable as men in cultivating essential and typically masculine virtues. Despite these claims of gendered egalitarianism by these ancient writers, however, deeply engrained misogynistic attitudes remained difficult for these intellectuals to overcome. Recent evaluations of these supposedly more philogynist writers, have persuasively uncovered the dissonance between their idealistic philosophical claims, and the reality found in their texts.²⁵ For many Late Roman theologians the genderless ideal was quite often just the masculine ideal in disguise. Indeed, Christian theologians often portrayed exemplary Christians—male and female—as displaying masculine temperaments.²⁶

Moreover, there was nothing new or specifically Christian in Eusebius’ seeming rejection of “traditional standards of Roman masculine militarism”. Early Christian intellectuals, like Paul, had long utilised the paradox where “weakness was strength and defeat was victory”.²⁷ These New Testament authors in turn followed Stoic intellectuals in the Early Empire who had embraced ἀνδρεία as a “quieter virtue” of “endurance and self-control rather than a perseverance of action”. In fact, many of these same Stoic writers

²⁴ Averil Cameron, “Virginité as a Metaphor: Women and the Rhetoric of Christianity”, in *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History*, ed. Averil Cameron (London: Duckworth, 1988), 184-92.

²⁵ The bibliography on this topic is vast. A good summary of the current debates and a bibliography are found in Bernadette Brooten, *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 328-32, McNermy, “Plutarch’s Manly Women”.

²⁶ We find an example of this attitude expressed in a letter from Jerome (ca. 341-420) where he espoused the “manliness” of women whose dedication to perpetual virginity allowed women to transcend their gender’s innately carnal and inferior nature. He wrote: “As long as woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, she will cease to be a woman and will be called a man”. Jerome, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Ephesios*, III, v (658) in PL 26: 533, quoted in Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex*, 453. See too Augustine’s (*Confessions* 9.4.8) declaration that though his “mother had the inherent weakness of a woman, she had the strong faith of a man” [matre adhaerente nobis muliebri habitu, virili fide].

²⁷ Paul, *2nd Corinthians* 12:10. For the appropriation of this ideology, as well as the use of paradox in later Christian writers, see Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 208.

maintained that a seemingly passive death could be seen as manly if undertaken for a noble or honourable cause.²⁸

New Champions of Christian Holiness

Despite the continuing allure of these martyrs, by the fifth century this form of sacrifice had largely become outmoded.²⁹ There were several reasons for this change. When the Empire became Christian, two things occurred: first, the opportunities for a glorious death declined; secondly, because Christians joined the establishment, many of them found it unwise to treat the Roman government as an adversary. As Christianity's role in the Roman government grew, it also became essential for the Church to control individuals who acted outside the established hierarchy, even charismatic heroes such as the martyrs.³⁰ In fact, before the decline of the martyr, some Christians had adopted a new form of valour. In third and fourth-century Egypt and Syria, an elite cadre became Christian heroes by pushing the limits of abstinence. Following New Testament examples of Jesus, who "escaped to the desert to pray in solitude",³¹ devout Christians like the Egyptian Anthony had set out alone from the cities of the Empire and into the deserts, determined to separate themselves from the physical world's corruption.³² Struggling against temptation, they battled to purify their bodies against the "demon of fornication" and fears of starvation.³³ By persevering, these individuals became heroic models for the segment of

²⁸ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 77. For the influence of Stoic thought on Paul, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2000).

²⁹ Martyr stories continued to be produced involving men and woman facing persecutions outside of the Roman Empire, particularly in the Persian Empire, e.g. Theodoret, *HE* 5.38.

³⁰ Stuart George Hall, "The Organization of the Church," in *CAH* volume 14 *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors A.D. 425-600*, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 731.

³¹ Luke 5:16.

³² Many of these men and women it seems, however, had first entered the desert not to practice an ascetic lifestyle, but to escape persecution. Moreover, completely abandoning one's secular obligations, however, proved difficult for even for the most dedicated ascetic. James Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 16.

³³ For these men isolated in the desert, conquering hunger became an even more difficult task than their struggle against lust. Many Christian intellectuals alleged that Adam and Eve's first sin had not been fornication, but their inability to resist eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. See Brown, *Body and Society*, 220-21.

devoted Christians who proclaimed that supreme men practiced sexual abstinence, restricted their diet, and treated possessions, rank, and power with indifference.³⁴

To some extent, the rise of the extreme ascetic was connected to concerns on the part of some Christians about the growing influence of the Roman secular authorities in fourth-century religious matters, as well as a rejection by these same intellectuals of the increased effect of “aristocratic status culture” on Late Roman Christianity. Part of the appeal of the Christian ideal of heroism appears connected to its more inclusive nature. Though the majority of these extreme ascetics hailed from the upper classes, some came from the peasantry, and some were female.³⁵ This differed from classical Greco-Roman and Germanic cultures that focused on men, emphasised a hero’s lineage, and tended to look down on men of humble origins. Despite the fact that Late Roman Christians from the upper classes rarely spoke of “universal salvation or egalitarian spirituality”, Christian writers from the less privileged classes often preached a less restricted theology.³⁶ These theologians rebelled against the traditional Roman attitude that a man’s lineage and political accomplishments determined his *nobilitas* (distinction). They claimed that *nobilitas* served as a universal virtue and was open to all men, regardless of their social class. To emphasise their scorn for the Roman social order, these Christians gained acclaim by rejecting their family ancestry and joining Christ’s family, thereby creating their own “aristocracy”.³⁷ Although most Christians could never hope to attain the strict perfection demanded by this new principle of heroism, by interacting with holy men or appealing to male and female saints they could gain a glimpse of God’s flawlessness.³⁸

³⁴ Philip Rousseau, “Monasticism”, in *CAH* volume 14 *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors A.D. 425-600*, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 745.

³⁵ Theresa Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 67-79.

³⁶ Salzman, *Christian Aristocracy*, 218.

³⁷ This section owes much to Salzman, *Christian Aristocracy*, 200-19.

³⁸ Peter Brown, “Holy Men”, in *CAH* volume 14 *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors A.D. 425-600*, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 781-82.

Life of Anthony

The seminal work describing these innovative Christian heroes was the *Life of Anthony* probably composed by the Alexandrian bishop Athanasius around 357.³⁹ Written in simple Greek prose,⁴⁰ it set out to promote the devotion and the heroism of Anthony as an exemplar of the “extreme” ascetic life, and in this was largely successful.⁴¹ As Peter Brown puts it, “Anthony was the hero of the Panerémos, of the Deep Desert, the Outer Space of the ascetic world”.⁴² This work both attracted potential converts to monasticism and served as a literary model for later hagiographers.⁴³ Yet, like ecclesiastical history, its ancient readership included Christians and non-Christians.⁴⁴ Though a detailed analysis of this important text remains outside of this study’s scope, the metaphorical martial themes found in its opening chapters, as well as the influence this life has had on some modern scholars’ conceptualisation of a “new Christian masculine ideal”, deserve some comment.⁴⁵

Athanasius opened his account with a brief summary of the saint’s early life. He emphasised the boy’s noble upbringing, his love of solitude, and a predilection to avoid the study of secular literature (a sure sign in Christian literature of the time that the future saint had the “innate” traits necessary to take on the rigours of the ascetic life).⁴⁶ When Anthony was eighteen or twenty his parents died. As a result, Anthony inherited the responsibility of

³⁹ Some scholars dispute that Athanasius composed the life, see Timothy Barnes *Athanasius and Constantius, Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 240, n.64.

⁴⁰ Anthony’s biography, like much of the Christian literature of the day, was composed in a far simpler prose than much of the secular literature of the time. As a result, these Christian authors reached a far broader spectrum of Late Roman literate society than their non-Christian counterparts. These Christian *Lives* also concentrated on, and frequently praised, women and the poor, members of Late Roman society who were typically neglected in the non-Christian literary tradition. These issues are discussed in Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 147-49.

⁴¹ The modern literature on Anthony is vast. A good starting point is Brown, *Body and Society*, 213-40. An excellent survey on current historiographical controversies is found in Timothy Barnes, “Angel of Light or mystic initiate? The problem of the Life of Antony”, *JTS* 37 (1986): 353-68.

⁴² Brown, *Body and Society*, 214-15.

⁴³ Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 110.

⁴⁴ For this diverse audience, see Averil Cameron, “Form and Meaning: The Vita Constantini and the Vita Antonii”, in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 78.

⁴⁵ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 281.

⁴⁶ Samuel Rubenson, “Philosophy and Simplicity: The Problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography”, in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 115.

running the family estate and of caring for his younger sister. Athanasius explained that one day Anthony wandered into a Church and heard the Gospel's message that: "If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven".⁴⁷ Anthony immediately set about to obey Christ's memorandum. In a theme that remained controversial for even committed Christians of the time, Anthony "rejected" the classical notions of patriarchal responsibility by suggesting that a real Christian man needed to abandon his biological family in order to take on a patriarchal role in the eternal Christian family.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, for all of his detachment from worldly affairs and bonds of kinship, the author makes it clear that Anthony looked after his sister by giving her some of her belongings and "protected" her by sending her to a convent.

Having sorted out his obligations in the secular world, Anthony set out to sever ties with his old world by taking on the challenges of the extreme ascetic life; according to Athanasius, God was "training the athlete".⁴⁹ Complete abandonment of his corporeal frailty, however, remained difficult for an "untrained athlete" such as Anthony. Early on in his "conditioning", Anthony acted like a typical apprentice; he lingered near to his village and only observed the activities and personalities of the different holy men. He strove to master each of the disparate virtues exhibited by these men. Akin to Polybius' description of Scipio Africanus' adolescence, Anthony felt compelled to be morally superior to the boys of his own age.⁵⁰ The traditional path to Roman manliness was filled with this sort of competition amongst young men attempting to match the deeds and the manly virtues of their ancestors.⁵¹ Thus, Christian asceticism as portrayed by Athanasius, may have offered an alternative avenue to traditional Roman manliness that might have appealed to

⁴⁷ Mathew 19:21.

⁴⁸ As Liebeschuetz's suggests (*Ambrose and John*, 205-15), this rejection of the world was never expected of the majority of Christians or as absolute for this elite cadre as the rhetoric suggests.

⁴⁹ Indeed, we find Athanasius, like earlier sophists and New Testament authors, describing the difficulties of asceticism in athletic terms. See, e.g. Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* (trans. Wilmer C. Wright, LCL, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921, reprint 2005]) 1.525. For the reputation of athletes as courageous, self-disciplined, and manly in the Greek and Roman literary tradition, see Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 175-78.

⁵⁰ Athanasius of Alexandria, *The Life of Anthony and the Letter to Marcellus* (trans. Robert Gregg Mahwah N.J: Paulist Press, 1980), 1.4. Cf. Polybius, *Histories* 31.25. Within his larger account, Polybius' idealised description of his student and friend, Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (185-129 BCE), provides an illustration of righteous and manly Roman behavior. Scipio's primary ambition in life was to achieve virtue. He attained this goal through a strict regime of self-discipline, and his focus on self-perfection helped differentiate himself from his young rivals.

⁵¹ Carlin A. Bartin, *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 84-87.

young aristocratic men, steeped in classical traditions, yet hesitant or unwilling to match the codes of masculinity and/ or the martial prowess of their ancestors.

Though endowed with some innate courage and ascetic qualities, Anthony, like other young Roman men seeking “true” manliness, needed to hone these traits through constant self-discipline and tests of his courage in combat. For Anthony, the desert represented the ideal place to test one’s resolve and to fight invisible foes. This belief had a long history in Jewish and Christian theology. The desert represented a spiritual place for Jews, Christians, and even pagans of Anthony’s era. In the Christo-Judaic traditions, the desert was the domain of good and evil spirits; it was a place where the select might encounter God, but the majority would face “demons, death, and pollution”.⁵² During the early stages of his regime, Anthony had only enough strength to enter the tombs located on the cusp of the desert. As Claudia Rapp notes, even this step would have taken considerable courage considering the ancient concern associated with such crypts as places of religious impurity and death.⁵³

Inside the burial chambers, the temptations of his old secular life represented the first obstacle that Anthony had to overcome. Unaware of Anthony’s “unique” strength at this early age, the Devil tempted the young man with visions of the “softness and the pleasure” of his former life. Seeking to undermine Anthony’s emergent self-discipline, the Devil reminded his opponent about his duties to his sister and his family, the joys of money”, love of glory” [φιλοδοξίαν], the “luxurious life” [ἡδονήν], and finally “the difficulty of virtue” [τό τραχύ τῆς ἀρετῆς].⁵⁴ The author assured his readers that Anthony was “not thrown for a fall,” but this” sturdy contestant” resisted temptation even in the face of the Devil’s deceitful whispering. We have seen this motif before. Though this incident was surely meant to emulate the Devil’s temptation of Christ during his forty-day fast in the Judean desert,⁵⁵ the reader of this dissertation is immediately reminded of examples found in its previous chapters that show how Roman writers connected the love of the soft life and luxury to unmanliness, and the austere and the virtuous path with the manly life.⁵⁶ Anthony’s courage and, one might assume his manliness, allowed him to stand up to

⁵² For the nuanced and differing views of the desert in Judaic, Christian, and non-Christian spirituality, see Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 109-24.

⁵³ Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 111.

⁵⁴ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 1.5.

⁵⁵ Cf.: Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13

⁵⁶ See, e.g. 34.

Satan. Though only a creature of flesh, Anthony confronted the Devil, as well as hordes of demons, with “good courage” [καταθάρσας].⁵⁷ Athanasius shortly after reminded his audience that the Devil and the demons could only triumph over the cowardly.⁵⁸ In a culture where the dichotomy between courage and cowardice was often a gendered one, it seems likely that Athanasius’ early Byzantine readers would have seen the courage displayed by Anthony in the face of supernatural attacks as evidence of his manliness.⁵⁹

The martial metaphors come fast and furious at this point in the text. “Combat” (ἄθλησις) and “struggle” (ἀγώνισμα) against a multitude of demonic threats drives the narrative.⁶⁰ Despite his biographer’s reassurances that the Saviour’s “work in Anthony” helped him with his struggles, throughout much of this section, Anthony seemingly relied on his own courage and self-mastery to beat back a constant barrage of demonic attacks. In fact, the only assistance he received was from some of his friends in the “real” world who sought to soothe his “wounds” and provided him with the meagre sustenance required to face his adversaries.⁶¹ In a life famously bereft of miracles, God intervened with a ray of divine light to drive off a horde of demons only after Anthony had proven his worthiness in combat.⁶² In Athanasius’ telling, Anthony appeared somewhat exasperated, when God finally got involved, indeed, he demanded to know why the Saviour had not shown up sooner. God explained to Anthony, that he had always been watching over him, but that he wanted to see Anthony’s courage under fire. Like the young Roman soldier who first needed to be blooded in battle to gain his comrades’ and his commander’s respect, Anthony had to prove his qualities in spiritual warfare before he was able to break down some of the barriers between heaven and earth. As a harbinger of Anthony’s future fame, God explained that he would spread news of his name “everywhere” [πανταχοῦ]. Anthony immediately discovered that he had attained even more “power” [δύναμις]. Such hyperbole reminds one less of the ideal of the humble Christian, and more of the victorious Roman general or emperor publicising a triumph.

⁵⁷ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 1.6.

⁵⁸ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 1.13.

⁵⁹ As Craig Williams argues (*Roman Homosexuality*, 142), in the Greco-Roman literary tradition “the oppositional pair masculine/effeminate” was often associated closely with the binarism of courage/cowardice.

⁶⁰ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 1.10. (I consulted and translated some of the Greek text for section 1.5-10 found at http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/main/athanasius/vita_antonii_01.shtml).

⁶¹ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 1.6-10.

⁶² This reluctance to intervene may be a response to pagan literary motifs where the Gods continually interfere in the lives of mortals.

Anthony was thirty-five years old at this time, the prime of most men's lives in this period. Athanasius revealed to his readers that Anthony eagerly set out for the most difficult challenge. In his final transformation, Anthony headed deep into the heart of desert, a place where Satan and the demons were at their most powerful. In another martial metaphor, Anthony entered an abandoned fortress to begin what the author described as a twenty-year battle against his demonic foes. The author does not tell us much about this battle, preferring instead to take up the narrative when Anthony emerged victorious amongst a crowd of admirers. His description of Anthony presented a vision of a man who had taken the first steps towards the world of spiritual perfection:

When they beheld him, they were amazed to see that his body had maintained its former condition, it was neither fat from lack of exercise, nor emaciated from fasting and combat with demons, but was as they had known him prior to his withdrawal. The state of his soul was one of purity, for it was not restricted by grief, nor affected by either laughter or dejection. Moreover, when he saw the crowd, he was not annoyed any more than he was elated at being embraced by so many people. He maintained utter equilibrium, like one guided by reason and steadfast in that which accords with nature.⁶³

The heavy focus on the physiognomy and the *apatheia* of Anthony in the passage follows conventions found in classical biography and Stoic teachings. Though it is clear that Athanasius sought to paint a portrait of an individual who had taken his first steps towards incorporeity, this portrait shares some features of traditional Roman secular portraits of ideal manly deportment.⁶⁴ In fact, Anthony's self-control amidst such admiration mirrors, in some ways, Ammianus' famous account of Constantius II's arrival into Rome in 357, where in the historian's telling, during his *adventus* the emperor "exhibited no emotion" and ignored the cheering throngs by keeping "the gaze of his face straight ahead," and statue-like "turned his face neither right nor to the left".⁶⁵

At its core, the story is one of transformation. The early chapters relate the time-honoured Roman account of a young adolescent male on the cusp of manhood, and the choices he must make to become an ideal citizen and a manly Roman man.⁶⁶ Of course, what makes it special is the Christian twist on this conventional theme. Instead of

⁶³ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 1.14.

⁶⁴ Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 45.

⁶⁵ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 16.5.9-10 (trans. Hamilton). Ammianus conceded that Constantius II's deportment was "affected", but still admired the "self-control" it represented.

⁶⁶ The training Roman boys from the educated classed received to develop their "manliness" is discussed in Appendix 1, 168-70.

becoming a productive member of civic society once his metamorphosis is complete, Anthony sought to reject it.⁶⁷ Just as in Eusebius' profile of the emperor Constantine I, Athanasius both followed and subverted the classical forms of biography.⁶⁸ Whereas the ancient generals, political leaders, and emperors in traditional biography had typically demonstrated their manliness and worth in war, Anthony must validate his merit in spiritual warfare.

Conflict, albeit of a spiritual and a metaphorical type, is rife in the early part of the *Life* where Anthony has to prove his worth. Athanasius portrayed a world where Anthony vied for supremacy with false Hellenic deities and the Devil. In the words of Claudia Rapp, "Anthony's progressive withdrawal into the desert amounted to nothing less than a territorial battle with the demons".⁶⁹ According to Athanasius, the demons whom Anthony confronted in the tombs outside his hometown and deep in the desert represented fallen angels who had tricked the Greek oracles into worshipping them as Hellenic deities.⁷⁰ It seems likely then, that for Athanasius, Anthony's numerous victories over these demons—spurred on by God's spirit within him—symbolised the Christians' triumph over the pagans and their "false" pantheon of gods. Anthony's role as a prototypical soldier of Christ dominates the early part of the biography.⁷¹ In fact, Anthony faced many of the same choices and challenges that a young Roman recruit would have confronted upon joining the Eastern Roman army—the abandonment of one's city and family to an often distant outpost at the fringes of Empire, rigorous drilling to hone one's battle skills, and courage under the guidance of a commander who served as a conduit to courage and virtue.

The *Life of Anthony* demonstrates once again that Christian theologians often sought to associate their Christian heroes with traditional aspects of Roman masculine ideology.

⁶⁷ In the end his rejection is only partial. Anthony in fact communicates directly with many secular leaders of the day, including the emperor.

⁶⁸ Cameron, "Form and Meaning", 75.

⁶⁹ Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 110.

⁷⁰ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 1.22, 1.33. For the influence of "Greek" culture on Athanasius' vision of these pagan deities and his view that the pagan gods were not imaginary but demons in disguise, see Dag Oisten Endsjo, *Primordial Landscapes, Incorruptible Bodies: Desert Asceticism and the Christian Appropriation of Greek Ideas on Geography Bodies, and Immortality* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008).

⁷¹ It is, however, Anthony's role as a "teacher" that plays the prominent role in the remainder of the biography. For this theme, see Philip Rousseau, "Anthony as Teacher in the Greek *Life*", in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 89-109.

Though this *Life* must at its core be seen as a work of Christian literature based on biblical allusions and mimesis,⁷² it also adhered to some of the basic tenets of biography and traditional codes of masculinity based on one's self-mastery, courage in the face of danger, and the need to prove these skills in combat. In a culture that had long associated courage in warfare with manliness, and cowardice in battle with unmanliness, we can understand why proving one's bravery in even metaphorical struggles remained a fundamental aspect in the creation of any early Byzantine hero. It is probably not too much to suppose that the ability of these Late Roman and early Byzantine writers to adopt, and at the same time adapt, these traditional codes was critical in gaining support from the classically educated elites in the fourth and the fifth centuries.

The extreme ascetic life exemplified by Egyptian monks like Anthony, as well as the more city-linked asceticism popularised in the Syrian and Mesopotamian forms, proved attractive for a segment of devoted Christians in the latter half of the fourth and the fifth-centuries—particularly in the Eastern half of the Empire. Though the movement was probably never as popular or esteemed as some modern studies would have us believe, even Christians, like Augustine, who practiced a more moderate form of asceticism, felt attracted to its allure.⁷³ One finds that the early Byzantine historians—Christian and even some secular—thought that their audiences would be interested in the deeds of these holy heroes.⁷⁴ One observes a good example of this admiration in the fifth-century Church historians. Sozomen populated his ecclesiastical history with a multitude of often-obscure holy men. In a remark that suggests that these holy men may have been seen as masculine as well as religious role models, Sozomen described Anthony as “manly” [ἀνδρεῖος].⁷⁵ In fact, he praised all ascetics for their ability to “manfully” [ἀνδρεῖως] subjugate their passions and control what he described as their bodies’ “natural weakness” [σώματος ἀσθενείας].⁷⁶ The holy man’s martial qualities in his spiritual battles also

⁷² Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau, “Introduction: Biography and Panegyric”, in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 16-23.

⁷³ Augustine, *Confessions* (trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin [London: Penguin, 1961]), 10.43.70: “Terrified by my sins and the dead weight of my misery, I had turned my problems over in my mind and was half determined to seek refuge in the desert”.

⁷⁴ See, e.g. Procopius (*Wars* 1.7.7-8, 2.13.14-5) Geoffrey Greatrex argues, that even if these accounts of Christian ascetics comes from another source, Procopius’ use of them indicates that both he and his audience were interested in the deeds of “holy heroes”. Geoffrey Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502-532* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1998), 63, 87.

⁷⁵ Sozomen, *HE* 1.13.6.

⁷⁶ Sozomen, *HE* 1.12.3.

attracted notice. Another fifth-century Church historian, Socrates of Constantinople, who assumed that most of his readers were familiar with Athanasius' account, ignored most of Anthony's ascetic traits, as well as his later deeds as the leader of his monastic community, but still found space in his truncated account to praise the saint for his combat with demons, and his ability to overcome their "wily modes of warfare".⁷⁷

Anthony's spiritual battles certainly became a focal point for latter hagiographers to emulate in their writings. The author of the life of a popular fifth-century pillar saint, Daniel the Stylite, revealed that early in his "career" the holy man fought demons in order to emulate "the model of asceticism" Anthony.⁷⁸ Instead of fighting his battles against demons deep within the desert, however, Daniel took his fight to a church within a city. The author wrote:

On reaching the porch of the church, just as a brave soldier strips himself for battle before venturing against a host of barbarians, so he, too, entered the church reciting the words spoken by the prophet, David, in the Psalms: 'The Lord is my light and my saviour, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' (ps. 27:1) and the rest. And holding the invincible weapon of the Cross, he went round into each corner of the church making genuflections and prayers.

Like the barbarian enemies that afflicted the empire, however, the demons plaguing the church refused to go down without a fight. They threw stones at him and threatened to take his life. As long as the "athlete of Christ" Daniel kept awake and focussed on reciting his prayers, the demons had no way to harm him.⁷⁹ Whereas the trumpet blast of the Roman army struck fear in the Empire's foes, here the power of prayer enfeebled the enemy.

The examples above, and others like it from hagiographical accounts of the period, attest to the attraction for some early Byzantine Christian intellectuals in representing the holy man as an exemplar of virtuous Christian behaviour, and at times courageous and manly men as well. Part of this appeal may have been the independent authority that often allowed these individuals to act outside of the restrictions of either the State or the religious establishment. These men often show up in secular and Church histories as

⁷⁷ Socrates, *HE* 1.21.

⁷⁸ *Life of Daniel the Stylite*, 14 (trans. Elizabeth Dawes and Norman Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948])

⁷⁹ *Life of Daniel the Stylite*, 14-15.

heroic men of great power and influence who stand up to secular and ecclesiastical authority, and even to the enemies of the Empire.⁸⁰

We do know, however, that some members of the clergy saw these independent holy men as a threat, or at least as individuals who needed to be brought more fully under the Church's control. One way local bishops accomplished this aim was by seeking to prevent ascetics from wandering from place to place by recommending stability in a monastery.⁸¹ In addition, it is important to emphasise that, despite the fact that "independent" holy men continued to play an important role in the early Byzantine Empire, when compared to the clergy within the Empire's cities, their actual political authority and influence over theological debates were limited.⁸² Indeed, by the close of the fourth century, we find Christian theologians more and more emphasising the heroic virtues of the clergy living within the cities.⁸³ The fifth-century bishop and ecclesiastical historian Theodoret of Cyrrhus stressed that living a virtuous life amongst the temptations of the Empire's cities represented a more difficult challenge than starving alone in the desert.⁸⁴ It is to the most powerful member of the early Byzantine clergy, the bishop, that we now turn.

Bishops

The bishop represented Christianity's involvement in, and responsibility to, the secular world. A bishop's power was heavily dependent on his moral superiority. Because a bishop was an exemplar of supreme Christian conduct, it was natural that a bishop's lifestyle would be compared to that of the holy men. Consequently, although many bishops were married when elected, the leaders of the Church frowned on subsequent sexual relationships, often preferring virginal candidates.⁸⁵ In addition to his "ascetic authority", a bishop frequently wielded a great deal of "pragmatic authority".⁸⁶ As one finds with the example of the rather reluctant bishop, Synesius, bishops in the Later Empire were often

⁸⁰ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 1.7.7-11.

⁸¹ Rousseau, "Monasticism", 775.

⁸² Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of Christianization of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 72-3.

⁸³ See, e.g. Ambrose, *Epistula Extra Collectionem* 14.74.

⁸⁴ Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 120-21.

⁸⁵ Philip Rousseau, "Bishops", in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, Oleg Grabar (Cambridge: Harvard University Press / The Belknap Press, 1999), 342.

⁸⁶ Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 23-55, 100-55.

chosen because they hailed from the educated landowning elite, and therefore could be expected to use their social position and wealth to administer and look after the well-being of their communities.⁸⁷

The episcopate offered other benefits for Roman men. Their roles as spiritual and civic leaders at times provided bishops in the larger sees with direct access to the emperor and his inner-circle—a place of power and decision making that was increasingly out of reach for even the most esteemed members of the Roman upper classes.⁸⁸ In the court-dominated world of the early Byzantine Empire, where political influence represented a highly valued commodity, this close contact with the imperial court allowed some bishops to become patronage brokers with considerable influence. Even though the majority of bishops in the smaller bishoprics scattered throughout the Empire could never hope to gain such intimate contact with imperial authorities, even these men from the backwaters of the Empire could expect to send a missive on rather minor affairs direct to the eyes of the emperor or his inner-circle, as Fergus Millar has shown.⁸⁹ Therefore, while bishops remained largely subordinate to the emperor and his officials, as defenders of the local peace, advocates for their community's poor, sponsors of regional building projects, and protectors of the holy relics, many Late Roman bishops became powerful men in their own right.⁹⁰

Evidence for the growing power of the episcopate, as well as the need for some bishops to highlight their moral authority over secular rivals is found in Bishop Ambrose's famous dispute with the Emperor Valentinian II (ruled 383-392) and his mother the Empress Justina (ca. 340-ca. 390). This confrontation, as well as his disputes with Theodosius I, were well publicised in Western and Eastern sources of the period.⁹¹ In his clash with the Western court, the Nicene Ambrose went to great lengths in his public writings to describe how his Christian faith had furnished him with the "tools" to deny an imperial order to abandon his basilica to the *Homoian* imperial court in the first half of 386.⁹² Ambrose portrayed himself as a victim of imperial aggression. When the bishop and

⁸⁷ Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 17-18.

⁸⁸ Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 260.

⁸⁹ Millar, *Greek Roman Empire*, 60-2.

⁹⁰ Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 138-41.

⁹¹ Some Greek sources include, Sozomen, *HE* 7.13, 7.25, 8.4, Theodoret, *HE* 4.6, 5.17-18.

⁹² As J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz notes (*Ambrose of Milan*, 130), it would have been difficult for the embattled Valentinian II to evict a Nicene bishop without provoking the Nicene Eastern Emperor Theodosius I.

his supporters—who were guarding the basilica—found themselves surrounded by Valentinian II's soldiers, Ambrose declared, "If force is used, resistance I know nothing about. When I face arms, soldiers, Goths, even tears are my weapons; for such are the defences of a bishop". Similar to the early Christian martyrs, his "weakness", however, was in actuality based on his superior courage. "Neither weapons nor do barbarians", Ambrose continued, "inspire fear in man who is not afraid of death, who is not held back by the inclinations of the flesh".⁹³ Though adorned with Christian values, behind some of Ambrose's prose is ancient Greco-Roman masculine rhetoric extolling the unselfish manliness of men who treated their own deaths with scorn by standing up to "tyrants" for the good of others, or for their own "righteous" convictions.⁹⁴

In his account of the dispute, the Church historian Rufinus portrayed the clash between Ambrose and the imperial family in gendered and martial terms. Emphasising the role of the empress Justina, while deemphasising Valentinian II's part in the dispute, he wrote:

In this war she assailed Ambrose, the wall of the church and its stoutest tower, harassing him with threats, terrors, and every kind of attack as she sought a first opening into the church she wanted to conquer. But while she fought armed with the spirit of Jezebel, Ambrose stood firm, filled with the power and grace of Elijah.⁹⁵

The Milanese bishop, Rufinus continued, had sought to "ward off the empress's fury" not with "hand or weapon, but with fasts and unceasing vigils".⁹⁶

It is also probably no coincidence that in the midst of this dispute, Ambrose "discovered" the relics of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius.⁹⁷ Here he took a less passive stance. In a letter to his sister, the bishop related the metaphorical "martial" qualities of these dead saints, whom he asserted could be called upon in his confrontation with his imperial opponents:

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus, that in the holy martyrs you have raised for us such an effective guardian spirits, at a time when your Church needs greater defenders. Let

⁹³ Ambrose, *Ep. 75. 7*, in *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, (trans. J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, TTH 43[Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006]), 146.

⁹⁴ Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 142.

⁹⁵ Rufinus, *HE 11.15*, in *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia, books 10 and 11* (trans. Philip Amidon [Oxford: Oxford University, 1997]).

⁹⁶ Rufinus, *HE 11.16*.

⁹⁷ For the dates of these letters and a historical summary of the dispute, see Liebeschuetz, *Political Letters*, 124-35.

everybody take note what kind of champions I seek: champions who have the power to defend, but do not practise aggression. This kind of champion I have acquired for you, my holy people: champions to benefit everybody and harm no one. Such are the 'defenders' to whom I pay court, such the soldiers whom I maintain, that is, not soldiers of the world, but soldiers of Christ.⁹⁸

Whereas the emperor and his soldiers ruled in the secular world, Ambrose implied here that he and the "soldiers of Christ" held sway in the spiritual one. Contemporaries of Ambrose once again presented the dispute in gendered terms. In reference to Ambrose's "triumph" over the empress Justina, Augustine of Hippo declared that the discovery of the martyrs had allowed the Milanese bishop "to thwart a feminine [*femineam*] fury [*rabiem*], but also a royal one".⁹⁹

It is true that Ambrose constructed an image of the dispute that he wished to convey. Yet, passages like those discussed above—whether they are completely accurate or not—provide us with lucid examples of how these classically trained orators created, what one modern academic describes as a "Christian discourse" that could be wielded to promote the moral as well as the political authority of the episcopate.¹⁰⁰ By adopting the Hellenic tradition of *parrhesia* (freedom of speech) that had formally granted the politically non-aligned philosopher the ability at times to speak "truthfully" to the emperor, bishops like Ambrose in the West and John Chrysostom in the East helped to establish the episcopate "as the arbitrator of imperial mercy".¹⁰¹ Ambrose explained his vision of this role for bishops in a letter to Theodosius I, "It is not the part of an emperor to deny freedom of speech, so it is not that of a bishop to refrain from saying what he thinks".¹⁰² Though exaggerated for rhetorical effect, this sentiment on the part of Ambrose reflected the real power that bishops and holy men had throughout the Byzantine period to be listened to

⁹⁸ Ambrose, *Ep.* 77.10.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* 9.7.16, quoted and trans. in Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 135. Moreover, Ambrose's "protection" as well as that of John of Chrysostom some twenty years later in Constantinople—was not merely metaphorical. Both men had cultivated considerable support amongst the local population, and one suspects from the literary evidence that some of these individuals were more than willing to lay down their lives to protect "their" bishops. Sozomen (*HE* 8.18), though an ardent supporter of John related with some anguish a mob's attempt to first prevent the bishop's exile from his see in Constantinople in 403. Unlike Ambrose, John snuck out of his Church and accepted banishment. However, unrest amongst his supporters saw John's recall by the emperor shortly after, only latter to be banished for good after a dispute with the Empress Eudoxia.

¹⁰⁰ Cameron, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 139. I must reject Kuefler's claim (*Manly Eunuch*, 130) that Ambrose's "stands" against the emperors represented a "new manliness" in action. Kuefler overstates Ambrose's and other Late Roman bishops' ability to make Roman emperors "submit to them".

¹⁰¹ Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 65-6, 111-13.

¹⁰² Ambrose, *Ep.* 74.2.

respectfully by the emperor and his representatives.¹⁰³ In a culture where a man's masculine identity was often connected closely to his public authority, bishops could thus feel and be seen by others as powerful and, at times, manly men.¹⁰⁴

Of course the case of Ambrose standing up to the imperial regimes of Valentinian II and Theodosius I and emerging largely triumphant was exceptional, and was possible primarily because of the Milanese bishop's mastery of the complex Northern Italian politics of the day. Certainly, few later bishops had the inclination, the courage, or most importantly, the power, to follow Ambrose's example.¹⁰⁵ The Eastern emperors, in particular, "left little scope for independent initiatives by bishops".¹⁰⁶ I would suggest, however, that Ambrose's example, though extreme, sheds some light on the growing authority of bishops, and the need by some Christian authors to represent them as manly role models for the Church's growing authority in the early Byzantine Empire. Ambrose's supposed deeds stimulated the imaginations of those fifth-century theologians who sought to curtail the emperor's dominant role within the Church.¹⁰⁷ Much of this literature presented confrontational bishops like Ambrose as idealised Christians and as manly men. Sozomen, for instance, remembered Ambrose for the "manly [ἀνδρείως] and very holy way he represented his office".¹⁰⁸ For Sozomen, bishops need not make as dramatic a stand as Ambrose against the emperor to be seen as paradigms of Christian courage and manliness. Sozomen made it a point in his history to praise emperors who "never imposed any commands on priests", and praised bishops, who "manfully [ἀνδρείως] resisted the emperor" when he interfered in what the historian saw as the affairs of the Church.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John*, 268.

¹⁰⁴ For public authority and political virtues as an essential aspect of Roman masculine ideology, see Montserrat, "Reading Gender", 153-82, Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 19-69, Harlow, "Clothes Maketh the Man", 44.

¹⁰⁵ For the similarities and differences between Ambrose's and John's stands against the imperial family, see Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John*, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John*, 266.

¹⁰⁷ Theodoret (*HE* 5.17) went to great lengths to make Ambrose's dispute against Theodosius I even more dramatic and confrontational.

¹⁰⁸ Sozomen, *HE* 6.24.6 (my trans.).

¹⁰⁹ Sozomen, *HE* 6.21 (my trans.). Sozomen here was describing an incident in 353 when the bishop of Rome Liberius, against Constantius II's wishes, refused to condemn the Bishop Athanasius. Ammianus (*Res gestae* 15.7) provides the secular alternative of the incident, seeing it as an example of Christian arrogance and of a bishop prying "into matters outside his province".

Thus, for a ruling class that valued its social standing, by the fifth century holding an ecclesiastical office offered a means for religious fulfilment and worldly prestige.¹¹⁰ Reflecting on this development, one recent study on Late Roman masculinity goes so far to claim: “It was as bishops, then, that men of the later Roman aristocracy rescued their political identities and their social superiority and found a new means to achieve manliness”.¹¹¹ Even though we should remain cautious in making such extravagant claims as the preceding one, Robert Markus was surely correct when he concluded that the union of the holy men of the desert and the clerical authority in the cities altered “the spiritual landscape of Late Antiquity”.¹¹²

The Pious Emperor

On a summer day in 450, the forty-eight year old Eastern Roman emperor, Theodosius II died of injuries sustained in a horse riding accident. Having reigned since his father Arcadius’ death in 408, many contemporary Eastern Romans had never known another ruler. Such an end represented a somewhat ironic demise for an emperor better known by most modern historians for his ineffectual rule, monkish character, and prominent role in contemporary Christological debates, than for a zest for the active life.¹¹³ Similar to many upper-class Romans of the time, the emperor and his family were dedicated Christians.¹¹⁴ One sees evidence of this devotion in the literary and the visual sources from the reign.¹¹⁵ This emphasis is certainly found in the writings of the Eastern Church historians whose literary genre flourished during the emperor’s reign.¹¹⁶ One

¹¹⁰ Salzman, *Christian Aristocracy*, 204-05. As Salzman notes (*Christian Aristocracy*, 132-33), members of the aristocracy had been somewhat reluctant in the fourth century to pursue careers within the Church.

¹¹¹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 125.

¹¹² R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 181.

¹¹³ See especially Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 101, 130, Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 87.

¹¹⁴ A discussion of the imperial family’s religious devotion is found in Millar, *Greek Roman Empire*, 35-36 and Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 300. For a different perspective, see Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, 33. I would suggest that Theodosius, like his grandfather, was a sincere and devoted Christian.

¹¹⁵ Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 101.

¹¹⁶ The first half of the fifth century represented a fecund period of ecclesiastical history. In the Eastern half of the Empire, no less than five Greek authors continued the Church history of Eusebius. For some of the reasons for this abundance and popularity, see Alan Cameron, “The Empress and the Poet: Paganism and Politics at the Court of Theodosius II”, *Yale Classical Studies* 27 (1982): 269-70, Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 164-75.

specialist on the period remarks that many of the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians' descriptions of Theodosius II appear more characteristic of a Late Roman holy man, bishop, or monk than that of an archetypal Late Roman emperor.¹¹⁷ For example, Socrates, whose generally fair and balanced account provides us with the best narrative of the reign, informs his readers that the imperial family ran the palace like a monastery. He even suggests that the emperor wore a hair-coat—typical of extreme Eastern ascetics—underneath his royal garb and dedicated his days and nights to prayer, fasting, and study of sacred texts. Seemingly reneging on an earlier promise (*HE* 1.1.2-3) not to cross the line from historian to panegyrist, Socrates extolled what he saw as the emperor's "Christian" virtues:

He evinced so much prudence, that he appeared to those who conversed with him to have acquired wisdom from experience. Such was his fortitude in undergoing hardships, that he would courageously endure both heat and cold; fasting very frequently, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays; and this he did from an earnest endeavour to observe with accuracy all the prescribed forms of the Christian religion.¹¹⁸

Here we find all of the characteristics of the standard bishop or holy man.¹¹⁹ Throughout his history, Socrates created an image of Theodosius II as a model leader of both the Church and the State. Theresa Urbainczyk has recently illustrated how highlighting the ascetic authority of the emperor allowed Socrates to link the "unity of the Empire and the unity of the Church". Having the emperor conform to his vision of the attributes of an ideal bishop allowed the historian to promote to his readers the controversial idea that the emperor represented the dominant, and indeed, the "rightful", leader of the Church. This stance by Socrates contrasted sharply with that of his fellow Church historians, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Rufinus, who, as noted earlier, frequently supported the idea of the bishop as the primary authority in ecclesiastical affairs.¹²⁰

Sozomen presented a slightly more conventional portrait of Theodosius II as a quintessential Christian Roman emperor and man. In an introduction dedicated to the emperor, and most likely recited in front of the court in Constantinople, Sozomen's account

¹¹⁷ Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, 145.

¹¹⁸ Socrates, *HE* 7.22.

¹¹⁹ As Conor Whately (pers. comm.) has pointed out to me, an ability to endure hardships like hot and cold courageously had long been part of the rhetoric of the emperor or commander as '*commilitones*'.

¹²⁰ Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, 164-176. Urbainczyk contends as well (*Socrates*, 158-9) that Socrates' ascetic image of Theodosius II served, in part, to counter Julian's lingering reputation as an ideal "philosopher-king".

quite naturally veered from historical to unabashedly panegyric.¹²¹ The resulting impression of Theodosius II differed little from encomiums dedicated to the emperor Augustus four and a half centuries earlier: He was courageous, militarily successful, devoted to God, sexually restrained, philanthropic and benevolent.¹²² In comparison to Socrates, who made only passing mention of the emperor's martial qualities, Sozomen claimed that Theodosius' days were filled with military training, physical exercise, and state affairs, while his nights were spent in study.¹²³

Though men had trained the young emperor in arms, horse riding and letters, Sozomen attributed Theodosius' Christian piety and manly deportment to the upbringing and influence of his pious sister, Pulcheria. Amalgamating the traditional "womanly aristocratic" virtue of sisterly devotion, with the newer Christian emphasis on celibacy,¹²⁴ the historian applauded the emperor's elder sister for devoting "her virginity to God", and helping to guide "Theodosius into piety" by showing him the wisdom of constant prayer, respect for the clergy, and honouring the church with a steady stream of "gifts and treasure".¹²⁵

Although piety had always been one of the imperial virtues, Socrates and Sozomen, like other Christian sources from the period, emphasise this quality and the emperor's other Christian qualities such as charity over the emperor's more "traditional" virtues such as courage, wisdom, and prudence.¹²⁶ In addition, following Old Testament precedents and contemporary hagiographical motifs, the Church historians, tended to attribute the military victories of orthodox emperors to the power of piety and prayer.¹²⁷ We see evidence of this view in Sozomen's declaration that "Piety alone suffices for the salvation

¹²¹ It was expected that historians would exaggerate the virtues and exploits of living emperors, See, e.g. Agathias, *Histories* preface, 18-20. However, I must add we do find in Eunapius and in Procopius (*Wars* 1.24.39, 2.28.38-44, 7.1.30) criticisms of living emperors.

¹²² For the use of a similar combination of virtues in literary depictions of the emperor Augustus, see Conway, *Behold the Man*, 65. On the "minor modifications" imposed by Christianity on these standard imperial virtues, see Lesile Brubaker, "Sex, Lies, and Textuality: the Secret History of Prokopios and the Rhetoric of Gender in Sixth-century Byzantium", in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 86.

¹²³ Sozomen, *HE* 9.1.

¹²⁴ Salzman, *Christian Aristocracy*, 162-63.

¹²⁵ Sozomen, *HE* 9.1.

¹²⁶ For piety as an essential imperial virtue from the reign of Augustus, see Conway, *Behold the Man*, 45-6, 51, 59.

¹²⁷ Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 96-99.

of princes; and without piety, armies, a powerful empire, and every other resource, are of no avail".¹²⁸

Few modern scholars have been able to resist the temptation of seeing in such depictions a moving away from traditional marital virtues such as courage or manliness toward more Christian notions of extreme asceticism and piety. Since I will spend the remainder of this chapter rebutting aspects of these arguments, what follows are brief summaries, and a few initial comments and criticisms of some of their main claims. Theresa Urbainczyk's view is typical. She writes: "The Church became aware of the incongruity of celebrating military prowess in a Christian emperor and preferred to stress more Christian qualities....The change in emphasis would have also have had imperial approval".¹²⁹ Kenneth Holum proposes that this change in Christian imperial ideology had emerged in the reign of Theodosius II's Grandfather, Theodosius I. He points to Christian literature surrounding Theodosius I's victory over his Western rival, Eugenius, at the battle of Frigidus in 384 as evidence of this new ideology: "In that battle, contemporary authors stressed, the soldiers' weapons had accomplished nothing at all. Theodosius had accomplished nothing at all. Theodosius had mastered Eugenius through piety alone, his tears and prayers". According to Holum, in the reigns of his sons, Honorius and Arcadius, this Christian imperial dogma became more pronounced. He concludes: "The new ideology owed much to the old, but the personal qualities on which victory depended had been transformed, from strategic ability and brute military strength to the emperor's Christian *eusebeia*".¹³⁰ Peter Heather, too, points to a change in imperial ideology in the reign of Theodosius I. He argues more plausibly, however, that this emphasis on piety in the speeches of the court-propagandist, the Hellenic philosopher Themistius, represented a means to deal with changing political realities and military setbacks at the hands of the Goths in the years after Adrianople, as much as a real and permanent shift in imperial ideology.¹³¹ I agree that this stress on the emperor's "Christian" virtues, and the apparent rejection of the typical Roman adulation of brute force, seems to have been a response to Theodosius' rather embarrassing failure to crush the Goths in 381, as well as the ensuing incorporation of many of these "barbarian enemies" into his armed forces. Before these

¹²⁸ Sozomen, *HE* 9.1. Cf. Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 134-35.

¹²⁹ Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, 146. She does, however, leave open the possibility that this emphasis was taken out of necessity since Theodosius II had no military virtues worth mentioning.

¹³⁰ Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 50-1.

¹³¹ Heather and Moncur, *Politics*, 261-62.

defeats, Themistius had, in fact, gone to great lengths to promote Theodosius' warlike qualities, and had expressed in typical jingoistic and militaristic rhetoric, the emperor's need for revenge against the Goths for the setback at Adrianople.¹³²

Nevertheless, there are problems with all of these approaches. It is surely hazardous to rely largely on Christian writers' versions of battles like Frigidus and their visions of "pious" Roman emperors, as Holum does, as firm evidence of a cultural shift away from martial virtues as a key component of imperial ideology. Historians must take care when relying on ancient sources with a Christian rather than a historical agenda. As Alan Cameron warns, ecclesiastical history operated "on a theological rather than a historical plane"; secular wars and military victories were only of interest for the ecclesiastical authors "for the light they cast on the piety and orthodoxy of the victors".¹³³ This motive helps to explain why these Christian sources emphasised the bloodless and miraculous nature of Theodosius I's victory at Frigidus against the supposed pagan elements of Eugenius' forces.¹³⁴ It was only natural that these Christian sources, depending on Old Testament precedents (Joshua 6.20) as well fourth-century trends in Christian hagiography and panegyric, would highlight the pivotal role that the "hand of God" played in the triumph of the "orthodox" and "pious" Theodosius, while marginalising both the numbers and the military qualities of his soldiers. Such a view probably had imperial approval. For Theodosius I and his heirs, a hard-fought contest between two rival Christian emperors heading evenly matched Roman armies of a similar religious makeup was perhaps better explained as a bloodless and providential triumph over a numerically superior Western army intent on re-establishing pagan worship.

Though I would not deny the worth—and indeed the absolute necessity—of using Christian sources in helping to reconstruct secular events in the murky late-fourth and fifth-century, some care must be taken. Certainly, to proclaim the end of the relevance of the emperor and his soldiers' "brute military strength" as a key component of the Empire's well-being and as a key aspect of imperial ideology on such slanted evidence, as Holum does, is wrong-headed. Two Late Roman sources less favourable to Theodosius I, Eunapius and the Christian historian, Philostorgius (a Church historian who opposed Theodosius I's Christological position), portrayed Frigidus "as just another triumph of the

¹³² Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 98-101.

¹³³ Alan Cameron (*Last Pagans*, 103-09) disputes this "pagan" revival, and contends that the wind miracle was the gradual "invention" of later Christian writers.

¹³⁴ S. G. McCormack, "Latin Prose Panegyrics", in *Empire and Aftermath: Silver Latin II*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London, 1975), 169-72.

stronger over the weaker”.¹³⁵ Therefore, the marginalising of martial virtues and the trumpeting of Christian values promoted by Late Roman Christian and imperial sources may simply represent the demands of one’s literary genre and/or a response by imperial ideology to military setbacks and civil war.

We have evidence that Theodosius II sought to present himself as the face of Roman military victory. In a similar fashion as Justinian I in the next century, Theodosius II seemed to know the importance of claiming “the credit for military successes”.¹³⁶ His religious devotion and his belief in providence certainly did not keep him from commissioning equestrian monuments of himself to commemorate “his” victories over the Persians 420/21 and the Huns 441/2.¹³⁷ In fact, it was this image of Theodosius II as the protector of the Eastern Empire and the driving force behind the “triumphs” over the Huns and Persians that served as prominent themes in Olympiodorus’ secular history and the early Byzantine ecclesiastical histories of Theodoret, Sozomen, and Evagrius.¹³⁸

Without a doubt, military success represented an essential component to the ideology of both the state and the Church in the Christian Eastern Roman Empire of Theodosius II.¹³⁹ By his reign, it had in fact become difficult to separate the two. Though exaggerated for rhetorical effect, the famous quotation from a sermon from 428 by the newly elected bishop of Constantinople, Nestorius, highlighted this intimate connection between “orthodoxy” and military success: “Give me King, thee earth purged of heretics, and I will give you heaven in return. Aid me in destroying heretics, and I will assist you in vanquishing the Persians”.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, it should cause little surprise then that the younger Theodosius, who sought to justify and glorify his leadership of the Church and the

¹³⁵ Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 111. Eunapius, frag. 60.1, Philostorgius, *HE* 11.2.

¹³⁶ On Theodosius’ equestrian monument in Hebdomon just outside the capital, see Holum, *Theodosian Emperors*, 110. For the rather inconclusive outcome of these wars, yet the relative prosperity of the Eastern Empire at the close of Theodosius II’s reign, see Millar, *Greek Roman Empire*, 62-83.

¹³⁷ A.D. Lee, “The Empire at War”, in *CCAG*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 343-45.

¹³⁸ Olympiodorus, frag. 43.1-2. Theodoret, *HE* 5.7.4-10, Sozomen, *HE* 9.6.1, Evagrius, *HE* 1.19. The pagan Olympiodorus’ history composed around 427 was dedicated to Theodosius II. For Olympiodorus’ possible close relationship with Theodosius II and the Empress Eudocia, see Warren Treadgold, “The Diplomatic Career and Historical Work of Olympiodorus of Thebes”, *The International Historical Review* 26 4 (2004): esp. 714, 723.

¹³⁹ For this point, see Millar, *Greek Roman Empire*, 39.

¹⁴⁰ Socrates, *HE* 7.29.5. Socrates, in fact, used this speech to criticise Nestorius for his hardline against those the bishop considered heretics. Socrates portrayed many of the disputes that disrupted the Church and the fourth and the fifth centuries as a waste of time.

State, would have supported the creation of ideologies that portrayed him as both a model religious and secular leader.

The increasing juxtaposition of Church and state affairs that marked the politics of the Theodosian age is reflected in the writings of many contemporary Christian sources. In opposition to Holum's and Urbainczyk's conclusions about Christian writers growing tendency to marginalise militarism, a wealth of evidence is found in their writings applauding the Roman emperors' and their soldiers' military prowess. One example should suffice. In the following passage, the fifth-century Christian poet Prudentius celebrated the Emperor Honorius' "Christian" Roman army's victory over the Goths:

To lead our army and our empire we had a young warrior mighty in Christ, and his companion and father [-in-law] Stilicho, and Christ the one God of both. It was after worship at Christ's altar and when the mark of the cross was imprinted on the brow, that the trumpets sounded. First before the dragon standards went a spear-shaft raising the crest of Christ. There the race that for thirty years had plagued Pannonia was at last wiped out and paid the penalty.¹⁴¹

This sentiment represented a common theme in many Christian writings of the time. Sharing a view espoused by their model Eusebius, Sozomen, and Socrates made it clear in their histories that the well-being of the Church remained linked inexorably to the military successes of the Roman armies. Yet, Socrates and Sozomen included information on secular matters seemingly unlinked to Church affairs in their accounts. Socrates, in particular, knew that this inclusion set this history apart from his model Eusebius (and in some ways his contemporaries like Theodoret).¹⁴² This gradual move away from purely Christian histories is not so strange considering that these ecclesiastical historians lived in a different age than their historiographical model. By the time these men composed their histories, the Christian Roman Empire was nearly a century and a half old; paganism was a spent force, and Christian symbolism and iconography were an important part of Roman military ideology. Whereas Eusebius' history had been largely a tale of the Christian Church's fight against its external enemies, and in particular the "prosecuting" pagan Roman emperors, the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians concentrated on the battle against "heretics" within, and the integral relationship between the success of the Roman armies and the success of the Church.¹⁴³ To varying degrees, these ecclesiastical historians provided details on secular and military affairs and the actions of brave soldiers,

¹⁴¹ Prudentius, c. *Symmachus* 2 ll. 709-14, quoted in Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 131.

¹⁴² Socrates' prefatory comments to open book six suggests that some of his early readers had been critical of his heavy focus on secular matters.

¹⁴³ Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, 150.

and even provided accounts of “brave” Roman citizens taking up arms against foreign invaders.¹⁴⁴ This inclusion was no accident. Socrates explained he included such formerly taboo topics for two primary reasons. First, and most important, as he put it, “when public affairs were in turmoil, those of the Church were in turmoil”. He continued by justifying his emphasis on the life and deeds of Roman emperors. He wrote, “I continually include the emperors in history since from the time they became Christians, the affairs of the Church have depended on them”. Last, and perhaps most revealing, he thought (or perhaps hoped) that his reading audience would tire of an endless rehashing of doctrinal disputes.¹⁴⁵

Due to the loss of much of the secular literature from the fifth century, our portrait of Theodosius II derives mostly from the relatively abundant Christian sources that survive from his reign. This skewed ratio has probably tilted our view towards the “Christian” Theodosius II somewhat.¹⁴⁶ Priscus, one the few fifth-century secular historians besides Olympiodorus to provide us with some details on his reign—albeit in a negative fashion—says very little in the fragments that survive about the emperor’s piety, and nothing about the Christological views of the imperial regime.¹⁴⁷ Instead, he voiced his concerns that Theodosius’ cowardice and lack of marital virtues had caused him to prefer to pay off the Eastern Roman enemies instead of facing them in battle.¹⁴⁸ In what survives of his work known as *Byzantine History*, Priscus created a portrait of Theodosius II and his ministers as unmanly fops. Though we lack around two thirds of the text, It appears that the career diplomat had constructed the conventional binary contrast comparing the unmanly vices of Theodosius II and his generals and eunuch advisors with the more typically martial and masculine ideals displayed by the emperor Marcian’s (ruled 450-457) military background and his strong diplomatic stance against the Huns.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ For just a few examples, Sozomen, *HE* 7.4, 9.5, 9.9, Socrates (*HE* 5.1) provided a vivid account of the citizens of Constantinople taking up arms to defend the capital against the Goths.

¹⁴⁵ Socrates *HE* pref. 5.5. This emphasis on secular events may suggest a less devout Christian audience than one might suspect.

¹⁴⁶ Hence Millar’s masterful account of the reign relies heavily on the Church historians and the *Acta* of the Oecumenical councils held during Theodosius II’s reign.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Priscus, frag 3.1: “Theodosius, who succeeded his father Arcadius as Emperor, was unwarlike [ἀπολεμος] and lived a life of cowardice [δελιλία]. He obtained peace by money, not by fighting for it.

¹⁴⁸ This paradigm was observed long ago by E. A. Thompson, who revealed that Priscus approved of anyone or group of peoples who took bold stands against barbarian peoples. E.A. Thompson, *A History of Attila and the Huns* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 189.

¹⁴⁹ Priscus, frag. 5.18-20.

The fact that the fifth century produced at least five other secular histories should serve as an important reminder, that in contrast to the West, historical writing continued to be a viable literary genre in the East. Judging from their fragments and their sixth-century successors, these works appear to have focussed on military affairs and the manliness of war. We are told that Candidus' lost history focused heavily on the future emperor Basiliscus' military "successes and failures" in Africa.¹⁵⁰ Malchus' history appeared, as well, to concentrate on the military reigns of Leo I, Zeno, and Basiliscus.¹⁵¹ Indeed, as we noted in chapter 2, with the exception of Anastasius I (ruled 491-518), Theodosius II's fifth-century successors had all begun their careers as soldiers.¹⁵²

Secular sources continued to portray military setbacks, not as acts of Divine retribution, but primarily as failures of courage and manliness. Priscus, for instance, blamed Leo I's failed campaign to recapture North Africa from the Vandals in 468 largely on its commander the future "usurper" Basiliscus. In Priscus' telling, Basiliscus—either through treachery or through cowardice—failed to act decisively, and therefore allowed the noble and valiant Roman soldiers to suffer a disastrous defeat at the hands of Vandals.¹⁵³

The disappearance of much of the secular historiography from the fifth century should always be remembered when we try to determine the extent of this era's focus on Christian virtues or a larger societal rejection of martial virtues and traditional masculine ideologies. Indeed, imagine our view of the sixth century if the complete accounts we have from Procopius, Agathias, and Theophylact had disappeared or come down to us only in fragments like all of their fifth-century counterparts. The balance of the surviving sources is such as to give a false impression of a dramatic shift in the fifth century away from an imperial, as well as a larger societal, ideology of masculinity based, in part, on martial virtues.

A New Christian Masculine Ideal?

Specialists on Late Roman masculinity have taken the thesis concerning the supposed decline in the relevance of martial manliness at the close of the fourth century a step further. Unsurprisingly, they take a more gendered reading of these shifts. Mathew Kuefler and Virginia Burrus, suggest that by the opening of the fifth century, the "manly"

¹⁵⁰Candidus, frag. 1

¹⁵¹Malchus, frags.

¹⁵² See, e.g. Priscus, frag. 5.15.

¹⁵³ Priscus, frag. 53.

asceticism best practiced by holy men, bishops and monks had become the new model of heroic behaviour for Christian Roman men to emulate. Thus, from Kuefler's perspective, by the opening of the fifth century, "monasticism was the undisputed champion of the new masculine ideal, and even men who did not live up that ideal had to recognise its symbolic force".¹⁵⁴

Of particular relevance for this study is Kuefler's contention that this Christian ideology of masculinity prevailed because it maintained many classical concepts of martial heroism and manliness based on self-mastery and courage in the face of danger. Although he claims most Christians rejected violence, he avers that they managed to adopt the Greco-Roman warrior-male tradition without fighting in secular wars. In fact, some Late Roman advocates of this new ideology claimed that because they were fighting a much more difficult spiritual battle, these ideal Christians were even more heroic and brave than a Roman legionary. He thinks that part of the reason that Christianity ultimately triumphed over paganism resulted from the religion's ability to adopt classical Greco-Roman notions of martial manliness and adapt to contemporary political and social realities. By co-opting these ideals, Christians not only began to challenge classical notions of heroic and manly behaviour, but created heroes who became archetypes of Roman courage and manliness. Of course, as Kuefler admits, this disinclination to wage war did not keep numerous Christian soldiers from serving in the Roman army before and after 312. Nevertheless, he insists that, despite the Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity, and the subsequent evolution of a Byzantine Christian army that used Christian symbols and offered prayers to the Christian God before battle, men who refused military service continued to be seen as upholding the Christian ideal of manliness.¹⁵⁵

Moreover, he concludes that upper-class Roman men were able to counteract the increasing autocracy of the emperor by taking on increasingly powerful positions of authority within the Church. In particular, it was in their role as bishops that the Christian nobility was able to achieve a new type of manliness based on one's intimate relationship with God and moral superiority. This alternative authority, as Kuefler puts it, allowed bishops, "to take on a masculine posture even towards the emperor".¹⁵⁶ He writes: "In that authority the Christian bishops found a new manliness".¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 281.

¹⁵⁵ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 108.

¹⁵⁶ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 125.

¹⁵⁷ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 130.

In *Begotten Not Made: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity*, Virginia Burrus comes to many of the same basic conclusions as Kuefler. She points to the allure that powerful positions within the Church had for men of the Later Empire. As Burrus sees it, by the end of the fourth century: “The Christian clergy are a new elite, and *officium*, in defining a higher moral duty in distinctly ascetic term, also marks the privilege and responsibility of a ruling class”.¹⁵⁸ She proposes that the gradual triumph of Christian manliness resulted because men who had formerly had been “groomed for civic leadership” found more powerful masculine roles within the hierarchy of the Church: Receding is the venerable figure of the civic leader and familial patriarch; approaching is a man marked as a spiritual father, by virtue of his place in the patrilineal chain of apostolic succession, and also as the leader of a new citizenry, fighting heroically in a contest of truth in which (as Gregory of Nyssa puts it) the weapon of choice is the “sword of the Word”.¹⁵⁹ Burrus completes a discussion on Bishop Ambrose’s promotion of a Christian “model of civic manhood” by emphasising that the preeminent military virtues were those used by individuals in what she calls “spiritualized warfare”. In Burrus’ interpretation of Ambrose’s beliefs, “When Christians renounce war, it is not, then, because they lack courage but because they possess an excess of bravery. Real men, he argues, do not strive after mere bodily fortitude but rather seek fortitude of the mind”.¹⁶⁰ Like Kuefler, she judges that Christian leaders like Ambrose managed to adopt traditional Roman martial manliness by equating their spiritual battles with traditional secular warfare. In a world where there was not such a sharp distinction between the real world and the spiritual world as our own, according to Burrus, in much of the Christian rhetoric of the Later Empire, “the roles of the emperor and the bishop are knit tightly together within the weave of military metaphors”.¹⁶¹

There is, no doubt, some truth in these views. As we have discussed, the fourth and the first half of the fifth century had witnessed major religious developments in the Eastern and Western halves of the Empire. As Fergus Millar so aptly puts it:

The prominence, both in real life and in literature, of the ideal of abstinence, extreme physical denial, and devotion to piety, whether conducted individually, or in loose groups, or in tightly organized monastic communities, could be thought to represent a

¹⁵⁸ Burrus, *Begotten Not Made*, 178.

¹⁵⁹ Burrus, *Begotten Not Made*, 4-5.

¹⁶⁰ Burrus, *Begotten Not Made*, 176.

¹⁶¹ Burrus, *Begotten Not Made*, 159-60.

revolution in the history of Christianity comparable to the conversion of Constantine himself.¹⁶²

Asceticism, best personified by exemplars of ideal Christian virtues like bishops, martyrs, monks, and holy men and holy women, certainly proved a popular theme in much of the Christian literature of the day. There was, however, no single Christian perspective on these issues. The positive views of extreme asceticism found in some of the writings of Athanasius, Ambrose, and John Chrysostom that serve as the basis for most contemporary studies on Late Roman masculinity must be balanced by other Christian and secular sources that provide more nuanced views or reject what they saw as radical views of the ideal Christian life, just as the praise of holy men in some sources must be offset by the writings of Christian theologians who sought to control these wandering ascetics. In fact, it must be pointed out that even those considered “rigorists” and advocates for a new Christian masculine ideal like the three theologians mentioned above often had more complex and/or malleable views on marriage, virginity, and the value of monks abandoning the world in search of ascetic perfection than the modern studies we have discussed recognise.¹⁶³

Clearly, there is room for disagreement concerning the acceptance by the majority of Romans in the East and the West of a Christian masculine ideal based on extreme asceticism. Kuefler and Burrus, in particular, state as established fact the idea that the often rigorist views of masculinity espoused by the Church Fathers superseded more traditional forms of manliness. But evidence from the period suggests that a number of committed Christians in this period were hesitant to embrace a form of Christianity that seemed to ask them to reject many of the essential aspects of Roman culture.¹⁶⁴ As even Kuefler admits, “many Christian men seemed content to remain in the world, despite the extortion of their leaders to flee from it”.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Millar, *Greek Roman Empire*, 131-32.

¹⁶³ For this evolution in John Chrysostom’s theology, see Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John*, 174-84.

¹⁶⁴ An example of such resistance to the ascetic ideal among even devout Christians is found in teachings of the fourth-century Western monk, Jovinianus, who rejected the need for ascetic living and the value of perpetual virginity, see D.G. Hunter, “Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late Fourth-Century Rome”, *JTS* 48 (1987): 45-64. Even Church Fathers like Augustine practiced a more moderate form of asceticism than that promoted by rigorists like the Desert Fathers and Jerome. As Liebeschuetz shows (*Ambrose and John*, 177), Augustine in *De bono coniugali*, and *De sancta virginitate* sought “to distance himself from the extreme ascetic views of Jerome and the anti-ascetic views of Jovinian”.

¹⁶⁵ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 281.

We would be wise to heed Anthony Kaldellis' warning that there is a danger of missing much of the diversity of early Byzantine society, if one depends on a simplified image of "the universally pious Byzantine of (modern) scholarship".¹⁶⁶ As Warren Treadgold suggests, it may well be that for many people in the early Byzantine Empire—perhaps even most—that asceticism or holy men were something that many people knew very little about, or possibly were inclined to scoff at.¹⁶⁷ This specialised influence of the holy heroes may be contrasted to the martial deeds of Rome's famous emperors and generals, which as we have observed represent a ubiquitous image throughout the early Byzantine age, familiar to both the educated and the uneducated masses. Even if asceticism represented a new wave of Christian manliness, it is problematic to argue that it ever became the hegemonic code of masculinity, admired and followed by the majority of men in the early Byzantine period.

Moreover, it is certainly a mistake to see all Christians as pacifists with no concern for the Empire's security. Those considered rigorist Christians like John of Chrysostom, as J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz makes plain, "accepted both the city and the Empire".¹⁶⁸ Christian theologians, as already noted, could be influenced by Roman masculine ideals based on martial virtues and courage in battle. Christian writers like Socrates, Sozomen, and even Ambrose admired the "courage" of the emperor and his soldiers that, in the words of the Milanese bishop led these men "to protect the country from barbarians in time of war".¹⁶⁹

Even less convincing is Kuefler's idea that Roman men in the Later Empire converted to Christianity as a means to "preserve the manliness of (Roman) men's identity". He implausibly suggests:

Roman men became Christians because they saw in Christian ideology a means of surmounting the gap between ancient ideals and contemporary realities. The men of late antiquity believed that their ancient counterparts had been martial conquerors, great statesmen, and commanding husbands and fathers. When compared to these ancient heroes, they could only be dismal failures. Christian ideology offered them an opportunity to recover their sense of greatness. As Christians, they could see themselves as indefatigable conquerors against evil, honored statesmen of the

¹⁶⁶ Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, 169.

¹⁶⁷ Warren Treadgold asserts that he attaches "no great importance to holy men" since most contemporaries seemed little interested in their deeds". Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 17, 263.

¹⁶⁸ Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John*, 207.

¹⁶⁹ Ambrose, *De officiis* 1.129.

Church, and exacting spiritual fathers. The new masculine ideal presented itself to them both as a repudiation of the classical heritage and as its ultimate fulfilment.¹⁷⁰

To put it another way, military defeat forced Roman men to become Christians as a means of reclaiming their “lost” manliness. There is, however, little evidence to back up Kuefler’s contention that Roman men viewed themselves “as unmanly failures” or became Christians in an effort to reclaim their masculine legacy. While I largely agree with his view that Christian ideology at times offered Roman men of the Late Empire another way of cultivating a “masculine” identity, this aim was surely not the reason most Romans chose to become Christians. Additionally, the prevalence of an ascetic manly ideal in the writings of many devout Late Roman authors is simply no basis for proclaiming the triumph of a new Christian masculine ideal even amongst dedicated Christians.

To the contrary, I suggest that by creating a pathway to “true” masculine identities, these Christian men of the Later Empire were simply retracing the steps that the demilitarised Christian and non-Christian Roman elites had taken for centuries. As Colleen Conway remarks, there was nothing “new” about the Christian masculine ideal in the Later Empire. She demonstrates, in fact, that New Testament authors responding to a “threatened masculinity” had drawn “on a variety of discourses on ancient masculinity that produced multifaceted Christological constructions”.¹⁷¹ As we observed in the writings of Eusebius and Ambrose earlier in this chapter, in the competitive and sometimes dangerous masculine-and military-centric world of the Later Empire, Christian men at times felt need to present themselves as courageous and manly while characterising their enemies as cowardly and unmanly. The Romans’ praise of the physical prowess and the acts of masculine bravery of its warriors had long been balanced by the cultivation of alternative forms of manliness based upon the more “civilised” masculinity of the literati. In a point that will be explored more fully in the next chapter, one finds, in fact, an increased militarism in the literary and visual sources of the sixth centuries, not a decline. As one specialist on the Eastern Roman army suggests, by the sixth century “the military was playing an increasingly important role in public and private life in the Eastern Roman Empire”.¹⁷²

In conclusion, the emergence of what social historians describe as a Christian rhetoric of manliness did not mark the passing of classical forms of hegemonic masculinity

¹⁷⁰ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 287, 296. Although, Kuefler’s study deals predominantly with the Western half of the Empire, he suggests (*Manly Eunuch*, 9) that a similar process occurred in the East.

¹⁷¹ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 176, 183. Conway, however, accepts Kuefler’s main thesis.

¹⁷² Whatley, “Descriptions of Battle”, 354.

based, in part, on martial virtues. Instead, it merely offered Christian men another means to promote their authority, as well affirm their masculine identity to their peers, Christian, and non-Christian.

Chapter V

Contests of Virtue and Manliness in Procopius' Gothic Wars



(Plate 6)

Show them, therefore, as quickly as possible that they are Greeks¹ [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 (trans. Dewing).

Throughout Roman history, notable wars often produced notable historians. The sixth-century conflicts of the Byzantine Empire were no exception. 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.² This chapter 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 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. I will suggest that issues of manly ἀρετή and the age-old belief in the gendered dichotomy between ἀνδρεία and ἀνανδρία play a significant role throughout the account. We will see that Procopius' biographical details on the Gothic monarchs and the Byzantine military hierarchy were often gender-based and interlocked. Therefore, to comprehend some of the significant themes found in the larger narrative, one must understand both the larger purpose of these character sketches, and

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

² 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

the ways that Procopius drew on early Byzantine attitudes towards gender, and in particular, idealised masculinity in their construction.

Procopius

Ordinarily, it might be considered problematic to rely on one historian's work as an accurate reflection of his society. There are, however, several important reasons for choosing Procopius as the main source for his era and as a good example of how early Byzantine gender ideologies were constructed. Procopius has, arguably, long been the most important and widely read early Byzantine historian.³ The *Wars*, *Buildings*, and *Secret History* are the primary, and at times the only, source for events in the crucial reign of Justinian. In their accounts of the era, eminent historians like J. B. Bury have paid Procopius the ultimate compliment by summarising large sections of the *Wars*. Procopius' writings were popular during his own lifetime as well; the historian claims that the history found an audience in every part of the Empire.⁴ His focus on military affairs and the martial deeds of the Byzantine soldiers seems to have reflected the literary tastes of the period as well.⁵ Though the audience for such a detailed prose account of Justinian's campaigns could never have been large, its Byzantine readership probably included influential Greek-speaking members of the bureaucracy and the military high command.⁶ Procopius may too have recited his work in front of larger and less-educated audiences, who, as Brian Croke

³ Procopius has received much needed attention in the past twenty-five years. Cameron (*Procopius and the Sixth Century*) and Kaldellis (*Procopius of Caesarea*) provide thorough reviews of the earlier literature, and interesting, if at times opposing, ideas on Procopius' religion, methods, intentions, and merits as a historian. Treadgold's (*Byzantine Historians*, 176-226) short study provides a good basic summary of the content of *Wars* as well as some interesting insights into Procopius' creative process. For other recent scholarship, see Geoffrey Greatrex, "Recent work on Procopius and the Composition of *Wars* VIII", *BMGS* 27 (2003): 45-67. Procopius' views on gender—particularly his attitudes towards Theodora, Antonina, Belisarius, and Justinian found in the *Secret History*—have received particular attention. Much of this work has been the byproduct of the upsurge of research focusing on the role of women in the early Byzantine Empire. Some of the best examples of these studies include: Judith Herrin, "In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach", in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Averil Cameron, and Amelie Kuhrt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 167-89, Pauline Allen, "Contemporary Portrayals of the Byzantine Empress Theodora (A.D. 527-548)", in *Stereotypes of Women in Power: Historical Perspectives and Revisionist Views*, ed. Barbara Garlick, Suzanne Dixon, and Pauline Allen (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 93-103, Talbot, "Women", 117-43, James, *Empresses*, Brubaker, "Gender and Society", 427-47.

⁴ Procopius, *Wars* 8.1.1.

⁵ For the popularity of military matters and the praise of military men in a variety of literary genres in the sixth century, see Claudia Rapp, "Literary Culture under Justinian", in *CCAG*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 376-97, Conor Whately, "Militarization or Rise of a Distinct Military Culture? The East Roman Ruling Elite in the Sixth Century", in *Warfare and Society in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. D. Boatright and S. O'Brien (Oxford: BAR Archaeopress, forthcoming).

⁶ For this probable audience, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 189, Croke, "Historiographical Audience", 33.

reminds us, “were no less used to formal rhetoric and found these works enjoyable”.⁷ The *Wars* also influenced other early Byzantine historians. Agathias, Procopius’ continuer, who accused some of his fellow sixth-century writers of composing histories that demonstrated a “flagrant disregard for the truth” and no concern for historical precision, in contrast, complimented Procopius for his accuracy and reliability.⁸ This praise was not limited to secular historians. The sixth-century ecclesiastical historian Evagrius, who paraphrased large sections of the *Wars* for his own history, revealed the esteem in which Procopius was held: “Procopius has set forth most assiduously and elegantly what was done by Belisarius, when he commanded the Eastern forces and by the Romans and Persians when they fought each other”.⁹ The regard in which contemporary historians held him and his popularity amongst an influential segment of early Byzantine society indicates that his history was considered accurate and suggests that his paradigms of heroism and masculinity were ones that his audience could appreciate.

Procopius witnessed many of the events he described and knew many of the people that helped to shape events in his history. In 527, the historian had been appointed as *assessor* (legal secretary) to Belisarius, the newly appointed commander of the Eastern forces.¹⁰ For the next thirteen years, Procopius accompanied Belisarius on his military campaigns in the East against the Persians, to the West in Africa against the Vandals, and in Italy against the Goths. Writing Belisarius’ speeches, letters, and military reports seems to have represented some of Procopius’ primary duties, suggesting that some of his material on earlier battles and set-speeches given by Belisarius may be more accurate than some scholars would have us believe.¹¹ After 540, the two parted ways, and we lose track of the historian’s exact location. We do not know if he joined Belisarius in his 541 campaign against the Persians, though he was present the next year when the plague struck in Constantinople. It is almost certain that after 542 he no longer witnessed the

⁷ Croke, “Historiographical Audience”, 32.

⁸ Agathias, *Histories* preface 18-22.

⁹ Evagrius Scholasticus, *HE* (trans. Michael Whitby [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000]) 4.12. Admittedly, as Whitby points out (Evagrius, intro. 31-32), Evagrius shifts the focus of Procopius’ secular military narrative to better highlight the providential aspects of the episodes he borrows.

¹⁰ Most historians believe that Procopius was a lawyer, Juan Signes Codoner, *Procopio de Casarea: Historia Secreta*, (Madrid, 2000), 11-12, Geoffrey Greatrex, “*Lawyers and Historians in Late Antiquity, in Law, Society and Authority in Late Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Mathisen (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001) 151, F. Tinnefeld, “Prokopios [3]” *Der Neue Pauly* 10 (2001): 391-2. However, James Howard-Johnston argues that Procopius was an engineer/architect, James Howard-Johnston, “The Education and Expertise of Procopius”, *Antiquite Tardive* 8 (2000): 19-30.

¹¹ As suggested by Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 186-206.

events he described, but relied on Byzantine diplomatic records and on his contacts in the Byzantine army and within the Italian Senate.¹²

Scholars have long noted the literary character of the *Wars*, and for some, Procopius' excessive moralising and heavy emphasis on a rather limited number of virtues and vices to describe his leading characters hinders any attempts to discover these people's actual personalities or to uncover the "real" history of the age.¹³ It is true that Procopius could shift chronology, distort the truth and, at times, tell outright lies in an effort to create a more dramatic narrative.¹⁴ Yet, we should not criticise Procopius too heavily for his penchant to stretch the truth or "recreate" the thoughts of his main players in an effort to create a more didactic account. Ancient historians cared less than their modern counterparts do about seeing men like the emperors and generals as "real" men or learning about their private lives.¹⁵ Additionally, like many of his fellow early Byzantines, Procopius made the point in his writings that a combination of fate, circumstances, God, demons, and men's vices and virtues helped to determine events in the secular world.¹⁶ Therefore, for Procopius, providing detailed or an accurate account of the foreign policies or the intricate strategic and tactical motivations of the Gothic and the Byzantine leadership were not as important as his observations on how the moral characteristics of his key players influenced the outcome of battles. This emphasis helps to explain why the historian filled his writings with numerous character sketches of the soldiers who played an integral part in Justinian's

¹² On these contacts in Italy, see Evans, *Procopius*, 31-6. For Procopius' and Agathias' use of oral sources, see Whitby, "Greek Historical Writing", 46. On Procopius' use of official sources: Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 156, and Greatrex, *Rome and Persia*, 62-64. Procopius also used written sources. Unfortunately, like many ancient historians, he failed to specify which writers he consulted.

¹³ Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 12.

¹⁴ A discussion of some of these "untruths" and the role that such deceptions play in Procopius' writings is found in Amelia Brown, "Justinian, Procopius, and Deception: Literary Lies, Politics, and the Archaeology of Sixth-Century Greece", in *Private and Public Lies: The Discourse of despotism and Deceit in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Andrew Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 355-72. For Procopius' tendency to shift chronological order to create a more didactic narrative, see Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 33.

¹⁵ As Kate Cooper has convincingly shown, for these ancient authors events in their characters' private lives only had meaning to the extent that they influenced their public lives. Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealised Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 14. Particularly in *Secret History*, Procopius investigated the private lives of his power couples: Belisarius/Antonina and Justinian/Theodora. He did so, however, primarily as a means of explaining setbacks in Belisarius' and Justinian's public lives.

¹⁶ Undeniably, fate (τύχη) plays an important, if complex, role throughout the *Wars*. Kaldellis (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 199) goes so far to claim that for Procopius there was "no reward for nobility in the world, only the twists and turns of *tyche*". I would agree with Treadgold's assertion (*Byzantine Historians*, 223), however, that men's virtues played an essential role in determining events, and that for Procopius "fate, whether personified or not, could represent the will either of God or of the demons, it amounted to little more than a rhetorical device. Only God, the demons, or men determined what happened". See too Michael Whitby's insightful comments ("Religious Views") on Procopius' views on causation and on "the ambivalence to Tyche" amongst even some devout Christians in the early Byzantine Empire.

various military campaigns.¹⁷ The remainder of this chapter will focus on Procopius' characterisations of the Gothic monarchs and the Byzantine soldiers in the *Gothic Wars*.

Theoderic: Manly Leader

Procopius opened the *Gothic Wars* by relating his version of events that 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 Byzantines.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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. 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.²⁰ 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 (Romulus, whom Procopius does not name).

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'

¹⁷ As we will see, however, Procopius' depictions of the personalities and the deeds of the key players in his history are usually corroborated in other contemporary sources.

¹⁸ Procopius, *Wars* 5.1.1-2: "I shall now proceed to the Gothic War, first telling all that befell the Goths [Γότθοις] and Italians [Ιταλιώταις] before this war". In the next sentence, he described the Eastern Roman Zeno, as "the reign of Zeno in Byzantium [βυζαντίω]". 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. Patrick Amory (*People and Identity*, 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.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ Procopius (*Wars* 3.5.12-13) described a similar land-grab by the Vandals in North Africa.

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.²¹ 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".²² 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".²³ 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*.²⁴ 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 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" [ἔρωσ τε αὐτοῦ ἔν τε Γόθοις καὶ Ἰταλιώταις].²⁵ The question of whether the Italians owed

²¹ 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.

²² Procopius, *Wars* 5.1.29.

²³ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 7.9.10, 7.21.12, 23.

²⁴ For Procopius' use of such inversions in his accounts of the Gothic rulers, see Guy Halsall, "Funny Foreigners: Laughing at Barbarians in Late Antiquity", in *Humour, History, and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Guy Halsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 106-11.

²⁵ Procopius, *Wars* 5.1.27-29.

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”.²⁶

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. 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.²⁷ Firstly, this flattering description of Theoderic may represent a barb aimed at Justinian, whose humble origins, lack of battle experience, and inability to fend off barbarian incursions into Byzantine territory earned Procopius’ scorn in *Secret History*.²⁸ 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.

In keeping with the depictions of the Emperor Julian that we saw in chapter 3, Procopius based much 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

²⁶ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 7.4.16, 7.9.10-15, 7.30.24.

²⁷ 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. Geoffrey Greatrex, “Roman Identity in the Sixth Century,” in *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, ed. Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex (London: Duckworth/ The Classical Press of Wales, 2000). See too Kaldellis’ comment (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 221) that Procopius “treated Romans and barbarians impartially, condemning the former as often as he praised the latter”. Cf., however, Averil Cameron (*Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 239) who argues that Procopius attempted to preserve the “established order” by creating “a strong demarcation between civilised peoples and barbarians”, and Goffart (*Narrators*, 94-6) who uses Procopius’ account of the Herules to make the larger claim that Procopius wanted to expel all the barbarians from the Roman Empire.

²⁸ As Kaldellis points out (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 60), 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.

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.²⁹

Athalaric: Boys to Men

For Procopius, Theoderic's strong leadership helped to bond the Goths and the Italian people together; however, the historian's descriptions of the king's flawed successors revealed the difficulty of maintaining this unity between the two peoples. 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. In Procopius' telling, the early years of Amalasuintha's regency were a relatively peaceful and stable time for Italy.³⁰ Amalasuintha sought to restore harmonious relations between the Goths and the Romans by distancing herself from some of 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 ἐκείνους ἀδικίαν ὀργῶσιν]. Additionally, she attempted to reconcile herself to the senate by returning Symmachus' and Boethius' confiscated lands to their families.³¹ Amalasuintha and her supporters reigned supreme, yet trouble lurked in the hearts of Gothic men spurned by the new regime.³²

Procopius compressed the ten-year period of Athalaric's rule into a didactic tale that appears to unfold over a much shorter time-frame.³³ 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.³⁴ She sent him to a Roman school of letters and

²⁹ Procopius, *Wars* 5.1.31. As Whatley explains (*Descriptions of Battle*, 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.

³⁰ Procopius tells (*Wars* 7.21.12) his readers that by 550 many Goths recalled the years of Theoderic's and Athalaric's rule fondly.

³¹ Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.5-6.

³² Herwig Wolfram claims (*History of the Goths*, 336) 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 Amalasuntha and her followers.

³³ Discussed in Amory, *People and Identity*, 156.

³⁴ For further contemporary evidence of Amalasuntha's adulation of classical learning, see Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.3.

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 ἀρετὴν], 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 would cause them “to despise sword or spear”.³⁵ 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.³⁶ While this discrepancy and other incongruences 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.

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.³⁷ Each of the Gothic factions suggested that boys travelled a long and hazardous path to manhood. The two sides only differed on the best

³⁵ Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.11-17.

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Of course, some young men from the Byzantine literate classes would have received military training as well.

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.³⁸ 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 that literary learning allowed the warrior to discover “what will strengthen him with courage; the prince learns how to administer his people with equity”.³⁹ As touched on in our discussion of Julian, in the Greco-Roman literary tradition even innate virtues like ἀνδρεία and one’s martial skills could be enhanced by a literary education.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹

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”.⁴² 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 we have already seen in the classical tradition represented typical vices of not only barbarians, but of unmanly men as well.⁴³ For Procopius, Athalaric’s inability to

³⁸ Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.11-17.

³⁹ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 10.3 (trans. Barnish).

⁴⁰ Connolly, “Andreia and Paideia”, 287, 328.

⁴¹ Amory, *People and Identity*, 96. For the Goths’ military ethos, see Peter Heather, *The Goths*, 322-26, Michael Whitby, “Armies and Society in the Later Roman World”, in *CAH Volume XIV*, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 472.

⁴² Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.18-20.

⁴³ Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.19. Athalaric’s alcoholism is hinted at in the *Variae* of Cassiodorus, see S.J.B. Barnish, introduction to *Variae*, 16. Procopius revealed that an addiction “to the disease of drunkenness” [μέθης νόσῳ] 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

control both his drinking and sexual appetites marked him as flawed—and ultimately—as an unmanly man.

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.⁴⁴ 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,⁴⁵ 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”. 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 ἀρρενωπόν].⁴⁶ By overcoming her enemies’ attempts to usurp her control over Athalaric, she earned Procopius’ praise for not acting “woman-like” [γυνή] and feebly giving way to her enemies.⁴⁷ 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

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 BCE).

⁴⁴ Procopius, *Wars* 5.4.4.

⁴⁵ Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 108.

⁴⁶ Procopius, *Secret History* 16.1.

⁴⁷ Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.21.

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].⁴⁸

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".⁴⁹ 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".⁵⁰ Although Amalasuintha ruled briefly within her own kingdom, she remained subordinate to Justinian and dependent upon men within the Gothic aristocracy for her survival.⁵¹ 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.⁵²

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

⁴⁸ Procopius, *Wars* 5.2.3 (my trans.).

⁴⁹ A point made by Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 144-45.

⁵⁰ Procopius, *Wars* 5.3.13.

⁵¹ A. Daniel Frankforter, "Amalasuntha, Procopius and a Woman's Place", *JWH* 8 (1996): 42.

⁵² 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. Lynda Garland (*Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527-1204* [London; Routledge, 1999], 32-3) regards this episode as an instance of Theodora taking on a masculine and martial role. I would agree with Averil Cameron (*Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 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.

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 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]”.⁵³ 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 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. 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.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ 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).

⁵³ Procopius, *Wars* 8.3.7 (my trans.).

⁵⁴ Cameron (*Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 199-200), in particular, criticises Procopius for this seeming inconsistency.

⁵⁵ Harrell, “Marvelous *Andreia*”, 83.

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 Amalasuintha to restore Italy to Roman rule. However, when Athalaric died in 534, political considerations forced Amalasuintha to ally herself to her cousin Theodahad. Theodahad suspected Amalasuintha of “treason”, and, attempting to ingratiate himself with the queen’s enemies, imprisoned and then murdered her in 535.⁵⁶ Like his war with Vandals in North Africa, Justinian used an “unlawful” usurpation of power by a barbarian king as a pretext for Byzantine intervention. Soon after Amalasuintha’s death, a relatively small Byzantine army invaded Italy and laid claim to the Gothic kingdom. Belisarius seized Sicily in 535. Theodahad’s immediate reaction was to cede power to Justinian; however, after the Byzantine troops in North Africa rebelled over a lack of pay, the Gothic king regained his nerve, arrested Justinian’s envoys, and began to prepare to defend Italy.

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 Amalafrida, 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.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸ In fact, Theodahad represented the antithesis of the ideal ruler praised by Plato, who typically rejected φιλοχρηματία and

⁵⁶ Procopius (*Secret History* 16.5) claimed that Theodahad had murdered Amalasuntha at Theodora’s behest.

⁵⁷ Procopius, *Wars* 5.3.1. Further evidence of Theodahad’s literary learning is found in Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10.3. On the Goths’ seizures of Italian land, see Cassiodorus, *Variae* 8.28.

⁵⁸ Kaldellis (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 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.

sought to safeguard his subjects' property.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

Moreover, Procopius did not necessarily fault Theodahad for his attempt to become a Romanised Goth; Procopius, who claimed Theodahad was by "nature unmanly" [φύσει ἄνανδρος], criticised the Gothic king for allowing his love of learning to thwart his fighting spirit.⁶¹ When the Gothic king faced the prospect of confronting Justinian's invading forces, Procopius described how Theodahad's lack of a "firm mind" [βέβαιον τὴν διάνοιαν], combined with his fear of war, caused Theodahad to enter into a state that Procopius described as "the antithesis of boldness" [ἀντικαθίστη θράσος].⁶²

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" [βέβαιος], display a "fighting spirit" [προθυμία], live an "active" life [δραστήριος] or to observe "justice" [δικαιοσύνη], exposed him as "unmanly" [ἄνανδρος].⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Plato, *Republic* 391C.

⁶⁰ Procopius, *Secret History* 5.4-7.

⁶¹ Procopius, *Wars* 5.9.1.

⁶² 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".

⁶³ Δραστήριος is one of the stock terms used by Procopius to describe ideal men. In the *Wars*, when men failed to be δραστήριος, or became inactive, they risked being perceived as unmanly or effeminate. For just one example of this point, *Wars* 7.6.12.

⁶⁴ According to Procopius (*Wars* 3.9.1), kind, yet "soft or effeminate" rulers were often too weak to face the rigors of war. He described the Vandalic king Hilderich (ruled 523-30), as "easily approachable" [εὐπρόσοδος] and "altogether gentle" [ὅλως πρᾶος] 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.

⁶⁵ Hence, I reject Guy Hassall's claims, ("Funny Foreigners", 106), 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.

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 ancient Greek and Roman literature that Procopius was familiar with provided examples of barbarians who had mastered a Hellenistic education.⁶⁶ 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).⁶⁷ 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 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 [δελίας], 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 [ἀνδρός ἀρετήν] is revealed by his deeds, not at their commencement, but at their end.'⁶⁸

⁶⁶ See, e.g. Julian's description (*Mispogon* 351A-351C) of his "barbarian" tutor Mardonius, who the emperor credited both for his early love of classical literature. The second-century writer, Lucian (*The Skythian*, 1.3) too made it clear that he knew "Celts and Scythians", who despite their barbarian births, "could become indistinguishable from Athenians" through their *paideia*. Procopius' familiarity with, and grasp of, classical literature is discussed in Greatrex, "Classical Past".

⁶⁷ 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*, 340-43.

⁶⁸ Procopius, *Wars* 5.11.12-22.

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.⁶⁹ 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 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.⁷⁰ Second, like many ancient intellectuals, Procopius commented frequently on the fine distinction between rashness and courage.⁷¹ As we noted in the first chapter, in classical Greek θράσος describes either recklessness or valour. Procopius used the term in both senses. 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.⁷² 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.

An early example of these tests of our protagonists' manliness and courage came in February 537 outside the gates of Rome when Belisarius and his men faced a vital test of their martial courage against the full force of Vitigis' revitalised army. Hoping to buy some

⁶⁹ Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 32.

⁷⁰ The following examples demonstrate this point. Procopius illustrated (*Wars* 1.18.19-26) how an accusation of "softness" drove Belisarius to abandon his prudence before the battle of Callinicum in April of 531. Impassioned by their Lenten fast, the Christian soldiers felt that the eve of the holiday represented the opportune time to engage the Persian army. Belisarius attempted to forestall their ardour by pointing out that "a large number of you have come on foot and all of us are fasting". Instead of heeding Belisarius' advice, the soldiers and officers insulted Belisarius to his face by accusing him of "softness" [μαλθακόν] that had destroyed their "fighting zeal" [προθυμίας]. Against his better judgment, Belisarius gave into their insults by reassuring his troops, "that now he was of good courage [θαρσύν] and would go against the enemy with a better hope". The Eastern Roman army went on to suffer a devastating defeat at the hands of the Persians. In another instance, the Heruls launched an unjust, and ultimately disastrous war against the Lombards, when their leader, Rodolphus, succumbed to his peoples taunts that he was "effeminate and womanlike" [μαλθακόν καὶ γυναικῶδη, *Wars* 1.18.13-29].

⁷¹ Some examples include, Procopius, *Wars* 5.20.8, 6.23.29-30. Cf. Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 2.40.3.

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

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]”.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ Belisarius and his men made the dangerous decision 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.⁷⁵ 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”.⁷⁶ As another specialist on battles has noted, it is here that the narrative takes a very Homeric turn.⁷⁷ 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 ἀρετήν 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.⁷⁸ Procopius discussed the loss of many notable fighters on each side. Yet, in the

⁷³ Procopius, *Wars* 5.17.18.

⁷⁴ 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”.

⁷⁵ On the importance of a general’s intellect in determining the outcome of battles, see Maurice, *Strategikon* 2.1.

⁷⁶ Procopius, *Wars* 5.18.5.

⁷⁷ Whately, “Descriptions of Battle”, 304.

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

end, Belisarius' and his men's superior ἀρετή won out, and the vanguard of "barbarians" fled back to their main army.⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰

"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.⁸¹ 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 δυνάμειωσ Γραικοῦς] 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.⁸²

Vacis' portrait of Belisarius and his men as "Greeks" may have 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 war against the

⁷⁹ Procopius, *Wars* 5.18.16.

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

⁸¹ Procopius, *Wars* 5.19.1.

⁸² Procopius, *Wars* 5.18.40-1. On this passage and the pejorative use of the term *Graikoi*, see Walter Kaegi, "Procopius the Military Historian", *BF* 15 (1990): 79-81.

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".⁸³ 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.⁸⁴ 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.

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".⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶ The statement that would soon be proven false was Vacis' contention that Belisarius 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.⁸⁷ As the situation in Rome deteriorated,

⁸³ The Greeks' reputation in the Roman literary tradition for an unmanly love of luxury and the "soft" life is discussed by Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, esp. 62-70, Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 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".

⁸⁴ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 135-9.

⁸⁵ Halsall, "Funny Foreigners", 110.

⁸⁶ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 7.4.16.

⁸⁷ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 3.3.10-13, 7.11.12-14.

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 "to take courage [θάρσεϊν], 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.⁸⁸

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 [θάρσος] 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" [θάρσει] 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 [βίῳ τρυφερῷ] but also of freedom, and cease your resistance to him (Vitigis) who is master of both of the Goths and the Italians."⁸⁹

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".⁹⁰ According to Procopius, when the envoys returned to camp, Vitigis asked his

⁸⁸ Procopius, *Wars* 5.18.42.

⁸⁹ Procopius, *Wars* 5.20.9-12. I have changed Dewing's "play the man" for ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι to "play the manly man".

⁹⁰ Procopius, *Wars* 5.20.18.

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 θάρσος, 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.⁹¹ As Procopius explained, the calculating Belisarius had exploited the “simplicity of the barbarians”.⁹² 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”.

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.⁹³ The Gothic king sent five hundred horsemen against

⁹¹ 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*”, esp. 264-70.

⁹² Procopius, *Wars* 5.27.27.

⁹³ 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*, 344-45.

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".⁹⁴ 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.⁹⁵ 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 once again succumbed to his soldiers' pressuring.⁹⁶ 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 κατορρωδήσας τὴν δύναμιν], but because his current strategy of skirmishing was going so well.⁹⁷ 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:

⁹⁴ Procopius, *Wars* 5.27.15.

⁹⁵ Procopius *Wars* 5.27.15-29.

⁹⁶ Common tradition allowed Roman generals to solicit and accept advice from their commanders. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War*, 179-80, n. 30.

⁹⁷ Belisarius avoided major engagements with the Gothic army. Of course, Narses ultimately defeated the Goths by seeking just such a confrontation.

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].⁹⁸

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.⁹⁹ 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.¹⁰⁰

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 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.¹⁰¹ 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.¹⁰² Vitigis' response

⁹⁸ Procopius, *Wars* 5.28.6-14.

⁹⁹ Most scholars agree with Cameron's contention (*Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 8, 15, 52-4) 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 Anthony Kaldellis, “Procopius' *Persian War*: a Thematic and Literary Analysis”, in *History as Literature in Byzantium*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Ashgate: 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.

¹⁰⁰ 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.

¹⁰¹ Procopius, *Wars* 6.24.1-16, 6.26.2-13.

¹⁰² Procopius, *Wars* 6.30.5.

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,¹⁰³ Vitigis called on the Goths starving in Auximum and Faesulae "to endure manfully" [φέρειν ἀνδρείως].¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶

Procopius concluded book six with a rather melancholy description of the vanquished Gothic forces marching downtrodden through the streets of Ravenna in May of 540.¹⁰⁷ Procopius indicated the Gothic soldiers' humiliation was made complete when their wives—seeing the small numbers and the ordinary stature¹⁰⁸ of the Byzantine soldiers who had captured the city—belittled their husbands for their "unmanliness" [τὴν ἀνανδρίαν], and spat in their faces.¹⁰⁹ 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

¹⁰³ Procopius, *Wars* 6.26.8.

¹⁰⁴ Procopius, *Wars* 6.26.13.

¹⁰⁵ 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.

¹⁰⁶ Procopius, *Wars* 6.29.18.

¹⁰⁷ 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" [δαίμόνιον]. Kaldellis (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 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. Treadgold (*Byzantine Historians*, 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.

¹⁰⁸ 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.

¹⁰⁹ Procopius, *Wars* 6.29.32-4. I changed the translator Dewing's "cowardice" for ἀνανδρίαν to "unmanliness".

battle)—to survive defeat at the hands of the enemy”.¹¹⁰ 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”.¹¹¹ Procopius probably used these earlier comments by Vitigis as a means of highlighting the ignominy of his end.¹¹² 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*.¹¹³ 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 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.¹¹⁴ 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

¹¹⁰ Procopius, *Wars* 5.29.9.

¹¹¹ Procopius, *Wars* 5.29.6.

¹¹² It also foreshadows both Totila’s “shameful death” and Teiās’ heroic death at the close of the *Gothic Wars*.

¹¹³ Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 204.

¹¹⁴ Discussed in Kaldellis, *Procopius*, 198-204.

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.¹¹⁵ 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 treasury¹¹⁶—not the caprice of fortune—represented the primary reason “the entire fabric of Roman power was utterly destroyed in a short space of time”.¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸

Totila is the undisputed hero of book seven.¹¹⁹ 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 the Procopius’ encomium on Belisarius at the opening of book seven.¹²⁰ 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.¹²¹ Similar to Theoderic, Totila was also “energetic” [δραστήριον] and “wise” [ξυνέσεως].¹²² Totila, however, exhibited some “civilised” qualities not typical in a barbarian king—even

¹¹⁵ 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 Whatley, “*Descriptions of Battle*”, 259.

¹¹⁶ 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.

¹¹⁷ Procopius, *Wars* 7.1.24. I thus reject Kaldellis’ claim (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 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*.

¹¹⁸ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 7.3.15-22.

¹¹⁹ Procopius’ admiration for Totila is seen by most modern scholars to have been genuine. See, e.g. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 190, 197, Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 198.

¹²⁰ As argued by Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 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” [εὐτολμοτατος], and “steadfast” [ἀσφαλεῖ] in war, without being rash.

¹²¹ For the fear Totila’s fighting prowess evoked in the Eastern Roman soldiers, see Procopius, *Wars* 7.6.19.

¹²² Procopius, *Wars* 7.2.7 (my trans.).

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” [ἀνδραγαθίζεσθα] 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.¹²³ 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.¹²⁴

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 the 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 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.¹²⁵

As a modern scholar notes, Totila’s reputation for σωφροσύνη “is scarcely a virtue one would associate with a barbarian”.¹²⁶ Totila’s civilised σωφροσύνη definitely distinguishes him from typical barbarian leaders, and, I would suggest, even the manly and wise

¹²³ Procopius, *Wars* 7.4.10-18.

¹²⁴ E.g. Procopius, *Wars* 7.16.19.

¹²⁵ Procopius, *Wars* 7.20.29-31.

¹²⁶ John Moorhead, “Totila the Revolutionary”, *Historia* 49 (2000): 382.

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.

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” [ῥαστήριος] man and “a capable warrior” [ἀγαθος τὰ πολέμια]. Totila, however, “gently and with no excitement” [πράως τε καὶ παραχῇ οὐδεμιᾷ] 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 afterwards.¹²⁷ 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”.¹²⁸

Soon after the capture of Rome, one senses a gradual modification in Procopius' idealised characterisation of Totila.¹²⁹ Though still capable of great deeds of moderation, the king also lashes out more frequently against the Italians and those he perceived as his

¹²⁷ Procopius, *Wars* 7.8.12-25.

¹²⁸ It also seems to undermine Narses' claim (*Wars* 8.30.5) shortly before the battle of Busto Gallorum that Totila had no regard for justice or Roman law.

¹²⁹ 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.

enemies.¹³⁰ 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" [ἀγῶνας], 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".¹³¹ "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 His wont to fight with a race of men or a particular nation, but with such as show the greater honour to justice".¹³² 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".¹³³

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

¹³⁰ 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.

¹³¹ Procopius' use of often widely discrepant troop numbers as a narrative device is discussed by Whately, "Descriptions of Battle", 350-54.

¹³² Procopius, *Wars* 7.21.4-12. I have changed the translator Dewing's "Greeklings" for Γραικῶν to "Greeks".

¹³³ Procopius, *Wars* 7.11.12-16.

Goths. The Byzantines then successfully defended the city from Totila's furious counter-attack.¹³⁴ 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.¹³⁵ 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".¹³⁶ 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.¹³⁷

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

¹³⁴ Procopius, *Wars* 7.24.1-26.

¹³⁵ Procopius, *Wars* 8.32.7-11.

¹³⁶ 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" [δῆλωσιν ἀρετῆς] that surpasses all others), 8.32.11 (Romans and "barbarian allies" at the battle of Busto 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 Busto Gallorum). 8.32.19 (Gothic soldiers make a panicked retreat at Busto Gallorum).

¹³⁷ 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).

battle. Procopius remarked that Totila was “like one who has been instructed in the art of dancing from childhood”.¹³⁸

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 Byzantine general 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.¹³⁹ 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.¹⁴⁰ In Procopius’ description, *tyche* and/or God play little role in deciding the outcome of the actual events on the ground.¹⁴¹ 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.

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.¹⁴² 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.¹⁴³ 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

¹³⁸ 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.

¹³⁹ Procopius, *Wars* 8.30.1.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Procopius, *Wars* 7.35.2.

¹⁴¹ 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.

¹⁴² For Procopius’ befuddlement at the “cowardice” [δελίαν] of Totila, see *Wars* 8.32.28-30.

¹⁴³ 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.

tyche. Certainly one can agree with Procopius that Totila's end "was not worthy of his past deeds".¹⁴⁴ Though undeserving, once again, a "martial" Gothic king had failed to obtain a glorious death in battle.

Teïas' Manly Death

For some modern readers, the *Wars* end on a tragic note.¹⁴⁵ 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 ἀρετῇ]. After Totila's death, the Goths' desperate situation, explained Procopius, forced them to seek a "virtuous death [θανατιῶ ἀρετῇ]. Their "despair of the situation" was the primary reason for the Goths' "extraordinary courage" [εὐτολμίαν].¹⁴⁶ Although he praised both sides' conduct during the struggle, Procopius saved his highest acclamation for the Gothic king, exclaiming that Teïas' 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". Teïas 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, Teïas was slain as he attempted to exchange another shield with his bodyguard.¹⁴⁷

With his heroic death in battle, Teïas finally obtained the type of noble and manly demise that had eluded all of the previous Gothic kings in the *Gothic Wars*. 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.¹⁴⁸ 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

¹⁴⁴ One would think that this point was equally true for his erstwhile hero, Belisarius, as well.

¹⁴⁵ E.g. Kaldellis, "Procopius' *Persian War*", 257.

¹⁴⁶ Procopius, *Wars* 8.35.20-21 (my trans.).

¹⁴⁷ Procopius, *Wars* 8.35.21-30 (trans. Dewing; I have changed Dewing's "courageous" for εὐτολμίαν to "extraordinary boldness").

¹⁴⁸ For this concept in Polybius, see Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, 42-3.

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 of the Byzantine soldiers. Finally, though unspoken, Procopius had fulfilled his stated purpose at the outset of the *Persian 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 in this context.

Narses: The Manly Eunuch

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 dissertation between martial virtues and hegemonic masculinity.¹⁴⁹ It is true, that in contrast to the gendered vitriol that had accompanied the eunuch Eutropius' military command against the Huns at the close of the fourth century, Narses' prominent military role, as far as we know, provoked little or no hostile response. Certainly, in Procopius' telling, Narses' identity as a castrate did little to hinder his military acumen. Indeed, Procopius' and his continuer Agathias' depictions of Narses as a skilled military commander has been used in a recent article as evidence of "a lessening of hostility towards eunuchs" from the fifth century.¹⁵⁰ I will argue below, however, that these positive views of Narses' generalship do not equate to a decoupling of martial virtues from hegemonic masculinity in this era.

Though Procopius depicted Narses, at times, as vain, jealous, insubordinate, and petty, the historian generally respected Narses for being a successful and resourceful commander.¹⁵¹ Yet it does not appear that Procopius (or Agathias for that matter) took

¹⁴⁹ I would like to thank Lynda Garland and Michael Whitby for this observation.

¹⁵⁰ Tougher, "Social Transformation", 82.

¹⁵¹ As Cameron (*Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 203, 239) and Kaldellis (*Procopius of Caesarea*, 217) both propose, Procopius' portrait of Narses appears more nuanced, and in places, far less "positive" than Tougher indicates. For "negative" qualities see, *Wars* 6.18.11, 6.18.28-29, 6.19.18. For "positive" traits, see *Wars* 6.13.16, 8.26.5, 8.26.14, 8.31.22, 8.35.36.

Narses' position as a general for granted as Tougher and others suggest. The opposite seems true. As Ringrose explains, Procopius perceives Narses "as an anomalous example" of a typical eunuch.¹⁵² Procopius' biographic sketch of Narses seems to be yet another inversion of "typical" behaviours that we have found throughout the *Gothic Wars*. 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. 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].¹⁵³ One finds such inversions before the fifth century. Ammianus, for instance, provided a similar account of an "atypical" eunuch a century and a half earlier when he provided a backhanded compliment to a court eunuch by suggesting, "Among the brambles roses spring up, and among the savage beasts some are tamed".¹⁵⁴

So where on what Kathryn Ringrose describes as "the ladder of gender difference" may we place Narses and other eunuchs? This issue has proved contentious. To simplify a complex debate, modifying the older paradigm that claimed that eunuchs represented a "third sex" in Byzantine culture, Ringrose contends it is better to see eunuchs as making up a third gender, "male in sex, but with a difference". Unlike classical intellectuals, Christian Byzantines, she contends, based their criterion on behaviour more than physiology.¹⁵⁵ Shaun Tougher is more hesitant to consider eunuchs as a third gender. He postulates that eunuchs had "a multiplicity of concurrent gender identities". He believes that some Byzantine sources saw them as "simply men".¹⁵⁶

Though Tougher's and Ringrose's views on the "gender" of eunuchs differ, both of their positions help to explain why some eunuchs like Narses may not have been completely "cut off" from the "masculine". Castration did not necessarily mean that a

¹⁵² Ringrose, *Perfect Servant*, 132.

¹⁵³ Procopius, *Wars* 6.18.7. I have changed the translator Dewing's "courage" for ἀνδρείας to "manliness". So too did Procopius' continuer, Agathias, describe Narses as "manly and heroic" [τὸ δὲ ἀνδρεῖον καὶ μεγαλουργόν (*Histories* 1.16.12, my trans.)]. These examples seem to undermine Ringrose's contention (*Perfect Servant*, 133) "that neither Prokopios nor Agathias attributes Narses' success to courageous manliness".

¹⁵⁴ Ammianus, *Res gestae* 16.7.4-8.

¹⁵⁵ Ringrose, *Perfect Servant*, 2-23.

¹⁵⁶ Tougher, "Social Transformation", 82.

eunuch could not be deemed “manly” or fight on the frontlines.¹⁵⁷ As Ringrose points out, though “they lacked full masculine status” eunuchs were seen as standing higher on a higher “rung” on the gendered “ladder” than either girls, women or young male boys. The traditional dichotomy between virtue and vice based on a bipolar model of gender proved a popular method in describing “good” and “bad” eunuchs throughout the Byzantine era. On the one hand, when eunuchs received praised in the Byzantine sources, they were usually described as displaying typically masculine attributes. On the other hand, when eunuchs faced criticism, it was “in terms of values traditionally ascribed to women”.¹⁵⁸ This paradigm helps us understand why Narses could be portrayed as an ἀνδρείος commander.¹⁵⁹

It is also important to point out that eunuchs did not typically become military leaders because early Byzantines no longer saw them in a gendered way. In fact, the imperial family frequently chose them because they were castrates. As Ringrose explains, “eunuchs were seen as a safer option, and often utilised when women or minor children ruled”.¹⁶⁰ So too did Procopius insinuate that Justinian’s appointment of Narses may have been a move to counter-balance Belisarius’ growing popularity and perceived threat to his leadership.¹⁶¹ Narses’ “emasculatation” therefore removed the real threat that a charismatic masculine military man like Belisarius could present to those in the imperial leadership. We have further evidence that the choice of Narses to lead the campaign in Italy was unusual. Procopius explains that some Romans believed that Justinian had appointed Narses as commander because of a prophecy that a eunuch would bring about the downfall of the Goths.¹⁶²

Finally, as discussed in chapters 3 and 5, martial virtues had never centred solely on “courage” or “physicality” alone. In the words of Agathias, “Brains and not brawn” were the

¹⁵⁷ Procopius showed (e.g. *Wars* 4.11.47-56) another eunuch general in Justinian’s army, Solomon, leading his men into battle.

¹⁵⁸ Ringrose, *Perfect Servant*, 19-20. Ringrose suggests that in the early Byzantine period eunuch-specific traits developed. These characteristics could be either “good” or “bad”.

¹⁵⁹ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 6.18.7.

¹⁶⁰ Ringrose, *Perfect Servant*, 134.

¹⁶¹ See, e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 6.30.1-5. Procopius discounts this explanation. His earlier comment (8.21.7), that “the reason why this was the wish of the emperor was explicitly evident to no one in the world”, implies that Procopius was befuddled by Narses’ appointment as commander-in-chief of the Gothic campaign.

¹⁶² Procopius, *Wars* 8.21.9-18.

primary qualities of a good Roman general.¹⁶³ As we have observed as well, most Byzantine military handbooks preferred it when military commanders avoided fighting on the front lines with their men. We see from passages like that above, that Procopius' account showed that it was the combination of Narses' "brains" with his soldiers' "brawn" that led to the Byzantine's final victories over the Goths. Indeed, one should not suppose that Narses did not put himself in danger during these battles against the Goths or assume that the eunuch had received no military training. Narses' age (he was over seventy during the events depicted in book 8) more than the fact that he was court eunuch probably represented the primary reason that Narses avoided combat. Undeniably, Narses displays many of the traits of an ideal "manly" early Byzantine commander. Some of Narses' best "martial" qualities were his organisational and tactical abilities, as well as his oratory skills, that allowed him to incite his soldiers to perform great deeds of courage and manliness on the field of battle. Unlike Ringrose, I do not believe that Procopius saw Narses' organisational skills and "cleverness" as traits typical of eunuchs; they are characteristics expected of any successful general. As we have seen, Procopius perceived Belisarius as both clever and well organised. In closing, just because Procopius recognised Narses' martial qualities, it does not necessarily follow that the historian rejected the polarity between martial virtues and "true" manliness.

Causation and Manly Virtues

As Warren Treadgold has pointed out, there are no "perfect" men in the *Wars*. I would agree with his assertion that this reality has less to do with Procopius' disdain for the role that men's virtues played in determining worldly events, and more to do with his Christian belief that all men were flawed.¹⁶⁴ Yet, despite his likely belief in the Christian principle of Original Sin, Procopius populated his work with heroic and manly characters seemingly drawn from the pages of classical literature as well. In a work that focused on warfare and the deeds of soldiers, it should not surprise that, in Procopius' mind, a "manly man" [ἀνὴρ ἀνδρεῖός] was a military man.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, in a history that provided a balanced view of the virtues and vices of both foreigners and Romans, one's ethnicity did not pre-determine one's manliness. The men who best personified the political and martial

¹⁶³ Agathias, *Histories* 2.22.5.

¹⁶⁴ Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 214-15.

¹⁶⁵ E.g. Procopius, *Wars* 7.40.9.

virtues esteemed by Procopius were, on the Roman side, Belisarius and Germanus, and on the barbarian side, Theoderic, Totila and, if only briefly, Teiās.

It is difficult to know with certainty if Procopius' views on causation and the importance of individual's martial virtues and manliness in determining secular affairs were representative of larger societal views. I would argue, however, that his history provides evidence of the continuing admiration of the soldier's life as an exemplar of the manly life in the sixth-century Byzantine Empire. It also reveals, once again, that there was no such thing as a typical Christian in the Byzantine era. Certainly, a belief in a Christian God did not prevent many Byzantines from believing in the essential role that military men played in both determining secular events and establishing paradigms of masculinity. Indeed, for Procopius, the manly deeds of courage and self-restraint performed in the theatre of war by military men like Totila and Belisarius set a standard of masculine excellence that was difficult for their civilian counterparts to match.

CONCLUSION

Why did you assume you were addressing an assembly of women, insulting our nature as well as our race? With words you misrepresent deeds, bringing shame on the council. Did you not realize that you were pouring forth disgraceful words in the presence of men [ἄρρένων]? Or do you not see an assembly of Roman people, proud of their zeal, vigorous in arms, knowledgeable in their experience of danger and providence for future advantage?

Theophylact Simocatta, *History* 2.14.3 (trans. Whitby).

The excerpt above comes from what would prove to be the last Greek history composed in the grand classical style for more than three centuries.¹ The Egyptian Theophylact published his work in the euphoric period surrounding the Emperor Heraclius' emphatic victory over the Persians in 628—a brief interlude of triumphant calm before the sudden emergence of the Arab threat in the 630s that saw the near snuffing out of the Byzantine Empire.² The sudden disappearance after 640 of many genres of secular literature, as well as the emergence of the Muslims as a new religious and political rival in this period, demarcates the dawning of a new age.³ I have chosen Theophylact's history to conclude this dissertation for these reasons, as well as the obvious martial aspect and gendered implications of the excerpt. The set-speech from which this quotation is drawn certainly touches on two of this dissertation's primary themes: the primacy of military matters and the manliness of war. In the anecdote, which describes the Roman response to an Avar invasion of Thrace in 587, the historian constructed a debate between two Roman soldiers, one a tribune, and the other a grizzled veteran. The debate provided his readers with both the standard commentary on the fine lines between courage and rashness and the familiar linking of traditional martial virtues to masculinity. The tribune suggested that it was best to avoid a direct confrontation with the Avars, whilst the veteran advocated a more aggressive approach. The older soldier appeared to win the debate with his refrain that Rome's rise to world dominance had been due to its men's embrace of the

¹ For some possible reasons for this decline in almost all genres of Greek secular literature, see Whitby "Greek Historical Writing", 66-74, Treadgold, *Byzantine Historians*, 348-49, 393-99, Croke, "Historiographical Audience", 34-35.

² Theophylact's career and the date of composition and publication of his history are discussed in Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 39-45.

³ For the seventh-century conquests of Byzantine territory as primarily a Muslim, not an Arab phenomenon, see James Howard-Johnston, *Witness to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 527.

rigours and courageous virtues of the soldier's life.⁴ His assertion from the rhetorical opening of the speech that bold action on the battlefield helped to prove that Roman soldiers' souls were "masculine" [ἄρρενας] like their bodies serves as an important final reminder for my readers of how conceptualisations of the soldier's life remained linked intimately to masculine ideology.⁵ According to Theophylact, "courage" in battle represented a sure sign of "manliness", whereas "cowardice" in the face of conflict indicated that one had fallen into the realm of "effeminacy".⁶

We have seen such motifs before. Indeed, the emotive rhetoric associating traditional Roman codes of masculinity with idealised visions of the soldier's life is so common in the ancient Roman and the early Byzantine sources that the modern reader is tempted to skip over such bombastic speeches to get to the "relevant" parts. Ancient and modern scholars have, I think quite rightly, criticised Theophylact, in particular, for his heavy reliance on "extravagant metaphors, sententious artistry, and ornate rhetoric".⁷ Yet, as I have suggested throughout this study, an exploration of these standard themes helps one to understand these early Byzantine texts and the society that produced them. While such anecdote's heavy reliance on standard rhetoric and stock heroes and villains may tell one very little about the "real" personalities of the combatants, or the actual debates among the Roman soldiers before battle, they provide important insights into wider attitudes towards gender and masculinity. The episode above, for instance, relied on the traditional appeal of the manly Roman soldier and on the conventional disdain for the cowardly and effeminate man.

What this study argues is that martial virtues and images of the soldier's life continued to represent an essential aspect of hegemonic masculinity in the early Byzantine period. This is not to say that the masculinity of soldiers represented the only type of heroic manliness in this period. Indeed, with the exception of chapter 4, my analysis has

⁴ Theophylact, *History* 2.14.6.

⁵ Theophylact, *History* 2.14.1: "Men of Rome, unless you would belie the name by your actions; men, that is if your souls [ψυχάς] are masculine [ἄρρενας] like your body. Even though the tribune is expert at high-flown talk and at confusing the issue, nevertheless deeds are more vigorous than words and do not tolerate empty sounds". I have changed the translator Whitby's "hearts" for ψυχάς to "souls".

⁶ See, e.g. Theophylact, *History* 3.13.4: "Comrades-you are my comrades both in toils and tumults because of the war-the engagement is established as a test of virtue [ἀρετῆς] and vice [κακίας], and is the arbiter of souls: for this day will either convict us of effeminate [θηλυπρεπὲς] cowardice [δελίας], or with garlands and glorious triumphs will proclaim our manly [ἀρρενωπὸν] bravery [εὐτολμίας]". I have changed the translator Whitby's "courage" for ἀρετῆς to "virtue" and "cowardice" for κακίας to "vice".

⁷ Whitby, introduction to Theophylact, *History*, 28. For a later Byzantine view, see Photius, *Bibliotheca* cod. 65.

leaned towards secular sources, and on writings that focused on military matters. As stated in the introduction, I took this stance, in part, to balance the heavy reliance by recent studies on Roman masculinity on ancient writings created from a theological perspective. In this dissertation, I was interested primarily in seeing how disparate ancient writers connected martial virtues to long-held codes of ideal manly conduct. It is important to note that military affairs were not a primary concern in a variety of literary genres or even in some historical writing that has come down to us from the age.⁸ As was discussed in chapter 4, alternative pathways to achieving “true” manliness had long been a feature of masculine ideology in the Late Roman and the early Byzantine period. Extreme ascetics, courageous martyrs, fearless philosophers, and powerful political and Church leaders were all, at times, compared favourably to military heroes. Moreover, Christian historiographical concepts like providence played a role in the classicising histories of Procopius, Menander, and Theophylact.⁹

Traditional hegemonic masculinity secured in acts of masculine bravery in warfare, however, proved resilient in the early Byzantine period. Certainly, one need not serve in the military to perceive the soldier’s life as an exemplar of the manly life. Civilian elites admired the manliness of war and the masculine deeds of the Empire’s soldiers. As Theophylact had the Bishop Domitianus of Melitene explain to a group of soldiers headed off to fight the Persians:

Let no one receive a scar on his back: the back is incapable of seeing victory. In the contest be united in spirit more than body, comrades in toils but not in cowardice. Let him who has not taken up the inheritance of danger be disowned. In death reach out for victory. Trophies are bought with wounds and blows. Sloth brings no glory. There is nothing sweeter than death in war, for if there is no advantage in growing old and being struck down by wasting disease, assuredly it is more appropriate for you heroes to die in the battle-line while you are young, reaping glory in your tombs.¹⁰

As a realm dominated by “real” men, the field of battle continued to provide one of the easiest places for men in the early Byzantine period to prove not only their courage, but their manliness as well.

⁸ For the relative neglect of military affairs in the seventh century *Chronicon Paschale*, for instance, see Whitby, “Greek Historical Writing”, 64. For the increasing focus in Heraclian propaganda in the Persian war based on religious themes, see Suzanne Alexander, “Heraclius, Byzantine Imperial Ideology, and the David Plates”, *Speculum* 52 (1977): 217-37, Mary Whitby, “Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and his Deputies”, in *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of the Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Mary Whitby (Leiden: Brill, 1998), esp. 247-265.

⁹ For this role in Theophylact and his sixth-century predecessor, Menander, see Whitby, “Greek Historical Writing”, 44.

¹⁰ Theophylact, *History* 5.4.8-9. This passage shows how Theophylact readily juxtaposed religious and classical themes in his history.

Inspirations and New Directions

The events surrounding the destruction of the twin towers on 9/11/2001 and the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq provided me with the original impetus for trying to understand how a demilitarised segment of a population could embrace militarism and men's martial virtues as a type of hyper-manliness. Living in the United States in this period, I found myself bombarded on a nearly daily basis by a myriad of visual and literary images promoting the soldier's life as the epitome of the manly life. Even more interesting to me, were the various ways non-soldiers both publically admired and sought to connect themselves with the martial legacy of the state and the manly identity of its soldiers. The image of a President, who had avoided fighting in Vietnam as a youth, draping himself in manly martial imagery made me ponder the ways similarly non-martial emperors from the Later Roman Empire may have promoted their own martial and masculine ideology. In the highly patriotic world of post 9/11 America, the field of battle seemed to provide a realm where soldiers—who hailed largely from the less privileged classes—could establish a raw manliness superior to that of powerful executives, politicians, famous actors, and professional athletes. While I understood the danger of making anachronistic comparisons between a modern state like the United States and an ancient one like the early Byzantine, it made me consider the ways and some of the reasons why civilian members of a population could, not just admire, but seem to share in a “group” masculinity shaped by the exploits of a relatively small percentage of men.

This study is largely the result of those earlier questions. Of course much more work is needed to understand how individual ancient writers constructed gender in their writings. The sort of detailed analysis that Procopius' *Gothic Wars* received in chapter 5 could be applied to a number of secular and “Christian” sources from the age. The ecclesiastical historians from the fifth and the sixth centuries, in particular, would seem to provide fertile ground for scholars interested in these authors' interest in military matters and/or the role that martial virtue, both in a metaphorical and in a literal sense, played in their conceptualisation of masculinity. All of Procopius' works could undergo a more thorough treatment as well. A complete lexicon of gendered vocabulary in his disparate writings would perhaps provide greater understanding of Procopius as a writer and a historian.

A study on the use of a concept like ἀνδρεία by various early Byzantine writers that emulates the methodology found in recent work on classical intellectuals' understanding of courage, manliness, and effeminacy would be welcome as well.

As discussed throughout this study, we will probably never know either the exact makeup or the size of the audience for all genres of early Byzantine literature. Therefore, an investigation similar to McDonnell's work on the Late Republic, combining an analysis of visual and literary representations of martial manliness, would shed light on just how hegemonic popular images of the "soldier's life" were in the early Byzantine period.

The relative abundance of literary sources from the entire sixth and the first quarter of the seventh century merit further scrutiny by historians interested in gender. The supposed rise of a more military culture in the sixth-century Byzantine Empire is an important topic awaiting further investigation by military historians and gender scholars. Was the seeming increased interest in military matters and the deeds of "manly" soldiers in much of the sixth-century literature the by-product of Justinian's reconquests, or more a reflection of the dearth of secular sources that come down to us from the fifth century? The increasing focus on religious ideology as an aspect of imperial propaganda during the Emperor Heraclius' military campaigns against the Persians has received much recent scholarly attention. Those interested in the ways hegemonic masculine ideologies disseminated the views of an elite intent on justifying and protecting the existing political order could delve further into these messages for hints of continuity and change in codes of traditional masculinity in this transformative era of Byzantine history.

This study has limited itself to Greek and Latin writers; an entire cache of sources composed in Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, and Arabic in a variety of literary genres awaits the gender scholar with the language skills to interpret them. Without a doubt, a thorough grasp of these disparate sources is essential if one wants to comprehend the vital social and political events that transformed the Byzantine world and shaped masculinity across the Eastern Mediterranean. Yet, as the recent work of scholars like James Howard-Johnston has shown, even those without a deep grounding in these languages can provide valuable insights on the "dark" periods of the seventh and eighth centuries. It would be interesting, for instance, to explore if the decline of secular literature and the relative abundance of many genres of Christian literature in the seventh and eighth centuries represented a turning away by members of the cultivated classes from military matters and traditional forms of hegemonic masculinity based on manly acts on the battlefield.

In closing, warfare and the deeds of soldiers are topics largely ignored in the recent research on Late Roman and early Byzantine masculinity. I hope that this dissertation has

shown its readers that an appreciation of these subjects is essential to uncover the ways early Byzantine intellectuals both understood and constructed masculinity.

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Appendix 1: The Universalised Masculine



(Plate 7)

This dissertation has argued that early Byzantine notions of virtue and vice remained closely aligned to their ideas of gender difference. Indeed, I have suggested that for many ancient intellectuals there was little difference between notions of ideal human behaviour and definitions of masculinity. This appendix shows that this belief was based predominantly on the teachings of earlier medical professionals, as well as the precedents established in the writings of earlier Greek intellectuals and historians.

Early Byzantine physicians were primarily compilers who relied on the work of earlier intellectuals and medical professionals, so to understand their beliefs in the links between gender and virtue, it is to these writings that one must turn.¹ Classical Greek and Roman medical practitioners based much of men's primacy over women on biology. Although there was never one recognised medical treatise concerning the biological and psychological differences between men and women, some generalisations may be made. Ancient doctors considered women and men to be fundamentally different. Males were the result when fetuses attained their complete potential by gathering the necessary "natural heat" to achieve a virile spirit. In contrast, females represented failed men—whereas men simmered with hot vitality—women remained liquid and cold.² Writing in the second-century CE, the physician Galen argued that a woman's frigidity was the primary reason for her inferiority. He wrote, "Just as man is the most perfect of all animals, so also with the

¹ A. J. Brock, introduction to Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* (trans. A.J. Brock, LCL [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916]), 19.

² Brown, *Body and Society*, 10.

human species, man is more perfect than woman. The cause of this superiority is the [males] superabundance of warmth".³

The classical Hippocratic medical treatise *On the Generating Seed and the Nature of the Child* presented a slightly more complicated theory of sexual difference. It proposed that "both partners alike" contained male and female sperm; males came from the stronger sperm, whilst women derived from the weaker. Nonetheless, despite the masculine sperm's inherent superiority over the feminine, the masculine seed could succumb to the feminine sperm and produce a girl if the feminine seed established dominance through numerical supremacy.⁴

Medical practitioners saw men and women as "mirror images of the other". The uterus functioned simply as a reversed penis, while the ovaries served as internal testicles.⁵ These physical distinctions between men and women were often matched by behavioural differences based on gender. Intellectuals, like the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, proposed that while masculine men displayed rationality, courage, and emotional calm, their biological opposites, women, exhibited irrationality, cowardice, and a lack of self-control.⁶ Aristotle argued that in all animals there appear differences in character between males and females. He suggested that this divergence was most evident in the case of humans. He also tackled the question of whether slaves and children had human virtues.⁷

While Aristotle recognised the potential for women's bravery, in the *Politics*, he maintained, "that a man would appear to be a coward [δειλός] if he were only as courageous [ἀνδρείος] as a courageous [ἀνδρεία] woman". Aristotle continued by proposing that just as the virtues of "justice" [δικαιοσύνη] and "restraint" [σωφροσύνη] differed in the good ruler and the good subject, so too did the virtues of σωφροσύνη and ἀνδρεία diverge "in a man and in a woman".⁸ Therefore, though some women could display masculine virtues, men's biological dominion over women assured that men would display a "purer" form of these essential virtues than their natural subjects, women.

³ Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.6.7.

⁴ Hippocrates, *On the Generating Seed and the Nature of the Child* 6.1-2.

⁵ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 20.

⁶ Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9.1.

⁷ Aristotle, *Politics* 1.13.

⁸ Aristotle, *Politics* 3.2.10-20 (my trans.).

The seminal classical historian, Thucydides (ca. 460 BC – ca. 395 BC), adhered to the normative Greek view that women's virtue differed greatly from men's. In Thucydides' depiction of Pericles' funeral oration in 430 BCE, the political leader instructs his audience that "womanly virtues" [γυναικείας ἀρετῆς] are best displayed by women "whom there is least talk about whether in praise or in blame".⁹ Still, in certain instances women could display a masculine trait like courage. In one of the few passages of *Peloponnesian War* that even mentions women, Thucydides praised the "courage" [τόλμα] of a group of women who had joined a raging battle by dropping tiles from the rooftops onto their enemies. Despite, the historian's admiration, however, he qualified these brave deeds, by labelling them as "beyond the nature of their sex" [πὰρ φύσιν].¹⁰ For Thucydides, as well as many of his classicising emulators, true courage and manliness remained beyond women's reach.

Much of men's primacy over women was based upon the vagaries of chance. The direction that the semen floated to in the womb during intercourse could determine whether one developed masculine or feminine characteristics. Some Later Roman thinkers supposed that the left side of the uterus contained "feminine" traits, while the right side held the "masculine" ones. A female seed that drifted towards the right, could therefore gain some manly characteristics, while a male seed floating to the left might capture some feminine ones.¹¹ This conviction helps one understand why many ancient writers supposed that one's gender was not an absolute, but a point on a sliding scale. This malleability did not mean that a man could become a woman, only that with every sign of femininity he displayed a man risked slipping further down the ladder of gender difference, from the top rung of masculine perfection, to the lower rungs of the feminised male. Though I might add, the gender ambiguity of eunuchs often challenged this notion of an "absolute divide between male and female".¹²

⁹ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (trans. Charles Forster Smith, LCL, 5 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914, reprint 2000]), 2.45. For a similar sentiment in Byzantine culture, Martha Vinson, "Romance and Reality in the Byzantine Bride Shows," in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 114.

¹⁰ Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 3.74.2 (my trans.).

¹¹ This concept is best represented in the writings of the fourth-century Christian writer Lactantius (*De opificio de* 12.12-3), who, as Kuefler (*Manly Eunuch*, 21) points out, though not a physician, related "a belief that we can imagine was shared by his contemporaries".

¹² Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 19.

Although each parent contributed to the personality and the sex of a developing baby, the father's manly supremacy made him the dominate donor. Moral variations among men, however, could play a role in the formation of a foetus—while a manly man passed down masculine traits—an unmanly father supplied some feminine ones. If a noble woman had sexual relations with a slave or a barbarian, these “substandard” men could add their unmanly traits to the child. In certain instances, no sexual contact was needed to infect the foetus with a flawed effeminate nature. An illustration of this threat may be observed when the author of the *Historia Augusta* tried to rationalise how the paragon of Roman manliness, the second-century Emperor Marcus Aurelius (ruled 161-180), had sired the unmanly and morally bankrupt Emperor Commodus (ruled 177-192).¹³

The author related a tale circulating amongst the upper classes, which claimed that Marcus' wife Faustina had admitted to her husband that she had recently fallen ill because of an uncontrollable passion she had developed for a gladiator who had merely passed by her one day. Following his advisors counsel, Marcus executed the gladiator and made his wife bathe in the dead man's blood. Our author quipped that while this solution certainly extinguished the empress' fervour, it had the unintended effects of exposing her unborn son to the gladiator's unmanly vices.¹⁴ The historian concluded that this incident might reveal how “the son of so virtuous a prince [Marcus] had habits worse than any trainer of gladiators, any play actor [or] any fighter in the arena”.¹⁵ Despite the narrator's personal opinion that Commodus' flaws had resulted from the empress' “numerous” liaisons with sailors and gladiators—he did not refute the “scientific” premise behind the gossip, which warned his audience about the threat of exposing a foetus—of even the most powerful and manly of men—to the character-altering defects of inferior men. While our author's tale may tell us next to nothing about the imperial couple, it does reveal some Late Roman attitudes towards gender and masculinity.

Boys to Men

While men established their superiority over women in the womb, it represented only the first step on a long and hazardous journey to “true” manliness. As already noted, being

¹³ On Commodus' reputation for unmanliness, see Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 28-9.

¹⁴ Many Roman intellectuals categorised gladiators as unmanly, because—like many public performers—they had given up dominion over their own bodies. Williams argues (*Roman Homosexuality*, 140-41) that Roman masculinity was centred on the notion of control. By “subjugating himself to others for the sake of pleasuring or entertaining them,” the gladiator opened himself up for gendered prejudice because he was deemed to have relinquished this essential command over his own body.

¹⁵ HA, *Marcus Antoninus* 19. 2-10.

born a biological male did not necessarily allow one to attain a complete masculine nature. Indeed, most men had little chance of ever achieving this perfect state; Roman masculinity was tightly defined and attainable primarily to freeborn citizens who knew how to behave and dress in the prescribed manner.¹⁶ For Roman men the reverence of the universalised masculine, however, functioned as a double-edged sword. In the real world, men consistently failed to live up to the stringent standard; the ancient sources remain littered with unmanly men giving into their passions, acting irrationally, displaying anger, and playing a passive role in society. These moral variations among men threatened the notion of masculine supremacy. However, Kuefler contends that instead of creating new categories of men to cover these ambiguities, writers regularly provided these unmanly men with a feminine identity. By separating the “failed” men from the remainder of men, one could maintain the connection between masculinity and virtue—if these effeminate individuals were not actually men, then one could continue to claim logically that all men were virtuous.¹⁷ Therefore, men who acted irrationally or in any “unmanly” fashion were not perceived to be displaying an alternative form of masculinity, but of slipping into the realm of femininity, while women who displayed “manly” courage did not represent a type of brave femininity, but were depicted as women who had tapped into the masculine.

Greek and Roman intellectuals portrayed masculinity as an achieved status; boys needed to be made into men, while girls quite often simply became women. This restrictiveness helps to explain why strict protocols and training for the mind and body needed to be followed for boys to attain manhood. During his formative period, a boy needed to be surrounded by male role models, who could pass down the necessary knowledge to guide the youth towards the standards of Roman masculinity. Even an intrinsically male characteristic like ἀνδρεία could be honed in the classroom. By the second-century CE, groups of Sophists steeped in Greek rhetoric and literature regularly took on the role as the “didactic voices” of manliness. Joy Connolly contends that: “The education in *ars rhetorica* undertaken by Greek and Roman elites was a powerful combination of body-mind training that bent all the pupil’s powers of emulation toward the goal of acquiring the habits, the look, of a manly man”.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the Sophists were not the only “experts” at making men in this era. A variety of training methods were available to those interested in shaping a boy’s inchoate masculinity:

¹⁶ Harlow, “Clothes Maketh the Man”, 44-45.

¹⁷ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 29-31.

¹⁸ Connolly, “Andreia and Paideia”, 287, 328.

athletic trainers, doctors, physiognomists, philosophers, and even dream interpreters all insisted that their techniques represented the best path to manly perfection.¹⁹ Whichever regime one chose, the wise instructor who functioned as a conduit to ideal human virtues played a vital role in the creation of manly Roman men.

The crucial part that manly role models played in guiding Roman boys from incipient to complete masculinity helps us to understand the danger of corrupt advisors in the ancient literary tradition. We find an illustration of this common theme in the third-century history of the emperors composed by the Greek historian Herodian (ca. 170-240). Herodian summed up the peril of an “effeminate education” in his description of the Emperor Commodus’ childhood. “Young men”, he proclaimed, “are easily diverted from learning moral values and slip easily into a life of pleasure [ἡδονὰς]”.²⁰ Marcus, who Herodian explained was universally admired for his “manliness” [ἀνδρεία] and “moderation” [σωφροσύνη], unfortunately failed to pass on these traits to his son. The historian blamed the adult Commodus’ love of the “soft” life on his flawed upbringing.²¹ At first, Commodus had followed the sound guidance of his father’s (Marcus) friends: he led a disciplined life and filled his free time with “proper physical exercise”. Indeed his “manly” [ἀνδρείας] visage showed the outward signs of his noble and manly heritage. Unfortunately, the inexperienced Commodus succumbed to the flattery of one group of depraved advisors. These men reminded Commodus of the “soft life of Rome” [Πώμη τρυφῆς] by telling him of the delightful pleasure to seen and heard” there, while another confidante took “advantage of his youth by relieving “him of his office by persuading him to lead a life of pleasure [τρυφαίς] and drunkenness”.²² Thus, while the depiction of Commodus may represent a trope, it highlights both the precarious nature as well as the paradox of Roman masculinity. For, despite the widely held conviction that many virtues represented intrinsically male attributes, these desirable qualities rarely developed without the aid of a proper education and extreme vigilance on the part of the man who attained them.²³

¹⁹ Van Nijf, “Askesis-Culture”, 283.

²⁰ Herodian, *BH* 1.3.1.

²¹ Herodian, *BH* 1.2.5.

²² Herodian, *BH* 1.6.1, 1.8.1.

²³ Connolly, “Andreia and Paideia”, 298.

Dangers of Civilisation

Let us conclude this discussion by showing how Herodian's depiction of Commodus' decline into effeminacy also exposes the Roman concern that the "luxury" of the city—and of civilisation in general—could corrupt the manliness of men who had traditionally utilised the battlefield as the primary outlet to demonstrate their manliness. As early as the second century BCE, Polybius had warned the Romans that universal dominion could be hazardous for Roman masculine ideals built around battle and strict living. Polybius, who had composed his history, in part, to explain Greece's decline and Rome's rise, illustrated that, just like the Greeks before them, the Romans remained in constant danger of succumbing to the temptation of the easy, and therefore, the effeminate life. After their victories over the Greeks, Polybius informed his readers, that many young Roman men freed from the battlefield quickly "abandoned themselves to affairs with boys" and courtesans. In addition to these relationships, the young men listened to immoral music and indulged in extravagant bouts of drinking. The historian argued that these disgraceful traits resulted from the young men's contact with "the moral laxity of Greek culture".²⁴ By succumbing to the unmanly temptations of civilisation, "soft" Roman men threatened the survival of the state.

Even a casual perusal of the sources reveals the freeborn Roman male's fear that his masculine authority over women, slaves, and barbarians was not unconditional. Roman masculinity left little room for complacency; if a Roman man let down his defences for even a moment he risked slipping into the realm of effeminacy. This dilemma meant that if a man displayed any trait that a peer might deem as unmanly, he risked being labelled as effeminate. Consequently, a man who displayed self-controlled manly courage in battle or served as an eloquent political leader in his public life could still be seen as unmanly if, say for instance, in his private life he cavorted with "loose" women.²⁵ Possessing ἀνδρεία or *virtus* did not necessarily make one an ideal man. Herodian drives home this point with his condemnation of Commodus' fighting in gladiatorial contests. While the historian acknowledged that Commodus had displayed "courage" [ἀνδρείας] and laudable fighting skills in these public spectacles, he considered a noble's participation in such events as

²⁴ Polybius, *Histories* 31.25. Note that Polybius did not condemn the soldiers because they were having sex with other men, only that they were breaking strict Roman protocols that regulated all sexual activities. In ancient Mediterranean societies, men's sexual relations were not distinguished by the sex of their partners and Greek and Roman cultures permitted sexual relations between men. But like all sexual behaviour, it was highly regulated and each culture differentiated between "active" and "passive" partners. See Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 85.

²⁵ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 142.

shameful. Moreover, it served as further proof of Commodus' flawed nature, because instead of "using his weapons to fight the barbarians" and proving "himself worthy of the Roman Empire", the emperor had preferred to squander these virtues in a "degrading exhibition".²⁶ Many ancient moralists perceived such "frivolous" displays of manly virtue as wasteful. Ἀνδρεία was not a quality for one to squander in the pursuit of personal pleasure or laurels, but an attribute that in most cases needed to be utilised for a higher purpose. In its purest form, ἀνδρεία functioned as a public virtue that needed be used, not for selfish reasons, but for the greater glory of the Roman state.

One's masculine supremacy needed to be constantly earned and protected. Greco-Roman authors stressed repeatedly that the ethical standards and the manliness of a nation's men were what separated the victor from the vanquished. This manly virtue, however, remained threatened, and the Romans, like the Greeks before them, needed to maintain their vigilance unless they too wanted to slip into the unmanly lifestyle that had destroyed the Greeks.

²⁶ Herodian, *BH* 1.15.7.

Appendix 2

Romans and Barbarians: Some Links between Masculinity and Ethnicity in the Later Roman Empire



(Plate 8)

“Women” represent only one of many groups that have been marginalised in the historical record. Ethnic minorities, slaves, and members of the lower classes have all at times been treated as the “equivalent to women” because they were seen as subordinated men.¹ Several recent studies on ancient Rome have convincingly demonstrated that the relationship between Romans and non-Romans was also laid out regularly along gendered lines. These scholars suggest that if woman represented the biological antithesis of man, then the barbarian often personified the social inversion of Roman.² This appendix examines some of the Romans’ reasoning for this belief. Yet, one caveat before we proceed: for just as ancient writers commonly created portraits of women as a means to describe men’s character, Roman authors’ commentaries about non-Romans tend to tell us more about their own culture than the foreign societies they purport to describe.³ This point is particularly relevant for a thesis like mine that relies so heavily on the Late Roman classicising and ecclesiastical historians for its ideas. These authors tended to conform to a Late Roman style of rhetoric for their portrayals of non-Roman peoples, and therefore the modern historian must use them with prudence. Quite often, the descriptions of non-

¹ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 3.

² See especially Eckstein, *Moral Vision*, Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 132-137, Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 47-49, 285-286, McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 159-161.

³ For example, Rebecca Langlands (*Sexual Morality*, 319-63) has shown persuasively that the imperial historian Tacitus’ (56–117 CE) description of the *pudicitia* of the Germanic tribes did not to describe reality, but served to point out the Romans’ *impudicitia*.

Roman peoples found in these sources were not based on reality, but on contemporary or classical preconceptions of how barbarian peoples should behave.⁴ I would suggest, however, that even rhetorical constructions might provide one with a more detailed picture of how Late Roman men saw both foreigners and themselves. For while this dependence on literary devices might hinder any attempt to uncover a foreign people's actual mores, these portrayals can provide a scholar with vital material by which to explore Roman notions of socially constructed concepts such as ethnicity and masculinity.

Soft Lands and Soft Men

In a similar manner to how they explained their “natural” ascendancy over women, Roman writers pointed to biological, environmental, and social factors to support their claims of supremacy over non-Romans. Some of the Romans’ belief in their manly superiority appears to have stemmed from the continuing relevance of the classical theory that geography played an essential role in the development of one’s or an *ethnos*⁵ physical and mental characteristics. Greek and Roman writers had long argued that—like the mother’s womb—the physical environment that one lived in played a part in the creation of manly and unmanly peoples.⁶ According to classical medical texts, one’s birthplace often correlated with one’s ability to attain essential masculine attributes. Some of the earliest examples of this motif are found in the early fifth-century BCE Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places*.⁷ This treatise theorised that Asia’s continual spring-like climate contributed to the emasculation of its population, asserting that: “Manly courage [ἀνδρείον], endurance [ταλαιώρον], labour [εμπονον], and high spiritedness [θυμοειδης] could not be produced in such an environment in either native or

⁴ It is important to note that this propensity to rely upon rhetorical models was not, however, universal, and one sees in the fifth and sixth-century histories of Priscus, Procopius and Menander, for example, more accurate ethnographies.

⁵ As Anthony Kaldellis points out (*Hellenism*, 87-89.), the terminology used by the Romans and the Byzantines to describe ethnicity: *ethnos*, *genos*, and *phylon* had more nuanced, flexible and frequently contradictory meanings than the modern concepts of “nations,” “races,” or “peoples”. In its most common usage, *ethnos* could signify the “Romans” themselves or any barbarian group no matter how it was constituted, but it could also be used to describe groups, such as women, philosophers and Christians. On the other hand *genos* usually denoted a “biological relation, and was often used to designate one’s family, *phylon* is a term that best represents the modern concept of “race”. However, *genos*, *phylon*, and *ethnos* could also be used interchangeably “to designate any category of things regardless of how they were constituted”.

⁶ Harrell, “Marvelous *Andreia*”, 86.

⁷ The extent of Hippocrates’ (ca. 460 BCE – ca. 370 BCE) contribution to, and exact date of, *Airs, Waters, Places* is problematic, though most scholars attribute it to Hippocrates or one of his followers, and therefore date it to the late fifth century BCE.

foreigner. But it is necessary for pleasure [ἡδονήν] to rule there”.⁸ In contrast to the temperate conditions of Asia, which created docile and unmanly men, the more varied seasons of Western Europe affected the sperm, which in turn, created the more courageous—albeit unstable—personalities and anatomies of the individuals born there.

Let us consider another example from *Airs* that sheds additional light on the important relationship between geography and biology in the development of masculine virtues among certain peoples:

The other people of Europe differ from one another, both in stature and in shape, because of the changes of the seasons, which are violent and frequent, while there are severe heat waves, severe winters, and copious rains, and then long droughts, and winds, causing many changes of various kinds. Wherefore it is natural to realise that generation too varies in the coagulation of the seed, and it is not the same seed in summer as in winter nor in rain as in drought. It is for this reason, I think, that the physique of Europeans varies more than that of the Asiatics; and that their stature differs very widely in each city. For there arise more corruptions in the coagulation of the seed when the changes of the seasons are frequent, than when they are similar or alike. The same reasoning applies also to character. In such a climate, arise wildness [ἄγριον], unsociability and spirit [θυμοειδεις]. For this reason, I think the inhabitants of Europe are also more courageous [ευψυχότερους] than Asiatics. For uniformity engenders slackness, while variation fosters endurance in both body and soul; rest and slackness are food for cowardice [ῥαθυμία], endurance, and exertion for bravery [ἀνδρεία].⁹

While most modern scholars would consider traits like “courage” and “indolence” as socially assigned aspects of gender, we can observe in the example above the ancient conviction that these behaviours represented aspects of biology, which in turn could be influenced by environmental conditions.

Greek and Roman historians applied some of these principles to their own ethnographies. Writing at about the same time as *Airs, Waters, and Places*’ composition,¹⁰ Herodotus (ca. 484 BCE–ca.425 BCE) concluded *Histories* by suggesting that peoples who wanted to maintain their masculine edge should avoid “unmanly” lands. The historian, who earlier in his history had attributed the martial virtues of the “native” Persians under the Emperor Cyrus to the “roughness” of their native lands, had a warning to all warrior peoples who might consider abandoning their own austere territories for more temperate

⁸ Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places* 12, quoted in Harrell, “Marvelous *Andreia*”, 87.

⁹ Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places* 23 (trans. W. H. S. Jones, LCL, 8 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923, reprint 1972])

¹⁰ Harrell (“Marvelous *Andreia*”, n. 36) suggests that Herodotus’ *Histories* and the treatise did not have “a direct relationship” but both utilised “earlier ethnographic works linking climate and character”.

and luxurious lands.¹¹ After their conquest of the Medes, a group of Persians attempted to coax the Emperor Cyrus to leave “this barren country of ours and take possession of a better”. In response, Cyrus chided his colleagues to abandon their thoughts of further conquest in Asia, warning: “Soft countries make soft men” [τῶν μαλακῶν χώρων μαλακοὺς ἄνδρας γίνεσθαι]. It is not the property of any one soil to produce fine fruits and good soldiers too”. The Persians relented, and Herodotus reasoned that their wise decision “to live in a rugged land” and not “to cultivate rich plains” allowed them (the Persians) to rule and not to be subjugated by others.¹² Though likely apocryphal, this anecdote reveals Herodotus’ conviction that geography played a role in shaping one’s character and manliness.¹³

Nevertheless, we should not take the influence of environmental factors over the social as the primary dynamic in the creation of ideal men too far. Most ancient writers did not have the same qualms as modern academics in seemingly contradicting themselves. This paradox is readily apparent in *Airs*, where the treatise seemingly undermines its earlier assertion by suggesting, “νόμος could create ἀνδρεῖον in those who do not possess this quality by nature [φύσις] (*Airs*, 24)”.¹⁴ Herodotus likewise extolled the vital role that νόμος played in the formation of manly peoples.¹⁵ In *Histories*, the Greeks’ subservience, not to any human master, but to νόμος, helped to set them apart from their Persian counterparts. The contrast between the Persian soldiers who were compelled to battle by their master Xerxes’ insatiable appetite for conquest, versus the Greeks, who were fighting for their political and personal freedom, represented a primary topos for Herodotus. Νόμος therefore served as a set of abstract common values that a man could submit to without falling into the realm of effeminacy.

Later Roman and early Byzantine writers propagated these theories to the point of cliché.¹⁶ One sees in the sources from these periods the opinion that certain variations

¹¹ Herodotus, *Histories* (trans. A.D. Godley, LCL, 4 vols. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920-25, reprint 2000]) 1.71.

¹² Herodotus, *Histories* 9.122 (my trans.).

¹³ Harrell, “Marvelous *Andreia*”, 86.

¹⁴ Harrell, “Marvelous *Andreia*”, n. 37.

¹⁵ Herodotus, and other ancient sources, frequently stressed the importance of free-will for men striving to display acts of martial courage. Consequently, in these sources attacks on masculinity are closely tied to servility. Manly courage is depicted as a “choice” that can only be made by the man who has the freedom to master his own unruly nature. E.g., Herodotus, *Histories* 7.107. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 579a.

¹⁶ Later Roman and Byzantine medical practitioners continued to consult the Hippocratic treatises. Galen wrote a commentary on *Airs, Waters, Places*, but the original Greek version of commentary was lost.

between Western and Eastern barbarians could be best explained by a combination of geographic and social factors.¹⁷ Despite the predominantly negative representations of non-Roman peoples found in these texts, many ancient intellectuals admired foreign peoples for displaying masculine qualities like courage and intelligence. I must emphasise, however, that even in these “positive” depictions, the rhetoric of racial exclusion usually took precedence, and when represented by Late Roman writers, individuals or groups of barbarian men seldom possessed the proper combination of intellectual and martial virtues necessary for a man to attain true Roman manliness.

We see the idea articulated in the Late Roman texts that masculine men needed to combine innate martial qualities with more learned political and intellectual virtues. We may observe this selectivity when the fourth-century Emperor Julian praised the Germanic and Celtic peoples for their “fierceness” [θρασεῖς] and their “love of freedom”, [φιλελεύθερόν], but criticised them for their “unruliness” [ἀνυπότακτον] and lack of wisdom.¹⁸ Similarly, while he admitted that some of the Eastern barbarian peoples were the intellectual equals to the Romans, he made it clear that their intrinsically “effeminate” [τρυφηλός], “docile” [τιθασόν], and “submissive” [χειρόθης] natures limited their ability to cultivate martial virtues, which contributed to their propensity to be ruled over by despots, or even worse, women.¹⁹ He made it clear that only the ancient Hellenes and Romans were able to combine an “unyielding” [στερεός] “warlike” [πολεμικός] nature with an inclination for the political life.²⁰ Additionally, while one reads frequently on the pages of the classicising historians about the authors' admiration of the Western barbarians for their “fine physiques,” and their “natural and fierce fighting ability,” just as often, these writers lampooned the barbarians for their dull intellects and inborn recklessness that tended to

However, Hunayn ibn Ishaq (809-873) in ninth century Baghdad translated it into Syriac for the court physician, Salmawayh ibn Bunan, of the caliph al-Mu'tasim bi-llah (reigned 833-842). Gotthard Strohmaier, “Galen’s Commentary on *Airs, Places, Waters*,” http://www.manuscriptcenter.org/history/Researches/Gotthard_Strohmaier.doc.

¹⁷ The Greek historian Arrian in the second century CE, for example, utilised this familiar formula in his description of the fourth-century BCE conquests of Alexander, to contrast the physical superiority of the “vigorous” barbarians of Europe with “lazy” and “soft” barbarians of Asia. Before battle Alexander roused his troops to battle by declaring: “As for our barbarian troops, Thracians, Paeonians, Illyrians, Agrianians, the most robust [εὐρωστοτάτους] warlike races of Europe, will be arranged against the most indolent [ἀπονώτατά] and softest [μαλκώτατα] tribes [γένη] of Asia”. Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* (trans. P.A. Brunt. LCL. 2 vols. [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929]) 2.7.5.

¹⁸ Julian, *Against the Galileans* 116 A, 138 B (my trans.).

¹⁹ Julian, *Against the Galileans* 138 B (my trans.).

²⁰ Julian, *Against the Galileans* 116A (my trans.).

limit their effectiveness in combat.²¹ These writers also compared barbarians to women because of their love of jewellery and other “excessive” ornamentation. The third-century imperial biographer, Herodian, for instance, likened the Western barbarians to women for their shared love of “brooches and belts extravagantly decked out with gold and precious stones”.²²

Despite their general admiration of the Western barbarians’ innate courage, the classicising historians from the fifth to the seventh centuries followed the classical notion that there remained a fine line between rashness and courage. 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”.²³ 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. The knack of ruling oneself by repressing one’s emotions and urges had long made up an essential component of Greek and Roman masculine identity.²⁴ Therefore, it is not surprising that Roman writers articulated the view that Roman men had a greater potential than either women or barbarians to overcome humanity’s natural instinct to avoid danger.²⁵ In contrast to the controlled courage best exemplified by Roman men, in these sources, barbarians frequently display a more primeval, undisciplined, and therefore more unreliable type of bravery.²⁶

Wild Courage

Classical sources long argued that, like slaves, barbarians stood much nearer than the civilised Greeks and Romans to the margins that separated humans from the other

²¹ Herodian, *BH* 2.9.11.

²² Herodian, *BH* 5.2.4.

²³ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1228a26-30a37, 1230a26-33, quoted in, Bassi, “Semantics of Manliness”, 52-53.

²⁴ Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 63-65.

²⁵ Roisman, “Rhetoric of Courage”, 127.

²⁶ For instance, while the Greek historian Polybius (ca. 203–120 BCE) proclaimed that the tenacity of the barbarian Gauls in battle proved that they were the equal to the Romans in courage, however, he later qualifies this statement by maintaining that the barbarians’ ardour tended to wane if their first frenzied onslaughts failed to overwhelm their enemies. Polybius (*Histories* 2.30-35) advised his readers that civilised peoples could defeat these terrifying hordes by depending on “the resolution and the ability of men who faced the danger with intelligence and cool calculation”.

lesser animals. Some of the Late Romans' convictions concerning the inferiority of barbarian peoples may hark back to Aristotle's perception of different levels of humanity, based on his theory that—just like other animals—men from different cultures and social backgrounds exhibited differing degrees of completeness or perfectiveness.²⁷ This bigotry helps us understand why the Greeks and the Romans traditionally depicted the barbarian peoples as “wild beasts”. Following these rhetorical traditions, Roman writers of the Later Empire regularly employed animal metaphors to describe foreign peoples from the East and the West.²⁸ I would suggest that these depictions allowed Late Roman writers to reassure their audience. By revealing to their readers that much of the barbarians' boldness in battle was brought on by wild desperation and an animalistic lack of self-mastery, they could comfort their audience by suggesting that much of these foreigners' martial prowess was based on more instinctive and therefore inferior types of courage and manliness. Similar to the youthful passion and self-indulgent exhibitions of courage displayed by flawed and unmanly emperors like Commodus, the irascible behaviour of the barbarians represented the polar opposite of Roman models of masculinity based on a man's ability to control his natural impulses and demonstrate a preternatural calm. Impulsive courage therefore differs from the controlled courage of the man who used his reason (λόγος) to exercise control over all of his passions.²⁹ Foreigners' propensity to more intuitive types of courage therefore corresponds with the conventional Late Roman attitude that non-Romans could be intimidated by manly Roman soldiers and driven from Roman soil. This is not to say that rational courage represented an endemic Roman virtue. Like *virtus*, ἀνδρεία served as a universal value, available to both genders and to all peoples—Roman or barbarian. Nonetheless, in the Roman sources, barbarian peoples who possessed *virtus* or ἀνδρεία often lost it, as well as their freedom, when they faced the manlier Romans in battle.³⁰

²⁷ Marguerite Deslauriers, “Aristotle on *Andreia*, Divine, and Sub-human Virtues”, in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Boston: Brill, 2003), 192-96.

²⁸ Blockley, *Classicising Historians*, 92.

²⁹ As Hagit Amirav points out, the Stoics believed that passions like anger (*ira*) differed in rational and irrational men. A passion like “anger” (*ira*), had several nuanced meanings, he argues, “bestial anger is not anger, but only an impulse, since animals do not have reason and therefore their apparent anger cannot be the result of temporarily defective λόγος”. Hagit Amirav, *Ammianus Stoicus*, 98. For a discussion in detail about Stoic beliefs and practices, see R.W. Sharples, *Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics: An Introduction to Hellenistic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1996).

³⁰ McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 161.

Barbarians often played the same role in the Late Roman sources as women and boys. Depictions of foreigners in these sources share similarities with the depictions of uneducated Roman youths and women, in that they often lacked the physical and the emotional control that were seen as fundamental qualities of manliness. Just as the sperm in the womb might become tainted by drifting into the feminine realm, a man separated from the regulation of Roman masculine ideology could easily wander into the temptation of an undisciplined, and therefore an effeminate existence. Somewhat ironically, only by submitting to Rome's masculine *imperium* could foreign men then begin to break down some of the barriers that had prevented them from attaining both civilisation and a "true" masculine identity.

APPENDIX 3

Greek Lexicon

This lexicon includes most of the Greek “martial” and “gendered” vocabulary used in this dissertation’s chapters and appendices. To get a better sense of usage and the nuanced meanings of these terms for non-Greek readers I have juxtaposed the Greek vocabulary within an English translation, as well as with examples of the usage of the term.

ἀλκή—bodily strength, prowess, courage, might, power. **Procopius**, *Wars* 8.23.36 (Gothic army makes a shameful retreat because they no longer thought of ἀλκής).

ἀνανδρία—(and cognates): unmanliness, cowardice. **Eusebius**, *HE* 5.1.34 (Christian martyrs are attacked by their pagan adversaries as ignoble and ἀνανδροί). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.9.1 (Procopius describes Theodahad as ἀνανδρος by nature). *Wars* 5.27.21 (Vitigis insists that ἀνανδρῷ had caused a Gothic defeat). *Wars* 6.18.14 (Belisarius warns his generals that the Goths’ previous defeats were not due to ἀνανδρία). *Wars* 6.29.34 (Gothic women accuse Gothic soldiers of ἀνανδριαν). *Wars* 6.30.5 (Vitigis is described by the Goths at the end of his reign as ἀνάνδρως and unlucky). *Wars* 8.23.25 (Goth describes Byzantine soldiers as by nature ἀνανδροί). *Wars* 8.23.26 (A Gothic commander argues that when one merely despises ἀνανδρία, it thrives).

ἀνδραγαθία—the character of a brave good man, bravery, manly virtue. **Eusebius**, *HE* 5.1.3 (Eusebius asserts that where other writers wrote about the ἀνδραγαθίας of soldiers, he was interested in describing the courage of the martyrs).

ἀνδραγαθίζομαι—to act bravely, honestly, to play the manly man. **Eusebius**, *HE* 4.15.17. (God commands the Bishop Polycarp before his execution to be strong and ἀνδρίζου). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.20.10 (The Gothic ambassador Albis tells the Byzantines that if they were confident in their ἀνδρεία, the coming battle would provide them with plenty of opportunities to ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι). *Wars* 5.28.6-14 (Belisarius explains to his soldiers that when men have met with misfortune their hearts no longer thrill even slightly with ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι). *Wars* 7.4.13 (Totila reminds his men that if they were ready to fight the

coming battle with the spirit of ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι displayed in a recent successful skirmish they would succeed in the larger contest to come).

ἀνδρεία—(and cognates): manliness, bravery, courage. **Aristotle**, *Politics* 1277b20

(Aristotle maintains that ἀνδρεία and restraint differed in a man and a woman. In fact, a man would seem cowardly if he were only as ἀνδρείος as an ἀνδρεία woman). *Eudemian Ethics* 1228a26-30a37 (Aristotle argues that ἀνδρεία was an attribute of a man whose actions demonstrate a balance between rashness and fear). **Eunapius**, frag. 3.18 (Julian recognises that ἀνδρεία needed to be combined with other less martial virtues to make a good leader). Frag. 68 (Eunapius stresses the importance of promoting the ἀνδρείον of the Roman emperor when making murals describing the destruction of foreign peoples).

Eusebius, *HE* 1.4.2 (Christians receive praise for outdoing their pagan rivals in ἀρετῆς ἀνδρεία). *HE* 6.41.16 (A martyr, the Roman soldier Besas, is called the ἀνδρειότατος soldier of God). *HE* 8.6.1 (The author contends that the ἀνδρεία of the martyrs could be compared with the courage of any Greek or barbarian). **Hippocrates**, *Airs, Waters, Places* 23 (The treatise suggests that “harsh” lands contribute to peoples development of endurance and ἀνδρεῖαι). **Julian**, *Letter to Alypius* 404 (Julian avers that the most virtuous of men combined gentleness and restraint with ἀνδρεία and force). **Libanius**, *Or.* 18.209 (Libanius comments that Constantius II drained the ἀνδριαν of the Roman soldiers).

Menander, *Second Treatise* 373, (Menander suggests that ἀρεταὶ was made up of four vital virtues: ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, φρόνησις). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.1.27 (Procopius suggests that Theoderic’s combination of ἀνδρίας and wisdom allowed him to protect Italy from barbarian invaders). *Wars* 5.2.12 (One faction of Goths contend that ἀνδρίας was far removed from a literary education). *Wars* 5.11.20-1 (Vitigis proclaims that the title of the coward, fittingly applied, has saved many, while the reputation for ἀνδρείας, which some men have gained at the wrong time, has afterward led them to defeat). *Wars* 5.20.9-10 (Gothic ambassador explains to the Italians and the Byzantines that rashness was different from ἀνδρεία). *Wars* 6.26.13 (Vitigis calls on the Goths to endure ἀνδρείως). *Wars* 7.40.9 (Procopius eulogises the Byzantine general Germanus by calling him an ἀνὴρ ἀνδρεῖός). *Wars* 8.3.7 (In Procopius’ telling, after all of their male soldiers died in a previous battle, the Amazons were still able to make display of ἀνδρεῖα). **Sozomen**, *HE* 1.13.6 (Sozomen describes the holy man Anthony as gentle, prudent and ἀνδρεῖος). *HE* 1.12.1 (Sozomen praised all ascetics for their ability to ἀνδρείως subjugate their passions). *HE* 6.21 (Sozomen praises bishops who ἀνδρείως opposed the emperor when he

interfered in Church affairs). *HE* 6.24.6 (Sozomen described the ἀνδρείως way that Ambrose served as bishop). **Thucydides**, *Peloponnesian War* 2.39.1 (Pericles argues that, from childhood, Athenian boys were educated to pursue τό ἀνδρεῖον). 2.39.4 (Pericles suggests that the Athenians' ἀνδρείας derived more from their way of life than compulsion of laws). **Zosimus**, *New History* 3.3.5 (Zosimus reveals that Julian's soldiers admired him for his ἀνδρεῖον in battle).

ἀπόλεμος—unwarlike, unfit for war. **Priscus**, frag. 1.3 (Eunapius describes Theodosius II as ἀπόλεμος). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.3.1 (Procopius criticises Theodahad for being ἀπολελειμμένος and taking no part in the active life).

ἀρετή—excellence, virtue, manhood, valour, prowess, goodness. **Athanasius**, *Life of Anthony* 1.5 (Devil reminds Anthony of the difficult path to ἀρετή). **Eunapius**, frag. 3.18 (Eunapius concludes that justice combined with authority was like a fountainhead of ἀρετῶν, which made even those far away manageable and obedient). frag. 44.3 (Eunapius describes Sebastianus as an exemplar of virtue whose ἀρετή matched that of the ancient Roman heroes). **Libanius**, *Or.* 18.230 (Libanius argues that if you force a naturally ἀρετῆς man to live among drunken revelry, his goodness deserts him and he learns these vices instead of the glories of the honourable). **Menander**, *Second Treatise* 373 (Menander suggests that ἀρεταὶ was made up of four vital virtues: ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, φρόνησις). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.18.16 (In a skirmish outside of Rome, Belisarius and his men prove their superior ἀρετή). *Wars* 5.20.11 (Gothic emissary warns Belisarius that when rashness takes possession of a man it brings him into danger with discredit, but bravery bestows upon him an adequate prize in a reputation for ἀρετῆς). *Wars* 5.28.9 (Belisarius explains to his men that with ἀρετή they could overcome the Goths' superior numbers). *Wars* 7.24.1-26 (Belisarius and his soldiers' ἀρετή and courage helped them to recapture Rome from the Goths). *Wars* 8.29.22-23 (Byzantine soldiers make a display of ἀρετῆς). *Wars* 8.30.1 (In a set speech, Narses claims that his army far out-stripped Totila's force in ἀρετῆ). *Wars* 8.32.11 (Romans and their barbarian allies show a common zeal and ἀρετῆ at the battle of Busto Gallorum). *Wars* 8.35.22 (Byzantine soldiers are motivated purely to make displays of ἀρετῶντες). **Theophylact**, *History* 3.13.4 (Byzantine soldiers are told that battle functions as a test of ἀρετῆς and vice). **Thucydides**, *Peloponnesian War* 2.45 (Thucydides suggests that γυναικείας ἀρετῆς are best displayed by women who are hidden away from the public arena).

ἄρρην—masculine, manly, strong. **Eunapius**, frag. 3.58.1 (Describes Valentinian II as ἄρρενωπὸν). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.2.3. (Procopius describes Amalasuintha as displaying very much an ἄρρενωπὸν nature). *Wars* 8.3.7 (According to Procopius, the death of all their male soldiers forced the Amazons to put on ἄρρενωπὸν). **Theophylact**, *History* 2.14.1 (Veteran soldier claims that courageous deeds proves to soldiers that their hearts are ἄρρενας like their bodies). *History* 3.13.4 (Byzantine soldiers are told that the coming battle will either reveal their effeminate cowardice or their ἄρρενωπὸν courage). **Zosimus**, *New History* 4.23-4 (Zosimus suggests that under the guidance of Sebastianus the Roman soldiers had achieved ἄρρενωπὸν out of effeminacy).

ἀσφαλής—firm, steadfast, unflinching. **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.1.27 (Theoderic ἀσφαλῶς protected Italy from the barbarians). *Wars* 7.1.14 (Procopius describes Belisarius as ἀσφαλεῖ without taking unnecessary risks in battle).

βέβαιος—firm, steadfast, trusty, sure, safe. **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.7.11 (Procopius criticises Theodahad for his lack of a βέβαιον mind).

γυναικεῖος—(and cognates): of or belonging to a woman, womanish, effeminate. **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.2.21 (Procopius “compliments” Amalasuintha for not acting γυνή). *Wars* 6.14.11 (The Heruls accuse their king, Rodolphus, of being soft and γυναικῶδη, which causes him to make a rash attack). **Zosimus**, *New History* 4.23 (Zosimus criticises Valens’ army, claiming that under the emperor’s watch, lax discipline and flawed training had led the army to be prepared only for retreat and for γύναι and unworthy desires).

δειλία—(and cognates): cowardice, timidity. **Aristotle**, *Politics* 1277b20 (Aristotle maintained that a man would seem δειλός if he were only as ἀνδρείος as an ἀνδρεία woman). **Priscus**, frag. 1.3 (Priscus accuses the Emperor Theodosius II of living a life of δειλία). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.2.12 (A Gothic faction argues that a Roman literary education leads to δειλὸν). *Wars* 5.11.20-1 (Vitigis suggests that the title of δειλίας, fittingly applied, has saved many, while the reputation for courage, led to often to disaster). *Wars* 8.32.29 (Procopius suggests that Totila’s inglorious death in battle had occurred because a deity

had smote him with δειλίαν). **Theophylact**, *History* 3.13.4 (Byzantine soldiers are told that the coming battle will either reveal their effeminate δειλίας or their manly bravery).

δραστήριος—energetic, active, vigorous. **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.3.1 (Procopius describes Theodahad as not δραστήριος). *Wars* 6.13.16 (Procopius declares that the eunuch Narses was δραστήριος in comparison to the typical eunuch). *Wars* 7.2.7 (Procopius describes Totila as δραστήριος). *Wars* 7.8.18 (Goths ask Totila to spare a Gothic soldier accused of rape because he was δραστήριος. Totila executes the soldier anyway).

ἡδονή—pleasure, luxury, effeminacy. **Athanasius**, *Life of Anthony* 1.5 (The Devil attempts to convince Anthony to give up his pursuit of asceticism by reminding him of his previous ἡδονήν life). **Eunapius**, frag. 55 (Eunapius maintains that the well-to-do have an inclination to τὴν ἡδονήν). **Herodian**, *BH* 1.3.1 (Herodian suggests that young men are easily led into a life of ἡδονὰς).

ἡρωϊκός—(and cognates): for heroes, heroic. **Olympiodorus**, frag. 40 (Olympiodorus describes both the Goth Saras and the Roman Boniface as ἀνὴρ ἡρωϊκός). **Procopius**, *Wars* 8.35.20-38. (Procopius declares that the Gothic king Teiās' noble death in battle compared to those ἡρώων of legend).

θηλυς—female sex, belonging to a woman. **Procopius**, *Wars* 3.3.9-16 (Procopius suggests that Valentinian III's θηλυνομένην education led to the losses of Roman territory in North Africa to the Vandals). **Zosimus**, *New History* 4.23-4 (Zosimus suggests that the Eastern Roman army had attained manliness out of θήλεος). **Theophylact**, *History* 3.13.4 (Byzantine soldiers are told that the coming battle will either reveal their θηλυπρεπὲς cowardice or their manly bravery).

θράσος—in a positive sense courage, confidence, in a negative sense over-boldness, rashness. **Aristotle**, *Eudemian Ethics* 1228a26-30a37 (Aristotle argues that ἀνδρεία was the attribute of a man whose actions demonstrate a balance between θράσος and fear). **Athanasius**, *Life of Anthony* 1.6 (Anthony faces the Devil and hordes of demons with καταθάρσας). **Procopius**, *Wars* (Theodahad enters into a state that Procopius describes as the antithesis of θράσος). *Wars* 5.17.18 (Outside the gates of Rome Belisarius and his

men hope to make a display of their own θάρσους). *Wars* 5.20.11 (Gothic envoy tells Belisarius that θάρσος is different from courage ἀνδρεία, because it often leads to disaster in battle). *Wars* 8.23.27 (Gothic commander suggests that θάρσος is related to a lack of fear). **Thucydides**, *Peloponnesian War* 2.11.3 (Pericles suggests that θράσος means ignorance).

κακία—badness, baseness, cowardice, vice. **Libanius**, *Or.* 18.65 (Libanius describes Roman army before Julian took command as by nature κακοῦς. He wonders if the κακία of their previous commanders was responsible). **Priscus**, frag. 11.2. 441 (A Greek serving in Hun's army remarks that the κακία of the Eastern Roman generals had endangered the demilitarised segment of the Roman population). **Theophylact**, *History* 3.13.4 (Byzantine soldiers are told that battle functions as a test of virtue and κακίας).

καρτερός—strong, staunch, brave. **Eusebius**, *HE* 1.4.7 9 (Christians receive praise for embracing the καρτερία life).

κράτος—strength, mastery, force, violence. **Eunapius**, frag. 3.18 (According to Eunapius, Julian recognised that the martial virtue of κράτος needed to be combined with justice to make a good leader).

μαλακία—(and cognates): weakness, softness, tenderness: of men, effeminacy, weakness. **Arrian**, *Anabasis of Alexander* 2.7.5 (Alexander tells his army that the most warlike races of Europe, will be facing the most indolent and μαλκώτατα peoples of Asia). **Herodotus**, *Histories* 9.122 (Cyrus chides his colleagues to abandon their thoughts of further conquest in Asia, warning that μαλακῶν countries breed μαλακοὺς men). **Procopius**, *Wars* 1.18.13 (Byzantine troops accuse Belisarius of μαλθακος, which causes him to launch a rash attack). *Wars* 3.9.1 (Procopius maintains that the Vandal king Hilderich's μαλθακός in war forced him to rely on his nephew to fight his battles). *Wars* 6.14.11 (The Heruls accuse their king, Rodolphus, of being μαλθακόν and womanlike). **Thucydides**, *Peloponnesian War* 2.40.1 (Pericles describes the Athenians as lovers of beauty, yet with no extravagance, and lovers of wisdom, yet without μαλακίας).

Πολεμικός—warlike. **Eunapius**, frag. 44.3 (Eunapius explains that the Emperor Valens was in search of πολεμικῶν soldiers to improve his army). **Julian**, *Against the Galileans*

138b (Julian proposed that only the ancient Hellenes and Romans were able to combine an unyielding πολεμικός nature with an inclination for the political life).

προθυμία—fighting-spirit, zeal, readiness. **Athanasius**, *Life of Anthony* 1.13 (The biographer describes Anthony as heading into the desert to battle the Devil and hordes of demons with προθυμία). **Procopius**, *Wars* 1.18.24 (Byzantine soldiers claim that Belisarius' fear of attacking the enemy had destroyed their προθυμίας). *Wars* 8.32.11 (Romans and “barbarian allies” show a common προθυμία and virtue that helps lead them to victory over the Goths at the battle of Busto Gallorum). **Socrates**, *HE* 3.1 (Socrates praises the Emperor Julian for his ability to infuse προθυμία into the Roman soldiers).

ῥαθυμία—carelessness, laziness, effeminacy. **Eunapius**, frag. 55 (Eunapius submits that the well-to-do have an inclination to ῥαθυμίαν). **Hippocrates**, *Airs, Waters, Places* 23 (Treatise suggests that “fertile” lands contribute to Eastern peoples' slackness and propensity towards ῥαθυμία). **Justinian**, *Nov.* 30.11 (The Novel blamed the loss of the Western provinces partly on the ῥαθυμία of the Western emperors). **Procopius**, *Wars* 6.26.13 (Fearing that their opponents might think the Goths had succumbed to ῥαθυμία, Vitigis calls on the Goths starving in Auximum and Faesulae to endure manfully).

ῥώμη—might. **Eunapius**, frag. 3.18 (The Emperor Julian recognised that courage, ῥώμη, and strength played a vital role on the battlefield, he concluded that δικαιοσύνη combined with authority was like a fountainhead of virtues which made even those far away manageable and obedient). frag. 68 (Eunapius argues that “appropriate” political murals promoted the manliness of the emperor and the ῥώμην of his soldiers). **Julian**, *Letter to Alypius* 404 (Julian claims that the most virtuous of men combined gentleness and restraint with courage and ῥώμη).

σωφροσύνη—temperance, restraint, self-control, temperance, chastity. **Aristotle**, *Politics* 1277b20 (Aristotle suggests that σωφροσύνη and ἀνδρεία differ in a man and a woman). **Julian**, *Letter to Alypius* 404 (Julian claims that the most virtuous of men combined gentleness and σωφροσύνην with courage and might). **Libanius**, *Or.* 18. 281 (Libanius proclaims that the emperor Julian was σωφρονέστερος than Hippolyctus). **Menander**, *Second Treatise* 373 (Menander suggests that ἀρεταί was made up of four vital virtues:

ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, φρόνησις). **Procopius**, *Wars* 7.1.11 (Procopius praises Belisarius for his σωφροσύνης, which allowed him to remain monogamous). *Wars* 7.20.28 (According to Procopius, Totila's protection of upper-class Roman women from violence won him great renown for σωφροσύνη).

τόλμα—(and cognates): courage to venture on a thing, daring, boldness. **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.2.13 (“Martial” Goths suggest that only training a young man in arms cultivates his τολμητήν). *Wars* 7.1.14 (Procopius praises Belisarius for being εὐτολμότετος without taking unnecessary risks). *Wars* 7.24.1 (Belisarius' τόλμα helps him to recapture Rome from Totila). *Wars* 8.35.21 (The Goths' starvation drives them to εὐτολμίαν at the battle of Mons Lactarius). **Theophylact**, *History* 2.14.6 (A Byzantine soldier claims that part of the reason for Rome's rise to supremacy was its men's innate τολμητὰς). *History*, 3.13.4 (Byzantine soldiers are told that the coming battle will either reveal their effeminate cowardice or their manly εὐτολμίας). **Thucydides**, *Peloponnesian War* 3.74.2 (Thucydides praises the τολμηρῶς of a group of women who had joined a raging battle by dropping tiles from the rooftops onto their enemies. He labels this behaviour, however, as contrary to their “normal” nature).

τρυφή—luxury, effeminacy. **Eunapius**, frag. 55 (Eunapius argues that to thrive the Empire must reject τρυφήν and embrace war). **Herodian**, *BH* 1.6.1, 1.8.1 (The τρυφῆς life in Rome corrupts Commodus). **Julian**, *Against the Galileans* 138b (Julian suggests that the Persians and other “Eastern” peoples' propensity for τρυφηλός leads to their tendency to be ruled by despots). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.20.11 (Goth describes Italians' life of τρυφερω under Gothic rule). *Wars* 3.3.9-16 (Procopius suggests that the Emperor Valentinian III had been educated in a τρυφήν manner).

Φιλοπολεμος—warlike, lover of war. **Eunapius**, frag. 44.3 (Eunapius describes Sebastianus as a Φιλοπόλεμος). **Themistius**, *Or.* 4.54a (Themistius praises the Emperor Constantius II for being a Φιλοπόλεμος).

φόβος—timidity, fear, terror, fright. **Aristotle**, *Eudemian Ethics* 1228a26-30a37 (Aristotle proposes that ἀνδρεία was an attribute of a man whose actions demonstrated a balance between θράσος and φόβος). **Procopius**, *Wars* 5.1.31 (Procopius praises Theoderic for

being an object of φοβερός to all his enemies). *Wars* 5.2.13 (Martial Goths suggest that a military education frees young men from the φόβου inspired by teachers).

χειροήθης—submissive, obedient, tame. **Julian**, *Against the Galilaens* 138 (Julian suggests that the Persians and the majority of “Eastern barbarians” were χειροήθης).