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***THE COUNTERFEIT AND FAKE EMPEROR –
PROCOPIUS IN THE RES GESTAE
OF AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS***

SUMMARY: The article discusses Procopius' usurpation which took place in 365-366 AD. Ammianus in his *Res gestae* deals not only with the historical details of this event, but also focuses on its interesting literary aspects. On the basis of quotations and sources the author of this article analyses these literary images of the whole issue, which are an integral part of Ammianus' historical narrative. This article was written with a view to showing the metaphorical and theatrical creations of the usurper against the background of the more important stages of his coup.

KEYWORDS: Procopius, Roman historiography, Ammianus Marcellinus.

Procopius,¹ a *comes* from an outstanding Cilician family, illegitimately seized power in 365 AD during the reign of Valens and Valentinian. Ammianus presents the usurper's undertaking as a remarkable historical diptych constituting two contrasting parts: the first one being small and ridiculous while the second is enormous, warlike and almost disastrous. Procopius, the main hero of this diptych, is an interesting character because of his metamorphoses and literary creations that are embroidered with psychological and theatrical overtones.

Let us begin with the short introduction of Procopius that Ammianus sketched in XXVI, 6, 1 of his *Res gestae*: *Procopius [...] ut vita moribusque castigatior, licet occultus erat et taciturnus, notarius diu*

¹ Procopius' life and career – cf. *PLRE* I, Procopius 4.

*perspicaciter militans et tribunus iamque summatibus proximus post Constantini obitum in rerum conversione velut imperatoris cognatus altius anhelabat adiunctus consortio comitum et apparebat eum, si umquam potuisset, fore quietis publicae turbatorem.*² According to Ammianus, Procopius' character as well as his conduct and way of life were blameless; moreover, he stuck to a strict and rigorous lifestyle (*vita moribusque castigior*³).

These virtues went hand in hand with (*ut*) Procopius' successful career: he was a *notarius* and *tribunus*⁴ initially before he became a *comes*. The historian also says that Procopius was a secretive and taciturn man (*occultus et taciturnus*; *perque morum tristium latebras* – sombre and self-contained in XXVI, 9, 11). The combination of these two features is interesting and noteworthy. The adjective *taciturnus* (without *occultus*) denotes a virtue that is praiseworthy because it characterizes a reliable man who is trustworthy and can keep a secret.⁵ But, if *taciturnus* is used in combination with *occultus* (insincere, secretive, deceitful),⁶ which has a definitely pejorative meaning, the positive sense of the former adjective is lost and, in consequence, *taciturnus* – like *occultus*

² In this article we quote the Latin text according to Seyfarth 1968-1978: Bd. I-IV.

³ It is worth mentioning that the combination *vita* and *mores* in the characterization of a person's decorous lifestyle and perceptible conduct and way of life has a long literary tradition – this combination appears in literature from Plautus to Ammianus. Many examples of *vita moresque* can be found in Cicero and in the *Historia Augusta* in particular. Ammianus himself uses the combination of *vita moresque* in the following passages: XV, 1, 3-4 (the combination relates to Constantius' character and way of life): *formare vitam moresque suos*; XXX, 4, 6 (the combination refers to the ancient orators who were famous for their perceptible way of life, blemish-free characters and simplicity of speaking): *vita, moribus, frugalitateque spectati* – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 127.

⁴ In Ammianus the functions of *notarius* and *tribunus* are closely connected – *notarius diu perspicaciter militans et tribunus*. Teitler points out the close connection of these functions and explains that imperial *notarii* frequently had the rank of *tribuni* in the army; this is the source of the connection between *notarius* and *tribunus* in Ammianus – cf. Teitler 1985: 19-20.

⁵ *Taciturnus* (without *occultus*) in combination with *fidus* (trusted) is used in the positive meaning in the following passages in Ammianus: XXI, 13, 4-5 – *praeter optimates taciturnos et fidos*; XXVIII, 5, 10 – *per taciturnos quosdam et fidos*.

⁶ *Occultus* in its negative meaning appears in Cic., *Fin.* 2, 54: *occultus et tectus* or in Tac. *Ann.* IV, 52, 3 (*occultus* refers to Tiberius' character): *audita haec raram occulti pectoris vocem elicuere*.

– denotes a drawback to our usurper’s nature. The combination of *occultus* and *taciturnus* clearly implies that Procopius, despite his blameless character and perceptible way of life, was prone to keeping certain evil intentions up his sleeve. Let us add that the phrase *humus intuendo semper incedens* (he walked with lowered eyes – XXVI, 9, 11) has a comparable meaning with *taciturnus et occultus* as the usurper’s downcast eyes denote not so much his modesty as his tendency to conceal insincere and evil intentions.⁷ But it was not the only *mala pars* of our usurper’s nature. In the phrase *altius anhelabat*⁸ Ammianus reveals another *vitium* of Procopius’ sombre and close character – that is a pernicious inclination to realize his excessive ambitions and aspirations. Therefore it was evident that Procopius would someday try to seize power and disturb the peace of the commonwealth (*quietis publicae turbator*) if he were given the opportunity (*si unquam potuisset*).

After Emperor Julian (his relative) had died, Procopius waited for favourable circumstances to raise his rebellion. At that time he was hiding at his friend’s, Strategius, near Chalcedon. Here, in this safe hiding-place, the usurper was attentively watching current events and observing public feeling. Moreover, Procopius like a most skilful spy (*ritu sollertissimi speculatoris*) also paid his frequent visits to Constantinople⁹ (XXVI, 6, 5-6) to *hunt after* rumours (*rumusculos colligebat*) and

⁷ Some other instances of people with downcast eyes can be found in the *Res gestae*: in a pejorative sense – Petronius Probus (XXIX, 6, 9) who under the threat of war betrayed his indecision, helplessness and fear in this way; the schemer Terentius (XXX, 1, 2) who walked with downcast eyes to conceal his evil intentions; in a positive sense – provincial bishops (XXVII, 3, 15) whose lowered eyes denote their modesty and humility. As for Procopius, it does not seem right to take *humus intuendo* as an indication of his modesty.

⁸ The passages XVI, 12, 46; XVIII, 4, 2 and XXXI, 7, 1 show that the phrase *altius anhelabat* is used in a definitely unfavourable sense in Ammianus: in XVI, 12, 46 this phrase refers to the barbarian Alamanni who were enemies of the Roman Empire at that time; in XVIII, 4, 2 the phrase refers to Ursicinus’ excessive ambitions that were falsely ascribed to him by the court clique; in XXXI, 7, 1 the phrase refers to the excessive ambitions of Profuturus and Traianus – two incompetent and ambitious, but – in point of fact – not very brave generals.

⁹ After Julian’s death (June 26th, 363 AD) Procopius withdrew from public life for two reasons. Firstly, according to the anonymous and false rumour that might have put our usurper in serious danger, Julian was to have appointed Procopius as his successor. Secondly, Procopius still remembered that Jovian, who actually became Julian’s suc-

collect some important information. Ammianus illustrates Procopius' behaviour by a telling comparison (XXVI, 6, 10): *subsideo ut praedatrix bestia viso, quod capi poterat, protinus eruptura*.¹⁰ Let us note that the usurper lurks like a wild beast (*praedatrix bestia*)¹¹ lying in ambush (*subsideo*) and ready to pounce as soon as it sees something that might be caught (*quod capi poterat*). Thus, in Ammianus' animal image the usurper is compared to a predator which attentively looks out for its prey (*quod capi*, which, in this case, denotes the imperial power) and *is very eager to realise his maturing plans (in haec, quae maturabat, ardens* – XXVI, 6, 11). Just as with wild beasts, Procopius' "lurked" posture indicates his vigilance and concentration on a possible attack. Moreover, this animal posture also implies that Procopius, like a predator which pounces only on a certain kind of prey, will attack suddenly (*protinus eruptura*) and when he has no doubts¹² (*quod capi poterat*) his coup d'état will constitute a great success.

cessor, reigned very briefly and, according to common opinion, was murdered as he was suspected of revolutionary projects and a possible usurpation (XXVI, 6, 3) – Procopius was terrified by this horrible removal. Before Jovian's death the authorities had been on the lookout for Procopius, so he moved to impenetrable and desert areas away from the civilized world, where his living conditions were very difficult (he suffered hunger and could not manage without social contacts – XXVI, 6, 4). So he quietly moved to Chalcedon and found shelter at his most faithful friend's, Strategius (XXVI, 6, 5). It was from Chalcedon that Procopius went on his secret "outings" to Constantinople.

¹⁰ Procopius' hope for a *successful hunt* was enlivened by the increasing upheaval of the provincial and Constantinopolitan society. This social upheaval was due to the plunders through which Valens and his father-in-law, Petronius (the instigator of these plunders), had recently ruined the social position and the fortune of many people (XXVI, 6, 6-9).

¹¹ There are numerous animal images in Ammianus. Our historian often compares a person's character and behaviour to those of an animal; in this way he illustrates the nature and behaviour of a person with whom this comparison is connected. Let us give some examples: the emperor Valens (XXIX, 1, 27) and two officials of the emperor Valentinian, that is Leon (XXVIII, 1, 12) and Maximinus (XXVIII, 1, 10), are compared to wild beasts; Maximinus (XXVIII, 1, 7; 33; 41) and Arbitrio (XV, 2, 4) are compared to snakes. According to R. C. Blockley (1975: 183-184), individuals and groups are compared twelve times to wild beasts in the *Res gestae*; "animal comparisons" in Ammianus cf. also Wiedemann 1986: 189-201; den Boeft et al. 2007: 296-297.

¹² In the statement *quod capi poterat protinus eruptura* Ammianus sees future events from Procopius' viewpoint (that is from the *praedatrix bestia*'s point of view);

The opportunity to raise a rebellion came by chance (XXVI, 6, 11): *fors hanc materiam dedit impendio tempestivam*. Let us emphasize that the noun *fors* (chance) is a key word to characterize Procopius' usurpation. The active verb *dedit* (*fors* [...] *dedit*) indicates that *fors* is the Agens of the entire episode and this active role of chance is almost programmatic here: Ammianus, setting the proper tone of his report, characterizes Procopius' usurpation by coincidence and improvisation. Let us explain that the usurper had neither a plan nor supporters; therefore he only seized chances that offered themselves (den Boeft et al. 2008: 148).

At the beginning of spring Valens left Constantinople and headed for Antioch (when the revolt began he was a long way from Constantinople, in Bithynia – XXVI, 6, 11);¹³ at the same time the Gothic tribes that had formed a confederation under the leadership of Athanaric, were preparing for the invasion of Thrace (XXVI, 6, 11).¹⁴

In these favourable circumstances Procopius *staked everything on one roll of the dice* and decided to carry out his bold plan (XXVI, 6, 12): *Procopius aerumnis diuturnis attritus et vel atrocem mortem*

the historian does not refer to the actual historical and political conditions at that time – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 148.

¹³ At the end of winter 365 AD (probably at the end of March or the beginning of April), after he had celebrated the first anniversary of his imperial election, Valens set out for Antioch in Syria, because the Persians were threatening to break the truce of 363 AD. The emperor, however, never reached Antioch. Having heard about Procopius' rebellion, at the beginning of October 365 AD, Valens left Caesarea in Cappadocia and had to return to Constantinople.

¹⁴ In 332 AD Constantine struck the treaty with the Goths. For about thirty years afterwards economic, cultural and religious contacts between the Romans and the Goths were quite peaceful (cf. Heather 1991: 107-115). There was a considerable deterioration of these favourable Roman-Gothic relations in the early 360s (particularly after Julian's death – 363 AD). According to Wolfram, the Goths felt threatened because they had expected that the Romans, after their disastrous defeat in Persia, would attack the Danubian frontier (cf. Wolfram 1985; Wolfram 2003). As a result the Gothic tribes formed a confederation under the leadership of Athanaric and invaded Thrace in the spring of 365 AD. According to Heather, the Goths were aggressors in this conflict; however, his opinion is doubted by Lenski, who claims that it was primarily Valens who went to war with Goths because he wanted to boost his position as emperor (by the spring of 365 AD Valens had already reigned for over a year) – cf. Heather 1998: 498-499; Lenski 2002: 126-127.

clementiorem ratus malis, quibus afflictabatur, aleam periculorum omnium iecit abrupte et extrema iam perpeti nequaquam timens praeunte perdita ratione facinus adoritur audacissimum. Let us pay attention to the metaphor *aleam periculorum omnium iecit* because it reveals the character of Procopius' action. In Ammianus' metaphoric image the usurper's bold attempt (*facinus audacissimum*) appears to be an actual game of dice (*aleam iecit*)¹⁵ which usually begins when one player throws the dice whereas the course and final result depend only on the *fors*. At the very beginning of this game of chance Procopius is a solitary player (he has no supporters), who begins to act as if he were Julius Caesar. Taking his action suddenly (*abrupte*) and unexpectedly, the usurper casts the die [of *periculorum omnium*] (*aleam [periculorum omnium] iecit*) just as the great leader Julius Caesar had done at the Rubicon river in 49 BC before he began his *bellum civile* with Pompeius (*alea iacta est* – Suet., *Iul.* 32). But let us note that in his reminiscence Ammianus adds the *Gen. qualitatis periculorum omnium* to these famous words of Julius Caesar (*alea iacta est*) so that their terseness is lost. In this way our historian makes a travesty of the saying ascribed to this great Roman leader in order to bring out the ridiculous character of Procopius' enterprise and the cowardice with which he begins to act. A real leader, unlike Procopius, is not afraid of any dangers, because he believes in his own victory when he begins the game and, in addition, he feels sure that his undertaking is definitely right (like Caesar – *alea* is used without *periculorum omnium*).

Procopius' throwing of the dice (that is his enterprise) is a plan which is morally wrong (*perdita ratione*);¹⁶ it is only a bold attempt to end the usurper's troubles and misery (*malis, quibus afflictabatur*) while it is not a political act of great significance. Let us draw attention to the fact that before taking his sudden decision (*abrupte*) Procopius had been worn out by long-standing worries (*aerumnis diuturnis at-*

¹⁵ A very similar metaphor about Procopius' attempt is also used in Libanius (*Or.* XXVI, 13) and in Philostorgius (*HE* IX, 5). As one may assume, Ammianus and these authors either derived this metaphor from a common source, in which *aleam iecit* (the throwing of the dice) denoted Procopius' bold attempt, or they took this metaphoric phrase from one another.

¹⁶ Cf. Seyfarth 1978: IV, 29 (*seiner verderblichen Berechnung*); *perditis rationibus* – *perditus* as a synonym of *turpis* or *pravus* – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 152.

tritus – XXVI, 6, 12); his decision was also accompanied by a strong feeling that a cruel death was better than all the miseries he had been suffering for a long time (*atrocem mortem clementiorem [...] malis, quibus afflictabatur* – XXVI, 6, 12). So the usurper's mood was not typical of a man who desired to seize imperial power. The reason was that Procopius' bold decision arose from his torments and lack of self-assurance as well as from his desire to escape from his own miseries. Let us also pay attention to the surprising motivation which caused Procopius to overcome his fears and made him begin to act without being anxious about *even the worst fate* (*extrema iam perpeti nequaquam timens* – XXVI, 6, 12). One should emphasize that it was not the usurper's hope and confidence that he would become an emperor which encouraged him to start the action. On the contrary, making his bold attempt Procopius chose the lesser (in his opinion) of two evils because he chose a cruel death (*mors atrox*) as something better and milder (*clementior*) than the miseries (*mala*) which had been wearing him out for a long time. Therefore, we can conclude that the usurper decided to act in the belief that *mors atrox* rather than *potestas certa* would make an end of his *facinus audacissimum* (XXVI, 6, 12). Therefore from the very beginning Procopius was acting with a resignation which seems to be the characteristic of a desperate man rather than that of a potential candidate for the position of emperor.

A mere day before his usurpation Procopius tried to incite and win over the soldiers of two emperor's contingents who had stayed for two days in Constantinople. Since he knew that it was not safe to stir up the whole army, he (with the help of some military acquaintances in these legions) won the support of only some confident soldiers (*fidem paucorum elegit* – XXVI, 6, 13) by promising them huge rewards (*spe praemiorum ingentium* – XXVI, 6, 13). In return, these new supporters, tempted (*pellecti*) by Procopius' promises, swore an oath (*sub consecratione iuris iurandi* – XXVI, 6, 13) that they would fulfil all his commands and would try to win their brothers in arms over to his plans (*promisere se quae vellet cuncta facturos, favorem quoque polliciti conturmalium* – XXVI, 6, 13). During a night meeting (*societate coita nocturna* – XXVI, 6, 14), which preceded the start of Procopius' undertaking, they managed to win the unanimous support of all soldiers

(*conscios omnes in eius studium consensisse* – XXVI, 6, 14).¹⁷ So we can say that the usurper bought the army over and won its support by his susceptible promises of huge amounts of money, which was the only stake in this secret and illegal *bidding for the emperorship*.¹⁸

Hardly had Procopius succeeded in this disgraceful bargaining with the soldiers than he took a decisive step in his venture. He started his coup early in the morning, at sunrise (*ubi excaudit radiis dies* – XXVI, 6, 14).¹⁹ The usurper, filled with hesitation and indecision (*diductus in cogitationes varias* – XXVI, 6, 14), went to the military quarters at the Anastasia Baths (*Anastasianas balneas petit, a sorore Constantini cognominatas, ubi locata noverat signa* – XXVI, 6, 14). One should admit that the warm reception which Procopius experienced in the *thermae* was somewhat strange (XXVI, 6, 14): *libenter admissus constipatione vendibilium militum cum honore quidem, sed in modum tenebatur obsessi [...] ipsi quoque Procopium infausti dominatus exordia molientem attenti ad omne compendium defenderunt*. In fact, the reception our usurper was given in the military quarters appeared to be a caricature of the customary welcome of a leader. Ammianus expresses this caricature with the phrase *admissus constipatione vendibilium militum cum honore*; the historian emphasizes this image by means of the noun *con-*

¹⁷ Zosimos says (*Neá Historia* IV, 5, 3-4) that the immensely rich eunuch Eugenius who had been dismissed from the imperial court at that time (Eugenius had probably been *cubicularius* at Valens' court before his dismissal) backed Procopius financially. Having Eugenius as his backer Procopius could be so brave as to promise "huge money" to the bribed soldiers. Eugenius (*PLRE* I, Eugenius 4) more – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 154. Zosimos also says (*NH*, IV, 5, 5) that Procopius rallied support not only from the soldiers but also from urban slaves and other unknown volunteers.

¹⁸ Ammianus illustrates this attitude to Procopius' usurpation by means of an *exemplum* which belongs to the *senium* period of his historiosophic theory. The historian mentions Didius Iulianus who, after having killed his predecessor Pertinax, became emperor by "bidding for the emperorship" – Didius Iulianus was ready to pay 25 000 *sestertii* to each of the praetorians in the army. Didius Iulianus reigned for only two months and five days (from March until June 193 AD) – this may be an allusion to the doubtful success of Procopius' usurpation.

¹⁹ Procopius' usurpation took place in Constantinople on September 28th, 365 AD. As for the time of the day, other versions are given as well. According to Temistius (*Or.* VII, 91 a-b; 92 b), who was an eyewitness of Procopius' undertaking, and to Zosimos (*NH*, IV, 5, 5), the usurper started his coup when it was still night. These versions are different from Ammianus' version.

stipatio (*constipatione* in the passage) which converts the whole scene into a caricature of the customary welcome (*constipatio* is used in three other passages in the *Res gestae* where – like in XXVI, 6, 14 – its sense is definitely pejorative).²⁰ The welcoming ceremony in the military quarters seems to be a customary one – Procopius like a real emperor is encircled by soldiers and given a welcome *cum honore* (*admissus cum honore*). However, it cannot escape our attention that the soldiers form a throng (a disorderly mass) round the would-be emperor, which is called *constipatio vendibilium militum* by Ammianus. This phrase suggests that Procopius is not so much surrounded by officers, but drowned in a crowd of military men who are not obedient to him at all. On the contrary, although the throng of soldiers (*constipatio militum*) have sold their loyalty to the new emperor and are ready to pay homage to him, they hem Procopius in and dominate over him: the soldiers hold on to the usurper as if he was being besieged (*sed in modum tenebatur obsessi*). The past passive participle *obsessi* (*obsidere*), which has no metaphoric sense here, denotes that Procopius was encircled like a defenceless and helpless sheep by a throng of hostile legionaries²¹ who were ready to support him provided that in doing so they benefited their own (especially financial) situation. Such being the case, the soldiers made neither a night nor a day proclamation which might have confirmed their own choice and will to hail Procopius as emperor. Procopius himself, an usurper and emperor rolled into one, takes a cautious and obedient attitude towards the crowd of soldiers, although he should have presented himself as the real ringleader of the coup; what is more,

²⁰ Parallels for the *constipatione vendibilium militum* (XXVI, 6, 14) which are also used in the pejorative sense occur in the following passages: XXIV, 8, 5 (*constipatio* refers to a dense mass of wild donkeys) – *asinorum constipatione densa*; XXIX, 1, 13 (*constipatio* denotes a crowd of prisoners kept in jails before the Antiochian lawsuit) – *inclusorum constipatio*; XXXI, 13, 3 (*constipatio* is referred to a dense mass of soldiers and horses that are not able to get out of straits at the Adrianople battlefield) – *evadendi copiam constipatio densior adimebat*.

²¹ Parallels for the real meaning of *obsidere* (that is *to surround in a hostile way*) may also be found in other authors: Sall., *Jug.* 24, 3 (*obsessus* occurs in the complaint of hemmed Adherbal) – *itaque quintum iam mensem socius et amicus populi Romani armis obsessus teneor*; Tac., *Ann.* I, 28, 4 (*obsidere* refers to Drusus who is besieged in the quarters by enraged soldiers) – *spem offerunt, metum intendunt: «quo usque filium imperatoris obsidebimus? Quis certaminum finis?»*.

trying to organize the start of his ill-starred tyranny (*infausti dominatus exordia*) Procopius makes the best of the soldiers' support, which he had bargained with them by his promises of *praemia ingentia*.

Let us now have a look at Procopius' first appearance before the troops that he was to lead as emperor (XXVI, 6, 15). At the very beginning we would like to emphasize that Ammianus depicted this scene as a funny episode full of vain theatrics, focussing entirely on descriptions of the ridiculous and theatrical creations of the would-be emperor. According to Jenkins (Jenkins 1987: 55-63), Ammianus' theatrical metaphors and reminiscences that occur in this scene of the presentation have the negative tenor, as they are connected with a domain which our historian despised, that is the theatre. Actually, by spicing up the whole scene with these theatrical metaphors, the historian makes a perfect parody of the would-be emperor.

In Ammianus' metaphoric image a pale and silent Procopius appears before his army like a vain creature summoned suddenly from the underworld to the real world of human beings in which he is supposed to accomplish a great task (this is the first theatrical creation of our usurper – XXVI, 6, 15): *stetit itaque subtabidus – excitum putares ab inferis*.²²

Procopius, wearing only a gold-embroidered tunica and being improperly dressed with the purple robe,²³ looks like an emperor's servant

²² According to the authors of the commentary on the *Res Gestae*, this section of the whole scene of Procopius' presentation was probably inspired by a passage in Solinus' chapter on Sicily (*Memor.* V, 13): *hic primum inventa comoedia: hic et cavillatio mimica in scaena stetit* (Ammianus also uses *stetit* in his passage: *Stetit itaque subtabidus* – XXVI, 6, 15; but *stetit* in Ammianus occurs right at the beginning of the phrase – therefore one may receive the impression that our historian borrowed this verb from Solinus to use it for a different purpose) – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 159. As for summoning someone from the underworld, this theme occurs in other authors, too – e.g.: Cic., *Ver.* V, 129 – *excitare ab inferis filium possem*; Liv. XL, 56, 6 – *Demetrium excitatum ab inferis*. Quintilianus says (*Inst. orat.* XII, 10, 61) that this rhetorical device belongs to the grand style. However, it is more likely that Ammianus uses this motive only to show one of the theatrical creations of the usurper so, as one may assume, this device is not referred to in the grand rhetoric style of Ammianus. On the other hand, some translators assume that this phrase is a mythological reminiscence – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 160.

²³ When an emperor presented himself before the soldiers or appeared at ceremonies, he was dressed in a gold-embroidered mantle (*paludamentum*) made of purple

rather than an emperor himself (this is the second theatrical creation of the usurper – XXVI, 6, 15): *nusquam reperto paludamento tunica auro distincta ut regius minister indutus*. Moreover, he did not have a diadem which was an important part of full imperial attire. In point of fact, nobody even thought about giving a diadem to Procopius (the historian does not mention this imperial *insignium* at all) and the purple imperial robe could not be found anywhere (*nusquam reperto paludamento*). As a matter of fact, Procopius lacked the two most important imperial *insignia* which were integral parts of an emperor's full attire and – according to Orosius (*Hist.* VII, 40, 6)²⁴ – were indispensable for a successful usurpation. Therefore, Procopius breaks the imperial tradition; according to which, not only a legitimate emperor but also an illegitimate one should be properly dressed in full imperial attire during his presentation to his soldiers.²⁵ For example, the legitimate emperor Valentinian wore a proper purple mantle and a diadem when he presented himself to his troops. The imperial insignia were solemnly put on Valentinian's arms and head during the official ceremony of hailing him as Augustus – this ceremony, which took place before his speech to the soldiers, was accompanied by the enthusiastic praise of all the legionaries (XXVI, 2, 3): *mox principali habitu circumdatus et corona Augustusque nuncupatus cum laudibus amplis*. Blockley (1975: 58) draws attention to the fact that in Ammianus each legitimate emperor is properly dressed in a purple mantle when he is presented to the army. The scholar also notices that no usurper in the *Res gestae* wears the proper purple robe at the moment of hailing him as emperor and then, during his presentation to the soldiers. According to Blockley, Ammianus presents usurpers as not fully dressed with the imperial insignia to express his disapproval of anyone who illegitimately seizes power.

Within the context of Blockley's remarks, let us discuss the imperial attire of other usurpers in Ammianus. One of them, Silvanus, had no

silk and he had a diadem on his head – this was the full imperial attire of a late-antique emperor; cf. Vogt 1993: 83.

²⁴ Oros., *Hist.* VII, 40, 6: *nam tyrannidem nemo nisi celeriter maturatam secretae invadit et publice armat, cuius summa est assumpto diademate ac purpura videri antequam sciri*.

²⁵ Ammianus refers to the purple mantle which was an important element of the imperial regalia in XX, 5, 4; XXII, 9, 10.

diadem and at the moment of hailing he was dressed in a piece of purple cloth (instead of a proper purple robe) which he had obtained from military standards (XV, 5, 16): *cultu purpureo a draconum et vexillorum insignibus ad tempus abstracto ad culmen imperiale surrexit*.²⁶ Julian at the moment of being hailed as emperor by his soldiers had neither a diadem nor a purple mantle. Finally, the new Augustus was decorated with a necklace which one of his officers had taken off his uniform and placed solemnly on Julian's head (XX, 4, 17-18): *Augustus renuntiat iubeatur diadema proferre [...], Maurus nomine quidam, postea comes, [...], abstractum sibi torquem, quo ut draconarius utebatur, capiti Iuliani imposuit confidenter*.²⁷ Another rebel, Firmus, during his presentation to the soldiers was dressed in a purple cloak (not a proper purple mantle) but had no diadem on his head (XXIX, 5, 48): *paulo ante vesperam visus est Firmus equo celsiori insidens sago puniceo porrectius panso*.²⁸ Let us draw attention to the fact that Procopius looks worse than other usurpers in the *Res gestae* because he has no imperial *insignium* (not even a makeshift one). The absence of the imperial *insignia* was due to the fact that our usurper had neither cared about his imperial regalia himself nor had received any from his soldiers before he was presented to the troops. In fact, Procopius who contents himself with a gold-embroidered tunica is only a fake emperor:²⁹ he looks like a servant of the imperial court, although he presents himself to his legionaries as a real emperor and thinks he really is their new ruler.

The other part of Procopius' "imperial attire" was also quite funny. With a sardonic smile Ammianus notices that from heel to hips the fake emperor looked like an apprentice of the court *paedagogium* in which

²⁶ Silvanus' usurpation took place on July 11th, 355 AD during the reign of Constantius II.

²⁷ Julian's usurpation took place in Lutetia Parisiorum in 360 AD during the reign of Constantius II. This successful usurpation was the result of the spontaneous action of Julian's soldiers. Julian himself had never before searched for his imperial diadem or expected it to be given to him; this fact implies that he had not planned his coup before his soldiers began their action – cf. Lewandowski 2001-2002: I, 311, n. 48.

²⁸ Firmus rebelled against the legitimate Roman authority in 375 AD during the reign of Valentinian and Valens.

²⁹ For the *counterfeit emperor* (Procopius) – cf. also Temistios, *Or.* VII, 91 c.

boys (*paedagogiani pueri*)³⁰ were brought up, educated and trained for service in the palace. So, like one of these servant boys, Procopius wore purple shoes and he held a purple scrap of cloth in his left hand as well (XXVI, 6, 15): *a calce in pubem in paedagogiani pueri speciem purpureis opertus tegminibus pedum hastatusque purpureum itidem pannulum laeva manu gestabat*. Let us now cast a glance at the lower part of the odd “imperial attire” of the would-be emperor Procopius. Viansino (1985)³¹ suggests that the purple shoes (*purpurea tegmina*) mentioned by Ammianus, probably denote long and purple gaiters from the heel to the private parts. According to Alföldi (1935: 3-158), such gaiters were an element of the everyday dress of court attendants. Therefore, in the scholar’s opinion, the presence of this comparable element in the usurper’s costume indicates that Ammianus sees Procopius to be a caricature of a real emperor. Procopius, having neither a diadem nor a proper *paludamentum* and wearing boyish gaiters, which are the only purple element of his dress, looks like an apprentice page (a member of *pueri paedagogiani*) rather than a real and dignified emperor (Steigerwald 1990: 218-219). One cannot say that a spear, which the would-be emperor holds in his hand like an ordinary weapon (*hastatus*), adds to his imperial dignity. This spear is probably the shaft of a lance with a purple dragonlike banner, which was usually carried by a warrant officer in a legion. One may regard Procopius’ attribute as a lance shaft on the basis of the passage XVI, 12, 39 in which a lance (*hasta*) denotes the shaft of this dragonlike banner: *quo agnito per purpureum signum draconis summitati hastae longioris aptatum*. Thus, in this context, *itidem* (quoted above – XXVI, 6, 15) may refer both to the

³⁰ *Paedagogiani pueri* (court attendants) were slaves; Nero was the first to make free boys be brought up as *paedagogiani pueri*. The *paedagogiani* were educated and trained by the *paedagogus* at the emperor’s court or in the palaces of rich nobles. The growing luxury at the imperial court manifested itself in thorough education and training as well as in sumptuous clothes (esp. outer garments) of *pueri paedagogiani* (see in Ammianus XXVI, 6, 15: *purpureis opertus tegminibus pedum – wearing purple shoes* [about Procopius]). At the imperial court the *paedagogiani* lived and slept in a separate apartment which was called the *paedagogium*. In the later empire the *paedagogiani* were servants at the imperial court; apart from menial tasks they also carried out *ministeriales* and *curae palatiorum* – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 162.

³¹ Cf. Viansino 1985; Balty and Ensslin refer to the comparable dress of the *pueri paedagogiani* – cf. Balty 1982: 299-312; Ensslin 1942: 2204-2205.

purple *tegmina pedum* and *hastatus*; this could mean that the phrase *purpureis opertus tegminibus pedum hastatusque* [...] *itidem* occurs in the sense of *carrying a lance with a purple dragonlike banner*³² (in his right hand, because the usurper holds a scrap of *purpureum pannulum* in his left hand). Procopius with this lance in his hand (*hastatus*) does not present himself like a real emperor who is expected to show his imperial dignity but he looks like a warrant officer carrying a dragonlike banner (*hastatus draconarius* – this is the third creation of our usurper). An indication that we can see Procopius as a *hastatus draconarius* may also be found in the passage XX, 4, 18 in which *hastatus* is referred in relation to one of the non-commissioned officers of the *Petulantes* (*Maurus nomine quidam, postea comes, [...], Petulantium tunc hastatus*).

Let us now move on to another *insignium* of the would-be emperor – that is the purple scrap of cloth (*purpureus pannulus*) which he holds in his left hand. Alföldi (1935: 152)³³ implies that *purpureus pannulus* is meant to be a purple scarf (*mappa*) which was usually dropped into the arena being the sign for the opening of the public games.³⁴ Therefore, in this passage (XXVI, 6, 15) a *mappa* is the symbolic sign to open the public *ludi*. Let us explain that this *opening of the public games* refers to the start of Procopius' bold and ridiculous undertaking, which appears to be only a form of cheap entertainment for the urban mob. But we should also consider an alternative interpretation of the usurper's *mappa*. So within the *purpureus pannulus* and its function can also be found a token of degeneration of a proper imperial presentation considering that the noun *pannulus* is used by Ammianus in a definitely pejorative sense in XXII, 9, 11; in this passage a plural form of this word (*pannuli*) denotes rags (old and torn clothes – in Julian's remark about a private man stitching a purple cloak for himself): *ut sciri possit sine viribus maximis quid pannuli proficient leves*.³⁵ Thus, in this context, the phrase *purpureus pannulus* (a purple rag) may be the symbolic sign of a distortion of our usurper's vain undertaking, which loses its

³² Cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 162-163.

³³ The scholar points out that a *mappa* frequently appears on the coin portraits of emperors (in their hands).

³⁴ Cf. Mart., *Ep.* XII, 28 (29), 9; Suet., *Nero* 22, 2; Iuv., *Sat.* XI, 193.

³⁵ Cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 163.

normal and desirable qualities: Procopius holds a purple scrap of cloth (a quasi-imperial piece of purple attribute) in his hand but, in fact, has no imperial authority.

To sum up, according to Ammianus, Procopius is dressed in a patchy, two-piece and quasi-imperial piece of attire, which seems to be an odd compilation of two funny styles of dress that is the *regius minister* style (the upper part: a gold-embroidered tunica) and the *paedagogianus puer* style (the lower part: purple gaiters). The would-be emperor's attire is completed by a spear (*hasta*) and a purple rag (*mappa*). One should admit that Procopius in wearing his odd costume and holding quasi-imperial regalia in his hands looks like a funny, helpless and submissive "fake emperor", who stands in front of his army unable to move out of fear of being supposed to play the serious part of a real emperor.

As a matter of fact, Ammianus sees the usurper's undertaking as a vain entertainment which is performed at the military quarters as if it was staged in a theatre (*in theatri scaena* – XXVI, 6, 15) in the presence of silent and motionless spectators (that is the soldiers). Procopius seems to be the only actor in this farcical and theatrical performance,³⁶ which is about the presentation of an emperor. Suddenly, in front of the main curtain (*per aulaeum*), an odd creature (*simulacrum insigne* – the fourth creation) or rather a comic mime (*mimica cavillatio* – XXVI, 6, 15; the fifth creation) appears in the presence of the waiting spectators, who are eager to see an emperor on the stage: *ut in theatri scaena simulacrum quoddam insigne per aulaeum vel mimicam cavillationem subito putares emersum*. You can easily recognize this actor – it is Procopius, the bizarre and fake emperor, who emerges suddenly in front of the curtain to play the part of a real emperor, something which is too difficult for him.

³⁶ Other authors also emphasize the theatrical aspects of Procopius' usurpation. Themistius (*Or.* VII, 91 a sqq) underlines the farcical aspects of the usurper's undertaking and calls it a comedy. Zosimos' description is comparable (*NH* IV, 5, 5): he says that the Constantinopolitans left their houses and observed Procopius' usurpation as if they were watching a play performed on stage. These similarities in Ammianus, Themistius and Zosimos imply that these authors probably used a common written source which contained such an official view of Procopius' coup – cf. Leppin 2007: 41.

Let us mention that Ammianus in his image of Procopius' farcical appearance tallies together two theatrical genres: mime and tragedy. Till (1974-1975: 75-83)³⁷ explains that the phrase *mimica cavillatio* is the equivalent of mime whereas *aulaeum*, which is the counterpart of *siparium* (a small screen usually used in mime or comedy), can be referred to as tragedy. According to Till, who draws an analogy between *aulaeum* and *siparium*, these two terms allegorically indicate two theatrical genres that are tragedy and mime. Another scholar, Eichele (1984: 160), agrees with the combination of these two genres in Ammianus' description, but he comes up with an entirely different and more convincing explanation. In the scholar's opinion, Ammianus' *simulacrum* (an odd apparition which is slightly of a tragic character) appears as a *mimica cavillatio* (a mime) at the end of the whole performance on the *aulaeum* (on the main curtain) when it is raised (the scholar explains that in Late Antiquity, as in the previous epochs, the main curtain was raised at the end of performances). Beacham (1991: 171-175), in his explanation of Ammianus' theatrical references, focuses on some mechanical details, although he does not reject the combination of these two theatrical genres that are tragedy and mime. According to Beacham, who outlines a mechanical system by which curtains were lowered or raised, Ammianus' *mimica cavillatio* is probably referring to the mechanical devices that were used during the performance of a mime (so the historian's reference to mime is a mechanical rather than a literary one); with the help of these devices an odd *simulacrum* which is comparable with a tragic apparition (this is Ammianus' reference to tragedy) can appear on the stage.

Anyway, one cannot deny that the whole scene of Procopius' appearance contains many farcical and parodic elements which are to make fun of the usurper and his undertaking. Ammianus himself says

³⁷ Till refers to two kinds of theatrical curtains that is *aulaeum* and *siparium*. *Aulaeum* (the main curtain) was richly ornamented: images of deities or heroes were usually woven or embroidered onto it; *aulaeum* was used during performances which were not of a comic character (including tragedies). In early Roman theatre *aulaeum* was fixed to the lower part of the stage (the curtain was lowered at the start of a performance and was raised at the end); in Late Antiquity this curtain was fixed to the upper part of the stage. The *siparium* (a screen) – was lowered at the end of each scene of a comedy; this screen was used when comedies and mimes were performed.

that Procopius was raised to his imperial position in a ludicrous and dishonourable manner (XXVI, 6, 16): *ad hoc igitur dehonestamentum honorum omnium ludibriose sublatus*. Let us draw attention to the fact that by tallying the phrase *ad dehonestamentum honorum omnium* (a degradation of honours) with *sublatus* (raised), Ammianus implies that, in fact, Procopius was raised to the degradation of all honours. Moreover, by *ludibriose* the historian once more emphasizes the fake and ridiculous character of the entire episode because this rarely used adverb clearly refers to the ludicrous aspects of the whole affair, that is to the usurper's patchy, two-piece and odd attire, to the absence of the proper imperial *insignia* and to the absence of the proper proclamation which should have taken place in the quarters. In fact, Procopius by having been raised to his imperial position in that manner, was rather degraded and humiliated than honoured.³⁸ This is a further paradox which Ammianus adds to his theatrical image of Procopius' appearance.

Let us now move on to the speech which was given by the would-be emperor in the presence of the troops. Shortly after having appeared in the quarters, the fake emperor addressed his soldiers with servile flattery (*ancillari adulatione*). In his servile speech (*adulatio ancillaris*) Procopius promised (*pollicitus*) that he would give huge rewards (*opes amplas*) and official functions or ranks (*dignitates*) to each of the legionaries to celebrate the *primitiae* of his reign (*ob principatus primitias* – XXVI, 6, 16). The servile and flattering character of Procopius' *oratio* can clearly be emphasized by a comparison with Julian's speech which he delivered during his presentation to the troops after having been hailed as emperor in Lutetia Parisiorum. In his comments upon *opes* and *dignitates* Julian stressed the point that neither an official nor a general would be promoted provided that he deserved his new *dignitas* (function or rank) on the basis of his real merits (*ut neque civilis quisquam iudex nec militiae rector alio quodam praeter merita suffragante ad potioorem veniat gradum* – XX, 5, 7). It is noteworthy that Procopius,

³⁸ Within the context of Procopius' fake proclamation one should mention Julian's proclamation whose character was quite different – the soldiers were filled with enthusiasm and joy; as for Julian, he was raised to all honours by soldiers who hailed him as emperor with determination (*firmiter iudicio* – XX, 5, 3): *Caesarem vestrum firmiter iudicio ad potestatum omnium columen sustulistis*.

unlike Julian, omitted this important statement (*praeter merita*) in his *adulatio ancillaris* in order to succeed in “bargaining” with the soldiers for their support and favour. And, to some extent, he was successful. Later, when the fake emperor left the quarters and came out into the streets (appeared in public – *processit in publicum*), he stopped moving clumsily and walked upright as if he was a true leader; the usurper was accompanied by a throng of military men who took up standards (*multitudine stipatus armorum signisque sublatis erectius ire pergebat circumclausus* – XXVI, 6, 16). Let us draw attention to the fact that the legionaries who accompany Procopius are not brought into regular order (according to the military custom, the soldiers who accompanied a newly hailed emperor should have been drawn up – XXVI, 7, 17), so the fake emperor is surrounded by a throng of military men (*multitudo armorum*) taking up their standards. That is why Procopius’ public appearance resembles rather a demonstrative march through the streets of Constantinople than the “ticker tape” parade of a newly proclaimed emperor. The usurper himself, who walks upright (*erectius ire*) and is encircled by his military mob, looks like the leader of this untidy group rather than a dignified emperor.

The fake emperor who strides along the urban streets is entirely hemmed in by gloomy sounds and the loud clash of shields (*fragor scutorum lugubre concrepantium*) and accompanied by the indifference of the citizens of Constantinople who observe his march but show neither resistance nor enthusiasm (*nec resistebat populus nec favebat* – XXVI, 6, 16-17): *circumclausus horrendo fragore scutorum lugubre concrepantium, quae metuentes, ne a celsioribus tectis saxis vel tegularum fragmentis conflictarentur, densius ipsis galearum cristis aptabant. Huic intimidius incedenti nec resistebat populus nec favebat*. It is noteworthy that the legionaries who encircle Procopius in disorder, take up their shields, join them together closely and hold them tight above the crests of their helmets. In this way the *scuta* (shields) make for a horizontal defensive covering above the soldiers’ heads, which is very similar to the particular arrangement of shields that the ancient Roman legionaries used during sieges in order to protect themselves.³⁹

³⁹ In the ancient Roman army a rectangular formation was arranged by soldiers during sieges: those legionaries that were drawn up in the front-row as well as those who

By this particular shield covering Procopius' soldiers wanted to protect the usurper and themselves against being pelted by stones and pieces of roof tiles⁴⁰ during their march through the streets of Constantinople (*ne a celsioribus tectis saxis vel tegularum fragmentis conflictarentur* – XXVI, 6, 16). One may come to the conclusion that the legionaries are aware that they are taking part in a fake “ticker tape” parade.⁴¹ That is why the soldiers act as if they were supposed rather to besiege the town than accompany the emperor to the tribunal and to the imperial palace. Therefore the clashing of the soldiers' shields is not an expression of their approval and support for Procopius' undertaking; on the contrary, the *fragor* of shields is casual because it is caused by the legionaries taking up their *scuta* and using them in order to protect the usurper and themselves.

Given the context of the above remarks let us now point out a completely different role and character of the clashing of shields during Julian's undertakings. As soon as Constantius had raised Julian to Caesar, the soldiers stroke their shields against their knees to express their approval (*militares omnes horrendo fragore scuta genibus illidentes, quod est prosperitatis indicium plenum* – XV, 8, 15). The legionaries' reaction to Julian's speech, which he delivered after having been hailed as Augustus, was comparable: the soldiers clashed their spears against their shields to show their support and unanimous approval of Julian's

were drawn up on the sides held their shields vertically and the soldiers who were lined up in the middle-rows of the whole formation held the shields horizontally above their heads (so the vertical and horizontal shields joined tight and closely resembled the shell of a tortoise and protected the whole unit). As for Procopius' soldiers, they created a comparable horizontal shield covering above their heads (that is only the top of the whole covering), although (unlike the ancient legionaries) they were not drawn up.

⁴⁰ W. D. Barry (1996: 55-74) draws attention to the fact that pieces of roof tiles were some kind of weapon which was frequently used during urban unrest. Ammianus' allusion to the possibility of the soldiers being pelted by roof tiles may mean that – in the historian's opinion – Procopius' public appearance seemed to be some kind of an urban rebellion.

⁴¹ Ammianus' description of Procopius' *ticker tape parade* contains many reminiscences of Herodian's report on Didius Iulianus' march to the imperial palace – Didius Iulianus, like Procopius, was rather escorted by the soldiers than accompanied by them to his palace (Her., *Tes meta Markon basilejas historia*, II, 6, 13) – cf. also den Boeft et al. 2008: 166.

words and plans (*miles [...] hastis feriendo clipeos sonitu assurgens ingenti uno prope modum ore dictis favebat et coeptis* – XX, 5, 8-9).⁴² When Julian, after his proclamation as emperor, informed the soldiers of his decision to march against Constantius, they clashed the shields to show their unanimous approval and cheered Julian on (*unanimanti consensu voces horrendas immani scutorum fragore miscebat magnum elatumque ducem* – XXI, 5, 9).

Within the context of the above comparison it can hardly be doubted that Procopius' usurpation is an ill-omened and ill-starred undertaking: one may think that it is rather a sinister rebellion than the prosperous reign of a real emperor that is about to commence. Procopius is being escorted to the imperial palace in a gloomy urban setting and in a terrifying atmosphere. The throng of soldiers using their shields to protect the fake emperor and themselves, the gloomy and casual clashing of shields and the cool indifference of the urban mob⁴³ make Procopius' public appearance more ominous than it really is. One can be under the impression that Procopius' march is rather reminiscent of someone being escorted to an execution than of a dignified emperor's "ticker tape" parade to the palace.

Zosimos gives a different report on the atmosphere in Constantinople and the feelings of its inhabitants during this part of Procopius' usurpation (*NH*, IV, 5, 5 – IV 6, 1; 3). He says that having heard about Procopius' rebellion the citizens of Constantinople were panic-stricken (*NH*, IV, 5, 5) and terrified (*NH*, IV, 6, 1). Let us add that during the night which preceded Procopius' public appearance, the citizens of Constantinople were intimidated by his supporters, who were deliberately sent by the usurper to the city in order to threaten the inhabitants (*NH*, IV, 5, 5). When the people, who were responsible for keeping order in Constantinople, heard about this unexpected coup, they were so surprised that they were not able to do anything to stop the usurper

⁴² The striking of spears against shields usually was an expression of the soldiers' anger and indignation (*XV*, 8, 15); in this particular situation (described in *XX*, 5, 8-9) the soldiers, by striking their spears against their shields, show their approval.

⁴³ Herodian gives a comparable report: when Didius Iulianus was escorted to the palace the urban population showed neither resistance nor enthusiasm (*Her.*, II, 6, 13). Ammianus' description is probably inspired by Herodian's report of Didius Iulianus' march to the palace – cf. also den Boeft et al. 2008: 166-167.

from starting the rebellion (*NH*, IV, 6, 1). As for Procopius' march to the *forum*, Zosimos – unlike Ammianus – mentions that it was really a “ticker tape” parade – the usurper was self-assured and did not seem to be walking along a *procliviores viam ad mortem* (*NH*, IV, 6, 3); according to Libanios (*Or.* XIX, 15), he was welcomed by the citizens of Constantinople.

Let us now move on to the usurper's public appearance at the city *forum*. According to Ammianus, when Procopius ascended the tribune in order to deliver his first public speech here, in the political heart of Constantinople, the urban mob present at the *forum* was dumbfounded (XXVI, 6, 18): *cum itaque tribunal idem descendisset Procopius et cunctis stupore defixis*. On the platform, where during solemn ceremonies speeches were always given, the mob suddenly saw a poor man dressed in an inept motley outfit (let us recall: a costume of a *regius minister / paedagogianus puer*) who was preparing to deliver his *adlocutio* as if he were a great orator or a real emperor. No wonder the inhabitants were struck dumb with astonishment – they had never before seen such an awkward jester standing on the tribunal. Therefore the silence at the *forum* does not testify to the solemnity or respect of the spectators but, on the contrary, it is ominous (*lugubre; silentium triste*). The counterfeit emperor was frightened of this *silentium triste* because he thought that a downward path towards death had appeared (XXVI, 6, 18): *timeret silentium triste, procliviores viam ad mortem, ut sperabat, existimans advenisse*.⁴⁴ Procopius was standing on the tribunal in fear and trembling and he was unable to speak for quite some time (*per ar-tus tremore diffuso implicior ad loquendum diu tacitus stetit* – XXVI, 6, 18). Finally the usurper began his speech to the mob gathered at the

⁴⁴ In the phrase *proclivior via ad mortem* Ammianus reveals his true attitude towards Procopius' usurpation – in the historian's opinion, the whole undertaking was ill-considered, clumsy and ill-starred. Zosimos, however, gives a different report on the issue; he says that Procopius' attempt was well prepared, although it came as a surprise to the inhabitants of Constantinople (Procopius arrested the city prefect Caesarius and the praetorian prefect Nebridius and forced them to communicate his ideas and orders to the subjects of the empire. Procopius personally oversaw this procedure – *NH* IV, 6, 2). Ammianus' version of this affair is possibly influenced by the rhetorical strategy of Valens' propaganda which dismissed Procopius' rebellion as a farcical episode – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 169.

forum: his voice sounded like that of a dying man and his *adlocutio* – like the broken utterances stemming from his broken spirit (*pauca tamen interrupta et moribunda voce dicere iam exorsus* – XXVI, 6, 18).⁴⁵ So the usurper’s speech sounded rather like the spiritual torment of a condemned man on the tribunal than a public *adlocutio* of a dignified emperor who presents himself to his subjects in order to demonstrate his imperial power. At this particular moment the fake emperor seems to be somewhat tragicomic. For, on the one hand, Procopius acts alone because he has no true supporters (he bargained for the counterfeit support of the soldiers and met with the cold indifference of the urban mob); what is more, the usurper is strongly in fear of death because he knows that he is acting against the legal authorities (in this aspect his behaviour and actions are comparable with those of tragic characters who oppose legal authorities and their orders and act alone, although they know that death is the only “reward” for their struggle). However, on the other hand, Procopius – unlike tragic characters – is not great and heroic and he does not act with a view to realizing his lofty moral purposes or great political ambitions; on the contrary, he is a small and clumsy man who longs to be a real emperor but, in fact, is afraid of his bold attempt which arose only from his low and egoistic motives (this is the comic aspect of his behaviour).

It is interesting to point out the considerable contrast of Procopius’ public appearance with Julian’s public speech and his acceptance of imperial dignity. The presentation of the latter after his proclamation was accompanied by an atmosphere full of cheerful expectation and approval. After his magnificent arrival at the *forum*, Julian climbed onto the tribunal, which was surrounded by standards, military *signa et aquilae* and soldiers who were standing close together in order to protect him (XX, 5, 1-2): *progressus princeps ambitiosius solito tribunal ascendit signis aquilisque circumdatus et vexillis saeptusque tutius armatarum cohortium globis*. Julian was silent for a moment (*interquievisset paululum* – XX, 5, 2) because he wanted to observe the faces of the legionaries who encircled him (*dum alte contemplatur* – so Julian’s silence was not due to his fear); he noticed that the soldiers were joyful

⁴⁵ Zosimos, unlike Ammianus, makes no mention of Procopius’ fear; he also does not mention that the mob was dumbfounded (*NH* IV, 6, 3).

and cheerful (*praesentium vultus alacres omnes visos et laetos* – XX, 5, 2). The new Augustus addressed his soldiers using simple and clear words which sounded like *litui* and encouraged the legionaries (*quasi lituis verbis, ut intellegi possit, simplicibus incendebat* – XX, 5, 2). In his *adlocutio* Julian emphasized his cooperation with the soldiers in difficulties and struggles for the common good of the Imperium (XX, 5, 3-5), encouraged the legionaries to protect him in case of adversities and dangers (XX, 5, 6) and charted the course of dealing with *honores et dignitates civiles militaresque* (XX, 5, 7). Let us draw attention to the fact that Julian, unlike Procopius, appeared as a self-assured, reliable and fearless man. Valentinian's acceptance of power was comparable (XXVI, 2, 5). Before he began to speak, he raised his right hand and, confident of his imperial dignity, when no one interrupted him, delivered a speech which he had previously thought through (*elata propere dextera vi principis fiducia pleni [...] cogitata nullis interpellantibus absoluebat* – XXVI, 2, 5). In his *adlocutio* Valentinian thanked the soldiers for hailing him as emperor, praised them for their courage (XXVI, 2, 6-7) and assured the legionaries that he was willing to share imperial power with the other Augustus (XXVI, 2, 8). Moreover, Valentinian encouraged the legionnaires to be always in agreement with one another (XXVI, 2, 8) and feel sure of their achievements and successes (XXVI, 2, 10); the emperor also promised that he would give a *donativum* to each soldier to celebrate the *primitiae* of his reign (XXVI, 2, 10). Thanks to this well-prepared speech Valentinian's authority increased (*finita oratione, quam auctoritas erexerat inopina* – XXVI, 2, 11) and he managed to encourage the legionnaires to support him and give their approval to his intentions (*flexit imperator in suam sententiam universos consiliique eius viam secuti* – XXVI, 2, 11).

Let us now come back to the content of Procopius' *adlocutio*. In his cowardly and patchy speech the fake emperor made only one statement – he emphasized his relationship with the Constantinian dynasty⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Procopius was related to the Constantinian dynasty through his mother, who was a sister of Julian's mother Basilina; the usurper probably had no agnatic relationship with the dynasty of Constantine. So Procopius' *imperatoria propinquitatis* is actually a dubious argument – Ammianus points out this dubious sense by the verb *praetendebat* (*imperatoriam propinquitatem praetendebat* – *praetendere*), which tends to be used when the historian refers to statements causing doubt (see *praetendere* in this sense

(*quibus stirpis propinquitatem imperatoriae praetendebat* – XXVI, 6, 18). He omitted his military functions and ranks as well as his military achievements, although he had some.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Procopius did not chart the course of his action and made no attempt to rally support from the citizens of Constantinople and to urge the soldiers to revolt. One may easily conclude that by stressing his *imperatoria propinquitas* Procopius intended to appear before the citizens as the right man to be granted the dignity of an emperor and, merely on account of this imperial relationship, enable his usurpation to be at least a mediocre success. Let us add that *imperatoria propinquitas* was a cunning argument for two reasons. Firstly, the social affection for the dynasty of Constantine was still great at that time; secondly, the legal emperor Valens had a relationship neither with the Constantinian dynasty nor with other *gens imperatoria*.⁴⁸ That is why Procopius, for the sake of his case, used this indispensable statement (*imperatoria propinquitas*) and pretended to have a relationship with the favourable *gens Constantina*. Later, in other difficult and decisive moments of his undertaking, the usurper also manifested his connection with the Constantinian dynasty. Let us mention that Procopius carried Constantius' daughter around the soldiers in Thrace (XXVI, 7, 10) to claim his kinship with this dead emperor who belonged to the *gens Constantina*; the usurper was also accompanied by Constantius' wife Faustina⁴⁹ (a widow at that time) and his daughter even into the line of the decisive battle with Valens in

also in XXVI, 7, 10 and XXXI, 14, 20) – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 170. Zosimos, unlike Ammianus, in his comments on Procopius' *adlocutio* makes no mention of the fact that Procopius was to have stressed his *imperatoria propinquitas* in his speech; the author says that the usurper *filled the Constantinopolitans with great hopes and promises* (NH, IV, 6, 3).

⁴⁷ Procopius was an envoy (together with Lucilianus) to the Persian king Sapor; he also took part in Julian's Persian expedition (Procopius commanded the troops in Mesopotamia). As for Procopius' military functions, we have discussed them at the very beginning of this article.

⁴⁸ Valentinian and Valens were the sons of Gratianus Maior (called *Funarius* scil. *Ropemaker* – XXX, 7, 2) who came from an unknown family from Cybale in Pannonia. R. C. Blockley (1975: 61) underlines the strong affection for the dynasty of Constantine at that time.

⁴⁹ Faustina – PLRE I, Faustina.

order to incite soldiers to fight more bravely for the *gens Constantina*, to which he himself claimed to be related (XXVI, 9, 3).

When Procopius had finished his cowardly *adlocutio* (XXVI, 6, 18), one could hear the soft whispers of a paid usurper's claue (*leni paucorum susurro pretio illectorum*) which were followed by the haphazard shouts of approval by the mob (*tumultuariis succlamationibus plebis*). In this disorderly and dishonourable manner Procopius was finally declared emperor (*imperator appellatus incondite*); after his proclamation he went straight to the *curia* (*petit curiam raptim*). Let us draw attention to the fact that hailing Procopius as an emperor is a parody of a true imperial proclamation: the usurper was proclaimed in disorder (*incondite*) by several paid supporters (a claue – *pauci pretio illecti*) who whispered softly (*susurro*) and the urban mob which showed its approval by improvised shouts (*tumultuariae succlamationes*); the soldiers stood silent, although they were present because they had escorted the usurper to the *forum*. It is understandable that in such circumstances Procopius went to the *curia* (*petit curiam*) to make sure of the support of the senate. But it is astonishing that he went there in a rush (*raptim*: he rushed to the *curia*), for he should have done so in a dignified manner. As for *raptim*, one should explain that this adverb is used in Ammianus only in descriptions of speedy military actions.⁵⁰ So the reference of this adverb to Procopius' action is clear: *raptim* (as well as *incondite*) brings out (once more) the amateurish and improvised character of Procopius' usurpation which appears to be rather a weak and not well-prepared revolt started by a poor leader than a great state event.

It is noteworthy that in the *curia* Procopius was not welcomed by the senators as a new emperor (XXVI, 6, 18). No member of the dignified *clarissimi* (*nullo clarissimorum*⁵¹) waited indoors to do honour to him. There were only some unimportant men in the senate (*ignobilium*

⁵⁰ *Raptim* (in a rush) occurs in descriptions of speedy military actions in eight other cases in Ammianus – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 171.

⁵¹ In XXVI, 6, 18 Ammianus uses *clarissimi* probably in a general sense – the noun *clarissimi* refers to the truly distinguished and influential men contrasting them with the *ignobiles* (this noun refers to those people whose role was unimportant). Let us mention that Valentinian and Valens legislatively formalized the existing distinctions of status within the *ordo senatorius* in 372 AD when three imperial grades were created that is

paucitas inventa), but they made no attempt to greet Procopius. After this disgraceful welcome, the disdained and ridiculed emperor went to the palace (XXVI, 6, 18); he entered his new residence in a hurry (*festinatis passibus*) and with an utterly unfavourable foot (*pessimo pede: palatium pessimo pede festinatis passibus introiit* – XXVI, 6, 18). Let us now pay attention to the usurper's gait⁵² because the way in which he entered the *palatium* helps us recognize his mood at this particular moment of his usurpation. So Procopius' quick step (*passus festinati*) expresses the anxiety and fear of a man who is fully aware that after his ill-starred entrance to the imperial palace he will meet his own misfortune there (*pes pessimus*). This is the last image of our usurper in the first and ridiculous part of his coup. But Ammianus explains that this ludicrous affair will soon be developed and converted into a dangerous state rebellion, although it was only improvised and thoughtlessly started by a man dressed in an inept motley outfit (XXVI, 6, 19): *profecto irrisione digna principia incaute coepta et temere ad ingemescendas erupisse rei publicae clades*.⁵³

clarissimi, spectabiles and *illustres* – cf. Jones 1964: 143-144, 528-529; Demandt 1989: 281-282.

⁵² The ancients were interested in the way people walk (people's gait). Sallust mentions that Catiline's step was irregular – this way of walking expressed Catiline's anxiety and excitement after he had committed a crime (*Cat.* 15, 5); in Suetonius gait helps one to recognize the relationship between Caesar and his son (*Iul.* 52, 2) as well as some features of Tiberius' character (*Tib.* 68, 3). Ammianus himself refers to people's gait several times: in XXII, 14, 3 – when he mentions about Julian's macho-like swagger (*grandiaque incedens*); in XXV, 10, 14 – when he pays attention to Jovian's heavy step (*Incedebat autem motu corporis gravi*); in XXVIII, 1, 13 – where he refers to Maximinus' ballet dancer gait, which imitates the Brahmins' levitation (this way of walking expresses Maximinus' true joy: *ideoque pedes huc et illuc exsultando contorquens saltare, non incedere videbatur [...] dum studebat [...] imitari Brachmanas*). According to ancient physiognomic studies, people's way of walking was an important factor which helped to recognize features of someone's character and mind – cf. chapter 50 (*De incessus et motus signo*) of Polemon's treatise on physiognomy or chapter 74 of an anonymous treatise entitled *De physiognomonia*. For more information on people's gait see den Boeft et al. 2011: 31-32.

⁵³ Let us mention that passage XXVI, 6, 19 functions as a hinge between two contrasting parts of Ammianus' diptych: the first part which is only the ludicrous beginning of Procopius' coup and the second one – dangerous and almost disastrous.

Procopius, however, is a transformable character. This ludicrous man showed quite different colours in the second, serious and dangerous part of his enterprise. The striking transformation of our usurper from a ridiculous and fake emperor into an authoritative and brave leader of his coup took place near Mygdum at the River Sangarios, where the imperial army confronted the rebels' troops.⁵⁴ Let us have a look at this memorable scene (XXVI, 7, 15). Procopius full of unusual boldness rushed suddenly to the middle of the battlefield and stood between the opposing battle lines, although the volleys of arrows were thrown from every side by the two hostile armies: *inter reciprocantes missilia quasi procurstatione hostem lacessens solus prorupit in medium*. Then the usurper greeted in Latin a soldier called Vitalianus as if he knew him well, asked this comrade-in-arms to step out of the row, took him by the hand and for the first time addressed the astonished soldiers bravely like a real emperor: *agnitum quendam Vitalianum, quem si norat ambigitur, Latine salute data blande produxit eumque porrecta dextera saviatus omnibus hinc inde attonitis*.

In his dramatic *adlocutio* (XXVI, 7, 16) Procopius forsook the servile and flattering promises of the *dignitates* and the huge rewards (XXVI, 6, 16) and desperate claims of his relationship with the Constantinian dynasty (XXVI, 6, 18) which he had emphasized in his previous speeches. Here, at Mygdum, the usurper stood before the troops not as a pale apparition (XXVI, 6, 15) or a *mimica cavillatio* (XXVI, 6, 15), but as a real emperor and a true leader who incites the soldiers to fight bravely. Procopius in the high moral tone of his *adlocutio* invoked the fidelity of the Roman soldiers and their oath confirmed by religious rites (XXVI, 7, 16): *en, [...] cana Romanorum exercituum fides et religionibus firmis iuramenta constricta!*⁵⁵ Let us explain that in these

⁵⁴ Having heard about Procopius' revolt, Valens was driven to despair. The emperor decided to discontinue his journey to Antioch and return to Constantinople by way of Galatia (Gallograecia) in order to face Procopius and the rebels. Valens sent forward the two legions, that is the *Iovii* and *Victores*; these legions met the usurper and his rebellious troops at Mygdum. As for Procopius' army, it consisted of corrupted soldiers and desperados (*ex vulgari faece nonnulli desperatione consiliisque ductantibus caecis* – XXVI, 7, 7).

⁵⁵ In this statement Ammianus' reference (*cana Romanorum exercituum fides*) to the first book of the Aeneid, lines 291-293, is clear – cf. Verg., *Aen.* I, 291-293: *aspera tum*

words (at the very beginning of his speech) the usurper referred to the pledge of allegiance which the soldiers had formerly sworn to Julian (XXI, 5, 7-11)⁵⁶ and by this reference insisted that they were bound to follow him, Procopius, Julian's true kinsman. It is noteworthy that in this way the usurper turns the tables on Valens to whom all legionaries were actually bound to be loyal at that time, although some of them had taken part in Julian's Persian campaign. But considering that Julian was dead and Valens was the legitimate emperor, the pledge of allegiance sworn to the former by the soldiers many years before, was no longer valid at the time of Procopius' usurpation; what is more, the oath sworn to Julian did not oblige the soldiers to follow the usurper (even if he really was a relative of the dead emperor).

In the next part of his speech Procopius raises a considerable rhetorical question⁵⁷ (XXVI, 7, 16): *placet, fortissimi viri, pro ignotis tot suorum consurrexisse mucrones, utque Pannonius degener labefactans cuncta et proterens imperio, quod ne votis quidem concipere ausus est umquam, potiat, ingemiscere nos vestris nostrisque vulneribus*. Let us draw attention to Procopius' attitude towards the legitimate emperor and turning the tables on him. In his bombastic and impudent question Procopius calls Valens *a degenerated Pannonian (Pannonius degener)* and pictures him as a Pannonian upstart and the real usurper who breaks the peace and order in the commonwealth (*labefactans cuncta*),

positis mitescent saecula bellis / cana Fides et Vesta, Remo cum fratre Quirinus / iura dabunt.

⁵⁶ The soldiers swore an oath of allegiance to Julian after his proclamation in Lutetia Parisiorum when he decided to fight with the legitimate emperor Constantius II (XXI, 5, 7-11): *ad quae vos ex more fidentium ducum iuramento, quaeso, concordiam spondete mansuram et fidam operam mihi navaturo sedulam et sollicitam [...]. iussisque universi in eius nomen iurare sollemniter gladiis cervicibus suis admotis sub execrationibus diris verbis iuravere conceptis omnes pro eo casus, quoad vitam profuderint, si necessitas adegerit, perlaturus. quae secuti rectores omnesque principis proximi fidem simili religione firmarunt.*

⁵⁷ According to M.-A. Marié (1984: 84), the whole phrase up to *vulneribus* is a rhetorical question which contains a proposition that must be rejected by the audience (*placet [...]* *tot suorum consurrexisse mucrones [...]* *ingemiscere nos vestris nostrisque vulneribus*), and which is followed by a preferable alternative introduced by the phrase *quin potius* (*quin potius sequimini culminis summi prosapiam*) – cf. also den Boeft et al. 2008: 208.

tramples everything (*proterens*) and wields imperial power, although – according to Procopius – he should not even have dared to dream about becoming emperor (*imperio, quod ne votis quidem concipere ausus est umquam*). In these insulting remarks the usurper impudently ascribed to Valens all the rebellious intentions and actions which he, Procopius, had actually undertaken himself. In addition to this, at the high-flown end of his *adlocutio* (XXVI, 7, 16) the usurper presented himself to the soldiers proudly as the true representative of the imperial dynasty (*culminis summi prosapia*) and the rightful heir to the purple (*maiestas avita*). He also incited (XXVI, 7, 16) all soldiers to follow him (*quin potius sequimini culminis summi prosapiam*) and said in justification of this *adhortatio* that his fight against Valens was legitimate (*arma iustissima commovens*) and aimed not to seize imperial power and properties of the citizens illegitimately (*non ut rapiat aliena*), but to restore his own imperial authority and the right to the throne to which he had been entitled by birth as a close relative of the imperial family (*sed in integrum maiestatis avitae restituatur*). It is worthy of mention that the cunning statements of the *arma iustissima* and *maiestatem avitam restituere* were used by Procopius to hide his real, illegitimate and rebellious actions and to conceal his true role as the *usurpator indebitae potestatis* (XXVI, 7, 12) which he had actually played over the course of the entire affair.

Thanks to this authoritative and deceitful speech delivered like a real emperor, Procopius managed to win over the troops who had been sent by Valens to stifle the rebellion (*Valens [...] agmina duo praeire iussisset, quibus nomina sunt Iovii atque Victores, castra perduellium irrupturos* – XXVI, 7, 13-14). The soldiers lowered the banners in token of surrender and instead of raising the *barritus* (a scream which denotes the start of a battle) and starting the real armed clash, they proclaimed Procopius emperor. Then the soldiers, who were brought into regular order, surrendered to Procopius and accompanied him in agreement to the military camp (XXVI, 7, 17): *Hac sermonis placiditate molliti omnes, qui acriter venerant pugnaturi, signorum apicibus aquilisque summissis descivere libentes ad eum et pro terrifico fremitu, quem barbari dicunt barritum, nuncupatum imperatorem stipatumque de more consentientes in unum reduxerunt ad castra*. Here, in the camp,

the legionaries – according to the military rite – swore by Jupiter that the newly hailed emperor would be invincible (XXVI, 7, 17): *testati more militiae Iovem invictum Procopium fore*.⁵⁸ Let us note that Procopius' proclamation, which came as a consequence of his *adlocutio*, was made by the soldiers according to the *ritu militari*, although – in fact – it was provoked by the usurper and proved to be the prelude to a disastrous rebellion. It is noteworthy that in Ammianus' account of this proclamation there are many topical elements which usually occur in the descriptions of speeches made by emperors to their troops (these elements are closely connected with the *ritus militaris*) that is *stipatus* (the well-arranged formation of soldiers who accompanied a newly proclaimed emperor to the quarters after his speech to the troops), *consensus militum* (the unanimity of soldiers), *nuncupatum imperatorem*⁵⁹ (praise for the emperor) and *testati [Iovem]* (the soldiers' oath sworn on a deity or God).

Procopius, the invincible emperor,⁶⁰ was not able to persevere any longer in his new and difficult role as a great ruler and leader. The myth of the great emperor Procopius was dispelled as unexpectedly as it had

⁵⁸ In XXI, 5, 9 a similar statement refers to Julian, who was acclaimed after his speech as a great and invincible leader and a fortunate conqueror of people and kings: *magnum elatumque ducem et, ut experta est, fortunatum domitorem gentium appellans et regum*. As for the oath (in XXVI, 7, 17 sworn by Jupiter), it is important that it was sworn whereas – according to Jones (1963: 24-25) – one should not attach too much importance to the choice of god or deity by whom an oath was sworn. The scholar explains that *soldiers conformed more or less passively to the prevailing religion of the state whatever it might be for the time being* (that is to the Christian or pagan religion). For example, the reception of Constantius' speech (XVII, 13, 34) was comparable to that of Procopius, although Constantius' soldiers called the Christian God (a nameless *deum* in Ammianus) to witness, because the emperor was a Christian: *Post hunc dicendi finem contio omnis alacrior solito aucta spe potiorum et lucri vocibus festis in laudes imperatoris assurgens deumque ex usu testata non posse Constantium vinci tentoria repetit laeta*.

⁵⁹ As for the element of praise for the newly proclaimed emperor in this passage (XXVI, 7, 17), it is either implied in the phrase *nuncupatum imperatorem* or just omitted by Ammianus.

⁶⁰ Procopius was successful in his military operations: he managed to capture Thrace, Bithynia, Cyzicus and Hellespontus.

arisen. During the decisive battle at Nacolia⁶¹ the usurper was suddenly betrayed and left by his *magister peditum* Agilo and those supporters who had been loyal to him until then (*Agilo rem excursu prodidit repentino eumque secuti complures iam pila quatientes et gladios* – XXVI, 9, 7).⁶² It is noticeable that the situation at Nacolia is quite the opposite to that at Mygdum. Just as some time ago at the Sangarios river the soldiers had left the rightful emperor and had gone over to Procopius (XXVI, 7, 17), so now, at Nacolia the legionaries betrayed the usurper and with determination took sides with Valens reversing their shields, constituting a token of desertion (*ad imperatorem transeunt cum vexillis scuta perversa gestantes, quod defectionis signum est apertissimum* – XXVI, 9, 7).

At that very moment Procopius realized that his part of being a great and invincible emperor, which he had tried to play after his successful proclamation, had just come to an end (XXVI, 9, 8). The usurper was terrified – he understood that he could count neither on the help nor favour of his soldiers and that they had left him to his fate. Procopius took to flight (*versus in pedes*) and with his two comrades-in-arms Florentius

⁶¹ The battle at Nacolia (in Phrygia) probably took place on May 26th, 366 AD – a day before the execution of the usurper.

⁶² Procopius' army was divided into two parts: the first one, which was under Procopius' command, had fought with Valens in Bithynia (Agilo was *magister peditum* in this part of troops) and the second one, which was under the command of Procopius' *magister equitum* Gomoarius, operated in Lydia. Ammianus says (XXVI, 9, 6) that some time before the encounter at Nacolia Procopius was betrayed by his *magister equitum* Gomoarius and that part of the rebel army which was under his command. After this success Valens moved into Phrygia (XXVI, 9, 7); here, at Nacolia the decisive battle took place during which the usurper was betrayed by Agilo and the rest of the rebel army. Zosimos, like Ammianus, mentions that Agilo betrayed Procopius at Nacolia and took sides with Valens (*NH*, IV, 8, 3); the historian also implies (*NH*, IV, 8, 1-2) that Gomoarius' betrayal during the battle at Thyatira in Lydia (the date of this clash is not certain) was a decisive factor which contributed to Procopius' defeat. Philostorgius (*HE*, IX, 5), like Zosimos, relates that Procopius' defeat in the battle with Valens was due to the treachery of his two generals, that is Gomoarios (Gomoarius) and Agelius (Agilo). As for Agilo – cf. *PLRE* I, Agilo (he was *magister peditum* under Procopius – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 188). As for Gomoarius – cf. *PLRE* I, Gomoarius + A. Lippold, *Gnomon*, 46 [1974] 270 (Gomoarius was *magister equitum* under Procopius – cf. den Boeft et al. 2008: 188).

and Barchalba,⁶³ went into hiding in remote places in the woods (XXVI, 9, 8): *Hoc praeter spem omnium viso Procopius salutis intercluso suffragio versus in pedes circumiectorum nemorum secreta petebat et montium Florentio sequente et Barchalba tribuno*. Just as before the start of his bold undertaking he took shelter in remote and secret places lying in ambush like a beast ready to pounce and catch his prey (XXVI, 6, 10) so now, following his defeat, he returned to his safe hiding-place exhausted and unable to keep his prey (that is imperial power: *quod capi* – XXVI, 6, 10) any longer. His role as an invincible leader was most certainly over. Here, at night (*maiore itaque noctis parte consumpta* – XXVI, 9, 9), in his remote hiding-place Procopius was transformed from the invincible emperor who had captured sizeable swaths of the Imperium following his unanimous proclamation by the soldiers at Mygdum, into a helpless and desperate man who felt sorry for himself in the presence of two false friends (XXVI, 9, 9). One may easily draw an analogy between the usurper's demeanour at the very beginning (XXVI, 6, 12) and at the end of his enterprise (XXVI, 9, 9): just as before the start of the coup, Procopius was depressed and worn out by long-lasting miseries (*aerumnis diuturnis attritus* – XXVI, 6, 12), so at the end of his rebellion he was out of spirits, helpless in the face of his own *fortuna luctuosa et gravis* and filled with anxiety (*consiliorum inops Procopius, ut in arduis necessitatibus solet, cum Fortuna expostulabat luctuosa et gravi mersusque multiformibus curis* – XXVI, 9, 9). Procopius' fears did not prove to be vain. Florentius and Barchalba suddenly captured the helpless usurper, bound him and delivered him to Valens, who immediately ordered his opponent's beheading (*subito a comitibus suis artius vincetus relato iam*

⁶³ As for Florentius – cf. *PLRE* I, Florentius 4; as for Barchalba – cf. *PLRE* I, Barchalba. Philostorgius gives a different account of this event (*HE*, IX, 5): After having been defeated by the emperor, Procopius retreated to Nicaea; on the next day he was seized and delivered to Valens by Florentius who was in charge of the garrison of this city. Philostorgius' version, however, is rather improbable, because Ammianus mentions that Marcellus was the commander of the garrison in Nicaea when he heard about the treachery of Procopius' troops and the execution of the usurper (XXVI, 10, 1); as for Marcellus – cf. *PLRE* I, Marcellus 5.

*die ductus ad castra imperatori offertur [...] statimque abscisa cervice – XXVI, 9, 9).*⁶⁴

Ammianus mentions that in the last minutes of his life the would-be emperor was silent and numb (*reticens atque defixus – XXVI, 9, 9*). In this way the tragicomedy of Procopius was to come full circle. Let us recall that his tragicomic enterprise was started in Constantinople in the quarters when the pale Procopius appeared to the soldiers like an apparition summoned from the underworld (*Stetit atque subtabidus – excitum putares ab inferis – XXVI, 6, 15*); it was to be continued when the terrified usurper encircled by the dumbfounded mob (*cunctis stupore defixis – XXVI, 6, 18*) stood on the tribunal unable to speak for some time (*implicior ad loquendum diu tacitus – XXVI, 6, 18*) and staring death in the face (*proclivior viam ad mortem [...] existimans advenisse – XXVI, 6, 18*). The end of this tragicomedy was similar to its beginning: after having been defeated and seized at Nacolia, Procopius *reticens atque defixus* faced the real emperor Valens whom he had called *a degenerated Pannonian (Pannonius degener)* not so long before (XXVI, 7, 16).

One may notice that Procopius' image, in spite of his transformation at Mygdum, is generally coherent with the course of the entire usurpation and links two contrasting parts of Ammianus' diptych. So at the end of the whole affair in the presence of Valens (XXVI, 9, 9) just as at the very beginning in the quarters (XXVI, 6, 15) and on the tribunal (XXVI, 6, 18), Procopius is *reticens atque defixus* as if he was transformed again into the pale and silent apparition (*subtabidus – XXVI, 6, 15; tacitus – XXVI, 6, 18; reticens – XXVI, 9, 9*) which was to walk a downward path towards death (*proclivior via ad mortem – XXVI, 6, 18*) and come back to the underworld from which he had been summoned for a moment (*excitus ab inferis – XXVI, 6, 15*). Paradoxically, this ridiculous *novator* (XXVI, 10, 15), in spite of his temporary transformation from an odd creature into a real emperor, was able to develop

⁶⁴ Procopius was executed on May 27th, 366 AD. As for his execution, Philostorgius, like Ammianus, says (*HE IX, 5*) that Procopius was beheaded. Zosimos (*NH IV, 8, 4*) explains that the usurper was killed (but he makes no mention of how it was done). As for Ammianus, he does not concentrate on the tragic aspect of Procopius' death, but underlines the fact that the disruption of the established order has finished.

his thoughtless undertaking from a ludicrous local affair into a dangerous state rebellion; moreover, he caused Valens, having heard about the revolt, fall prey to sudden despair and was so dispirited that he wanted to discard his imperial attire (*augustos amictus abicere* – XXVI, 7, 13) as if it was a heavy burden to him (*gravis sarcina* – XXVI, 7, 13): *atrocitate nuntii Valens percussus iamque revertens per Gallograeciam auditis apud Constantinopolim gestis diffidenter incedebat et trepide ac repentino pavore vias providendi turbante eo usque desponderat animum, ut augustos amictus abicere tamquam gravem sarcinam cogitaret*. And this seems to be the most intriguing aspect of Procopius' image in Ammianus.

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Lastly, let us add that Procopius, in spite of his theatrical creations and the striking transformation at Mygdum, has one immutable feature in the two contrasting parts of his usurpation. The historian consistently pictures Procopius as a victim of his own *hybris* (arrogant pride), an important character defect, which influences the usurper's undertaking from the very beginning and finally determines its failure (Blockley 1975: 61, 172). Procopius is full of excessive ambitions by nature (*altius anhelabat* – XXVI, 6, 1), so in the first part of Ammianus' diptych he makes an audacious attempt to start his ridiculous affair (*hybris: facinus audacissimum* – XXVI, 6, 12) and in the second part, after the capture of Cyzicus (*Hoc Marte Cyzico reserata* – XXVI, 8, 11), he is elated by his successes and ignores the fact (*hybris*) that his fortune can change and, in consequence, he can easily run out of luck (XXVI, 8, 13): *Ea victoria ultra homines sese Procopius efferens et ignorans, quod quivis beatus versa rota Fortunae ante vesperum potest esse miserimus*. Ammianus clearly indicates that the usurper, who seems to be unaware of this simple practical truth, will soon be punished for his *hybris* (*versa rota Fortunae* – XXVI, 8, 13) – after his defeat at Nacolia Procopius loses the part of a real emperor (XXVI, 9, 8-9) and transforms into the pale and silent apparition (XXVI, 9, 9) which stares death in the face at the end of its enterprise (*imperatorii offertur reticens atque defixus statimque abscisa cervice* – XXVI, 9, 9; the second part of the diptych) just as he did at the start of it (*atrocem mortem*

clementiorem ratus malis – XXVI, 6, 12; *proclivioram viam ad mortem* [...] *existimans advenisse* – XXVI, 6, 18; the first part of the diptych). By introducing *hybris* into the explanation of Procopius' failure, Ammianus lifts the whole action from the political level to the moral one. Thanks to his narrative art, which consists in making theatrical and metaphorical creations of the usurper and the picturesque scenes in which he acts, the historian shows this important moral lesson in a rich, literary light. In joining these literary images by this moral message and founding them on historical facts, Ammianus creates an impressive and coherent picture of the usurpation and its leader Procopius in both parts of his diptych.

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