

CASSIODORUS AND THE *GETICA* OF JORDANES

BRIAN CROKE

THROUGHOUT the nineteenth century devotees of source-criticism tended to dissect authors so minutely into their component sources that sometimes the original unity and purpose of a particular work were completely obscured. The sixth-century historian Jordanes, of Gothic extraction, was especially vulnerable to this sort of analysis and perhaps suffered from its application more than other authors, largely because of his style. By the standards of classical, Ciceronian Latin against which most works were normally judged, Jordanes wrote poorly. No account was taken of the fact that Latin was probably Jordanes' third language, or of his professedly modest aims in both his extant works, the *Romana* and *Getica*, which he completed in Constantinople early in 551.¹ Instead, wayward Latin was taken to mean wayward research and dubious intelligence. The view began to spread that Jordanes was an incompetent and that his *Getica* in particular amounts to nothing more than a simple summary of Cassiodorus' lost *History of the Goths* (commissioned, if not completed, before 526)² and can therefore be safely exploited as a repository of Cassiodoran culture and opinion.³

1. Both works are cited from T. Mommsen, ed., *Jordanis "Romana" et "Getica," MGH:AA*, 5.1 (Berlin, 1882; repr. 1961). Date of composition: the *Getica* is dated to early 551 because it mentions the great plague of 542 as having occurred "nine years ago" (*Get.* 104) and because it was written while Jordanes was engaged on the *Romana* and both works were published in the twenty-fourth year of Justinian's reign (*Rom.* 4, 363), that is, 1 April 550–31 March 551. E. Stein, *Histoire de l'Empire*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1949), pp. 820–21, argued that Jordanes was writing in 552 by dating two events to that year: the Spanish expedition of Liberius (*Get.* 203) and the Lombard/Gepid bloodbath (*Rom.* 386). However, Jordanes does not say that Liberius is on his way to Spain or campaigning there, but only that his appointment has been announced (*destinatur*; cf. Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 5.1:xv, n. 31); and the account of the battle between the Gepids and Lombards echoes that of Procopius, and both may depend on the Lombard envoys (Procop. *Wars* 8. 25. 14–15). Procopius' account is included in the campaigning season of 551 and is placed before the disastrous July earthquake (*Wars* 8. 25. 16). Even if the battle occurred later, its insertion would not affect the date of the already completed *Getica* (cf. J. J. O'Donnell, "The Aims of Jordanes," *Historia* 31 [1982]: 239–40). Place: Jordanes was clearly writing in the eastern part of the Empire (*Get.* 132) and almost certainly at Constantinople, "our city" (*Get.* 38).

2. The *Gothic History* was commissioned by Theoderic (*Ordo generis Cassiodororum*, CCL 96 [Turnhout, 1973], p. vi: "scripsit praecipiente Theoderico rege historiam Gothicam, originem eorum et loca mores XII libris enuntians") and may have been completed before his death in 526. It was certainly complete by 533: Cassiod. *Var.* 9. 25. 4; cf. *praef.* 11 (dated to 537). There is a strong possibility that research was completed and the work largely written in the period 523–26: S. J. B. Barnish, "The Genesis and Completion of Cassiodorus' *Gothic History*," *Latomus* 43 (1984): 336–61; B. Luiselli, "Cassiodoro e la storia dei Goti," in *Passaggio dal mondo antico al medio evo da Teodosio a San Gregorio Magno*, Atti dei Convegni Lincei 45 (Rome, 1980), pp. 225–53.

3. Well summed up by L. von Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 4.2 (Berlin, 1883), p. 327; cf. F. Giunta, *Jordanes e la cultura dell'alto medio evo* (Palermo, 1952), p. 147. The literature on Cassiodorus and his

This essentially negative tradition has now reached the point where one can argue, on the one hand, that the *Romana* is nothing more than the lost *Roman History* of Symmachus (cos. 485),⁴ and on the other, that the whole of the *Getica*—not just the section through the late 520s, for which Jordanes could have used Cassiodorus—is actually the work of Cassiodorus. This latter argument is supported by the contention that Jordanes is to be identified with the bishop of Crotona who was present in Constantinople in the early 550s, and that he was an intimate of Cassiodorus and Pope Vigilius, who were also in the capital at that time. In addition, it has been proposed that the birth of the younger Germanus early in 551 inspired Cassiodorus to update his history in order to urge a reconciliation of Byzantines and Goths: on this view Jordanes' *Getica* is merely Cassiodorus' newly updated history diluted for wider consumption.⁵ Nonetheless, much recent work both on Latin culture in sixth-century Constantinople and on Cassiodorus himself has pointed up some fundamental misconceptions in the received view of Jordanes and his work. In particular, it has highlighted his independence as an author, as well as the coherence and consistency of viewpoint evident in both his works.⁶ In this context there is room for a closer scrutiny of the *Getica* and its author in the political setting of Constantinople at the time of composition early in 551, and for a comparison of Cassiodorus' picture of Gothic history in his *Chronicle* with that found in the *Getica*. For the purposes of this analysis the ingredients and quality of Jordanes' Latin style, not to mention his accuracy in matters of Gothic history, ethnology, and topography, can safely be set aside.

I. JORDANES AND HIS CLAIMS

Jordanes tells us little about himself. His father was Alanoviiamuth (or Viiamuth) and his grandfather, Paria, was a *notarius* to an Alanic king

times is vast and growing rapidly. For orientation: J. J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979); A. Momigliano, "Cassiodoro," *Diz. Biog. Ital.* 21 (1978): 494–504 (repr. in *Sesto contributo alla storia degli studi classici* [Rome, 1980], pp. 487–508); Å. Fridh, "Cassiodor," *Theol. Realencyclop.* 7 (1981): 657–63 and the works there cited.

4. W. Ensslin, *Des Symmachus "Historia Romana" als Quelle für Jordanes*, Sitz. Bayer. Akad. d. Wiss., phil.-hist. Kl. (Munich, 1949); M. A. Wes, *Das Ende des Kaisertums im Westen des römischen Reiches* (The Hague, 1967).

5. A. Momigliano, "Cassiodorus and Italian Culture of His Time," *PBA* 41 (1955): 207–45 (repr. in *Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici* [Rome, 1960], pp. 191–229 = *Studies in Historiography* [London, 1966], pp. 181–210, which is the pagination used here), reiterated in "Gli Anicii e la storiografia latina del VI secolo d.C.," in *Histoire et historiens dans l'antiquité*, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 4 (Geneva, 1956), pp. 249–90 (which is the pagination used here; repr. in *Secondo contributo*, pp. 231–53). Despite occasional objections raised over the years, this general thesis remains intact: see, e.g., H. Wolfram, *Geschichte der Gothen* (Munich, 1980), pp. 441–42. It has been restated by Momigliano in "La caduta senza rumore di un impero nel 476 d.C.," *RSI* 85 (1973): 8 (= *Sesto contributo*, p. 163); "Cassiodoro," p. 499; and in *MAev* 49 (1980): 261; also by Averil Cameron, "Cassiodorus Deflated," *JRS* 71 (1981): 185, and more recently by Barnish, "Genesis," pp. 353–61.

6. D. R. Bradley, "The Composition of the *Getica*," *Erans* 64 (1966): 67–69; N. Wagner, "*Getica*": *Untersuchungen zum Leben des Jordanes und zur frühen Geschichte der Gothen* (Berlin, 1967), pp. 39–57; B. Luiselli, "Sul *De summa temporum* di Jordanes," *RomBarb* 1 (1976): 109–21; L. Varady, "Jordanes-Studien: Jordanes und das Chronicon des Marcellinus Comes—Die Selbständigkeit des Jordanes," *Chiron* 6 (1976): 441–87; B. Baldwin, "The Purpose of the *Getica*," *Hermes* 107 (1979):

who held sway in Moesia in the time of Attila. So far as can be deduced, Jordanes was himself a Goth who served, like his grandfather, as *notarius* to a certain general of the eastern Empire named Gunthigis or Baza (*Get.* 266). By any reckoning Jordanes must have been far from young (around 70, most likely) when he wrote the *Romana* and *Getica* in 550/51.⁷ If Jordanes was a bishop (as is frequently assumed) and if he lived in Italy (also frequently assumed), those elements of his background have left no trace in his two histories. In a celebrated sentence Jordanes claims that although *agramatus* he was, before his *conversio*, a *notarius* to Gunthigis.⁸ As a *notarius* to a Roman *magister militum* Jordanes would have been involved in interpreting and routine paper work. The position was by no means unimportant and certainly does not suggest that he was either illiterate or slow-witted. To be selected for such a position he must have been familiar with his native language (or languages) as well as Greek, which he obviously knew (*Get.* 3).⁹ Further, as a *notarius* to an important military figure he will also have needed Latin, still the language of the army. Certainly both the *Romana* and the *Getica* were written in Latin, but it is worth bearing in mind that Latin may well have been Jordanes' third (or even fourth) language.

When Jordanes describes himself as *agramatus*, therefore, he is not confessing ignorance and illiteracy but is simply implying that he had bypassed the conventional training in *grammaticē* and (if *quamvis* has any force at all) that by his self-instruction he was an exceptional *notarius*.¹⁰ Moreover, detailed lexical and grammatical analysis of Jordanes' Latin provides evidence of a Moesian origin and of a close

479–92; O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus*, pp. 271–72, and "Aims," pp. 223–40; B. Croke, "A.D. 476: The Manufacture of a Turning Point," *Chiron* 13 (1983): 81–119.

7. Since Jordanes' grandfather was in his prime in the 440s/450s, a standard count of twenty-five years per generation would make Jordanes about seventy in 550, assuming that he was born about 480. He cannot have been born much later; and varying the norm of twenty-five years per generation up or down slightly still leaves Jordanes an elderly man in 550. It is worth noting that, in singling out the Gothic general Bessas as a *nostrī temporis . . . patricius* (*Get.* 265), Jordanes may be drawing attention to his own age. When Jordanes was writing, Bessas had returned from distinguished service in Italy and had been reassigned to Lazica. He was just over seventy years old at the time (for details, see *PLRE* II, s.v. "Bessas," pp. 226–29).

8. Since Andag, the father of Gunthigis (the general whom Jordanes served), was active at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains in 451 (*Get.* 209), Gunthigis himself must have been *magister militum* in the late fifth or early sixth centuries. If born ca. 460 (and he may well have been born much earlier), he would have been about sixty in 520, toward the end of his military career. Most of Jordanes' term as his *notarius* would have fallen before 520. Gunthigis was perhaps *magister militum per Thraciam* (cf. *PLRE* II, s.v. "Gunthigis *qui et Baza*," p. 526). If so, this may account for the digression on Marcianople, the headquarters of the *mag. mil. per Thraciam*, and the Balkan bias in the work that Mommsen (*MGH:AA*, 5.1:x–xiii) took to indicate the place of writing. Incidentally, Gunthigis (Baza) cannot be identified with Batzas the *dux* of Euphratesia in 536 (Marcell. Add. 536.11, *MGH:AA*, 11:105) transferred to Italy in 538 (*ibid.* 538.1). Not only would it seem to make Gunthigis impossibly old, but it would mean that he reversed the usual career pattern by being a *dux* after being a *magister militum*. Hence the thesis of Luiselli, "Jordanes," pp. 110–21, evaporates (cf. O'Donnell, "Aims," p. 223).

9. Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 5.1:xxvii (observing that many points of grammar and orthography can only be explained as the grecized form of a Latin original); B. Baldwin, "Sources for the *Getica* of Jordanes," *RBPh* 59 (1981): 141–45. For Jordanes as *notarius*, see Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 5.1:vi.

10. Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 5.1:xxvii; Giunta, *Jordanes*, pp. 149–50; Luiselli, "Jordanes," p. 110. Beyond *Get.* 50 there are only two other instances of *agram(m)atus*—Vitruv. 1.1.3 and Cassiod. *Inst.*

affinity with the Latin characteristic of the army and administration of the time.¹¹ He probably learned his Latin on the job, to deal with military documents, not to read Cicero, so the Latin he writes is the Latin he speaks.

While Jordanes was engaged on his history of the world (usually, but misleadingly, designated the *Romana*), his friend Castalius (otherwise unknown) requested him to summarize in his own words (*nostris verbis*) the twelve-book Gothic history of Cassiodorus—a fact that would appear to presuppose a recognized competence in Gothic history on his part. So the elderly Jordanes took up the challenge, reminding Castalius that he could not hope to match or catch the fancy verbiage of Cassiodorus.¹² Now comes the crux:

super omne autem pondus, quod nec facultas eorundem librorum nobis datur, quatenus eius sensui inserviamus, sed, ut non mentiar, ad triduanam lectionem dispensatoris eius beneficio libros ipsos antehac relegi. quorum quamvis verba non recolo, sensus tamen et res actas credo me integre retinere. ad quos et ex nonnullis historiis Grecis ac Latinis addedi convenientia, initium finemque et plura in medio mea dictione permiscens. quare sine contumelia quod exigisti suscipe libens, libentissime lege; et si quid parum dictum est et tu, ut vicinus genti, commemoras, adde, orans pro me, frater carissime. Dominus tecum. Amen.

The overriding burden, however, is that I have no opportunity of using the history in order to attend to his meaning. Still, to speak truthfully, through the favor of his steward I previously read through the history over a three-day reading period. Although I do not recall the words, nevertheless I believe I preserve intact its meaning and narrative. To this I have also added relevant material from several Greek and Latin histories, while mixing in a beginning, a conclusion, and a good deal in between in my own words. So without reproach gladly take up what you have commissioned and read with pleasure. If anything is not sufficiently described and you, as a neighbour of the race, recall it, then add it, while praying for me, dearest brother. The Lord be with you. Amen.

Jordanes thus makes clear his basic problem in fulfilling the commission to summarize Cassiodorus' history at this particular time: he has no opportunity (*facultas*) of getting his hands on a copy of Cassiodorus' twelve-book work and so must rely entirely on his *previous* acquaintance with it. Evidently copies of the work were not readily available in Constantinople in 550/51, although Cassiodorus himself was in the

1. 28—neither of which denotes what we would call illiteracy, but rather a lack of formal education; cf. J. Friedrich, "Über die controversen Fragen im Leben des gotischen Geschichtsschreibers Jordanes," *Sitz. Bay. Akad., phil.-hist. Kl.* (1907): 388–89. It is unlikely that the *agrammatus* of Cassiod. *Inst.* 1. 28 derives from *Get.* 266, as argued by M. L. Agrisani, "Jordanes *Get.* 266 e Cassiodorus *Inst.* 1. 28," *RomBarb* 4 (1979): 5–11. There is no evidence that Cassiodorus himself ever read the *Getica*, even on the hypothesis that he was originally responsible for its composition.

11. H. Mihaescu, *La langue latine dans le sud-est de l'Europe* (Bucharest and Paris, 1978), pp. 10–11, 320, and passim. There are also traces of Christian Latin; A. Kappelmacher, "Jordanis," *RE* 9 (1916): 1926–27.

12. *Get.* 1–2: "relictoque opusculo, quod intra manus habeo, id est, de abbreviatione chronicorum, suades, ut nostris verbis duodecem Senatoris volumina de origine actuque Getarum ab olim et usque nunc per generationes regesque descendentem in uno et hoc parvo libello choartem."

capital at that time. In fact Jordanes' knowledge of the work was confined to a single rapid reading (*relegi*) on some previous occasion (*ante hac*) when he was obliged to borrow a copy from Cassiodorus' steward. The significant fact is that subsequent to Castalius' commission Jordanes either did not seek out Cassiodorus' history or, if he did take steps to locate a copy, found that he could not acquire a copy to summarize for Castalius. In other words, he no longer had access even to Cassiodorus' steward.

Consequently, Jordanes was obliged to write the *Getica* virtually from memory, on the basis of his three-day loan some time before. How long before is not clear, but it may have been well before the marriage of Germanus and Matasuntha. Obviously, as someone especially interested in Gothic history, he will have remembered a good deal, and presumably he took some notes. In any event, he says himself that although unable to recall the precise wording of Cassiodorus' style he nevertheless felt able to preserve the events (*res actas*) described and the general drift (*sensus*) of the history. Furthermore, so he goes on to say, he filled out the story by supplementing the Cassiodoran material with other relevant information contained in the works of various Greek and Latin writers, as well as adding a beginning (presumably the chapters based on Rufinus and Orosius), an end (presumably to carry the story beyond the point at which Cassiodorus finished), and various unspecified parts in which he was not so much drawing directly on a written source but expressing known facts in his own words (*mea dictione*).¹³

Given Jordanes' own account of his aims and methods we should not, therefore, expect to find Cassiodorus unacknowledged under every preposition. Instead, we should limit our expectations to the work's general structure and general content. This is not to deny that parts or whole sentences of the *Getica* could be verbatim Cassiodorus. But attempts to disentangle Cassiodoran material from the *Getica* have never proved convincing, based as they are on spurious presuppositions.¹⁴

Furthermore, Jordanes' own plain statements about the origins and purpose of his *Getica* are difficult to reconcile with the hypothesis of a special relationship between himself and Cassiodorus. Far from being "selected in a hurry to compile a summary of Cassiodorus' views about the Goths,"¹⁵ Jordanes tells us that he was obliged to borrow the work from Cassiodorus' steward on some previous occasion (*ante hac*) when he wished to read it and was then able to keep it for only three days (*Get.* 3). Indeed, far from enjoying exclusive use of a newly updated

13. *Get.* 2-3. Cf. 316 "quae legi et comperi," and 38 "nos etiam potius lectioni credimus."

14. Notably H. von Sybel, *De fontibus libri Jordanis de origine actuque Getarum* (Berlin, 1838); C. Schirren, *De ratione quae inter Jordanem et Cassiodorum intercedat commentatio* (Dorpat, 1858); C. Cipolla, "Considerazione sulle *Getica* di Jordanes et sulle loro relazioni colla *Historia Getarum* di Cassiodoro Senatore," *Memorie della R. Accad. di Torino* ser. 2, 43 (1892): 99-134; and, more recently, Barnish, "Genesis," pp. 348-61.

15. Momigliano, "Cassiodorus," p. 196; cf. "Cassiodoro," p. 499: "il diretto intervento di C. nella compilazione dell'epitome."

version of the history, Jordanes says he did not even have access to a copy at the time of writing (*Get.* 2), in the early part of 551. We have no good reason to disbelieve him. The evidence does not permit us to conclude that the *Getica* was composed under Cassiodorus' patronage, for Jordanes himself tells us that it was requested not by Cassiodorus but by Castalius.¹⁶ In addition, Cassiodorus did not make his history available to Jordanes, nor had he previously, for it was Jordanes who took the initiative, and he dealt not with Cassiodorus but with his steward; and if Cassiodorus were entrusting Jordanes with making an official summary of his history for important political purposes, then one would not expect such a strict time limit to be imposed on the loan.

Above all, Jordanes' own words raise a crucial question of chronology which tends to undermine the view that his comment on the significance of Germanus' birth in 551 must originate with Cassiodorus. The *Getica* was written before 1 April 551, and the younger Germanus was born just a few weeks before that.¹⁷ If Cassiodorus revised his history after the birth of Germanus (and there is no explicit evidence for this), and if Jordanes wrote after Cassiodorus but before 1 April 551, then his statement that he did not have access to Cassiodorus' history at the time of writing makes little sense. In fact, we would be forced to cram into the space of about two months (or less) (a) the birth of Germanus, (b) Cassiodorus' revision of his history, (c) Jordanes' reading of it, (d) Castalius' commissioning of Jordanes, and (e) the composition of the *Getica* at a time when Cassiodorus' revised history was not accessible to Jordanes. Although it is theoretically possible that events followed this order, it is surely more convincing to accept the most natural and economical hypothesis that the evidence admits: Cassiodorus' history, completed before 533, was never revised and updated, and it was this original and only version that Jordanes used in the *Getica*—that is, he read it well before he even intended to use it in writing the *Getica* in 551.¹⁸

II. STRUCTURE, SOURCES, AND TONE OF THE "GETICA"

If we continue to take Jordanes at his word, we find his independence as a writer and his command of the subject confirmed in the very structure of the *Getica*. The work is no aimless ramble but well designed and carefully presented. After a preface cleverly adapting Rufinus' translation of Origen's commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans (an indication of some theological reading at least), the *Getica* begins with the geographical origins of the Goths (*Get.* 1–24), then traces their early migration into Europe (*Get.* 25–81), then their history as a united race

16. Cf. Baldwin, "Purpose," p. 491.

17. Wagner, "*Getica*," p. 51.

18. The one scholar to have noticed this problem is Wes, *Ende*, p. 192, who dismissed it on the assumption that Cassiodorus explained his interpretation to Jordanes personally, which would have saved time.

to the end of the fourth century (*Get.* 82–130). At this point the work splits into two sections: the first treats the Visigoths to the writer's own day (*Get.* 131–245), the second covers the Ostrogoths in the same period (*Get.* 246–314), followed by an epilogue (*Get.* 315–16)—a pattern that modern histories of the Goths continue to follow. Throughout the *Getica* there are occasional signposts in the narrative referring the reader back and forth. So, too, the various digressions are carefully set out and finished off (e.g., *Get.* 16, 39, 55, 75, 82, 88, 172, 242, 245, 252, 268). In short, irrespective of the accuracy of the information, the reader cannot fail to notice the author's command of his structure and how all the material fits his stated purpose.

Likewise, there is no substantial reason to doubt Jordanes' claim that he supplemented the Cassiodoran account with material from various Greek and Latin writers. Indeed, many are named.¹⁹ Some of these may come from Cassiodorus. But Jordanes says he used these sources to expand Cassiodorus, and it must be observed that for the most part when Jordanes does cite some classical author by name it is by way of introducing or concluding a digression, or to present some alternative or supplementary account. Of these sources, it is widely conceded (even by the most skeptical critics of Jordanes) that he took his geographical introduction (*Get.* 4–9) firsthand from Orosius, an author he knew well, as the *Romana* shows. Then he turns to explain the location of Britain, citing Livy (*Get.* 10) secondhand and going on to explain the need to quote various sources to determine the island's shape and position: "aetati certius sui prodidit situm, quem, ut a Grecis Latinisque autoribus accepimus, persequimur" (*Get.* 10). Once again Jordanes is merely doing what he tells us he set out to do; hence he names Strabo, Tacitus, and Dio Chrysostom for the information he provides in his digression on Britain (*Get.* 10–15). Using exactly the same method he next discusses the site of Scandza (*Get.* 16–24), citing Ptolemy and Pomponius Mela (*Get.* 16). Having established the original homeland of the Goths, Jordanes takes up the story of their migrations into Scythia, passing judgment on the account of the Gothic historian Ablabius (*Get.* 28) and referring to Josephus in a way that suggests firsthand knowledge (*Get.* 29).

After a digression on Scythia (*Get.* 30–38), in which Jordanes cites no sources but does allude to relevant reading (*Get.* 38: "legimus," "fabulas . . . scriptas," "lectioni"), he continues the story, adding supplementary information from Dio (*Get.* 40, 58, 65), Orosius (*Get.* 44, 58), and Pompeius Trogus (*Get.* 48, 61), plus tags from both Vergil (*Get.* 41) and Lucan (*Get.* 43), poets well known in Jordanes' day. Having brought his story to the second century A.D., he then cites Ablabius once more—to explain the Ostrogoths' and Visigoths' origins (*Get.* 82)—before discussing at length the man he regarded as the first Gothic emperor of

19. The sources are listed and elucidated by Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 5.1:xxx–xliv, though he was reluctant to believe they could have been used by Jordanes directly.

Rome, Maximinus the Thracian. His account begins with a simple statement of its source, "ut dicit Symmachus in quinto suae historiae libro" (*Get.* 83), and concludes with an equally clear acknowledgment, "quod nos idcirco huic nostro opusculo de Symmachi hystoria mutuavimus" (*Get.* 88). Yet again here is Jordanes plainly following his stated method, supplementing Cassiodorus' version on his own initiative. Now that he has reached more recent and familiar stretches of Gothic history, the need to cite alternative accounts and explanations decreases and so does the naming of sources: for the period from Maximinus to Constantine (*Get.* 89–112) no source is mentioned. But when the fortunes of the Goths begin to intersect with those of other barbarian nations, Jordanes is obliged to provide some background on the Vandals, for whom he cites Dexippus (*Get.* 113), and the Huns, for whom he cites Orosius (*Get.* 121) and Priscus (*Get.* 123).

From this point Jordanes' narrative follows two tracks: first he tells the story of the Visigoths down to his own day (*Get.* 131–245); then that of the Ostrogoths (*Get.* 246–314). This section represents more than half the *Getica*, or forty-six of the eighty-four pages the text occupies in Mommsen's edition. Yet only three authors are cited: Dio Chrysostom again and the mysterious Fabius, in a brief digression on Ravenna (*Get.* 148–51), and Priscus (*Get.* 178, 183, 222, 254, 255). In fact, Priscus' *Byzantine History*, which covered the period from ca. 430 to 474, is a major source for this part of the *Getica* and can be identified even in sections where it is not specifically cited (e.g., *Get.* 256–58, 272–73). It is precisely the Priscan part of the *Getica* that contains the most vigorous and rhetorically colored narrative in the whole work, and it suggests that, following his predetermined method, Jordanes is here using Priscus firsthand, culling, quoting, and paraphrasing material to suit his purpose.

By the time he came to the end of Priscus' history, he had reached his own lifetime and was able to rely more on oral tradition and, eventually, personal knowledge. For various facts and judgments he cites as a source his own *maiores* (*Get.* 43, 59, 116, 148, 246, 316), by which he evidently means the Goths; indeed, he specifically locates certain pieces of information in the traditional songs and tales of the Gothic race to which he himself belonged (e.g., *Get.* 28, 43, 72, 79, 116). Cassiodorus could have been told about such traditions by Goths of his acquaintance, but he did not himself know Gothic. Yet, besides such oral traditions, Jordanes continued to use, unacknowledged, written sources such as the *Chronicle* of Marcellinus. In short, his use and citation of sources in the *Getica* conforms to his claim that he drew on various Greek and Latin *historiae* to supplement the account of Cassiodorus; he did not derive all his sources and citations secondhand from the history of Cassiodorus, who (it is usually admitted) did not know Greek.²⁰

Besides the additional material from written sources, Jordanes says he added a good many things here and there in his own words. Insofar as

20. Cf. O'Donnell, "Aims," p. 235.

such statements can be identified, they fall into three broad categories, beyond the use of oral traditions referred to above: asides and opinions, contemporary references, and connecting phrases. First, there are his personal opinions, such as the remark that it was strange of Josephus to omit discussion of the Goths' origins (*Get.* 29), or that "barbarians are inclined to civil wars" (*Get.* 169), or that the unexpected is always explained as an enemy ruse (*Get.* 218). This category also includes the many comments on points of geography and language.²¹ Second, there are contemporary references:²² for example, the plague (of 542) struck nine years ago (*Get.* 104); reconquered Africa is now flourishing (*Get.* 172)—a statement that only makes sense after 548; the Antae and Slavs are now rampaging everywhere (*Get.* 119)—as they did from 548 on; Liberius has been appointed to lead an expedition to Spain to suppress Athanagild's revolt (*Get.* 303).²³ Third, there is the vast number of connecting phrases that act as signposts in the narrative:²⁴ from being frequently directed back and forth by comments such as *ut superius diximus* or *redeamus ad propositum*, the reader gets a strong sense of the author's command of the flow and design of his work. If, therefore, we can attribute to Jordanes a fair degree of independence in putting together a coherent work from a variety of sources, then we might expect some sense of purpose and a unified viewpoint to emerge from the narrative.

Jordanes is, most of the time, pro-Gothic: the services of the Gothic *foederati* are highly praised (*Get.* 112, 113); Alaric's restraint at the sack of Rome was commendable (*Get.* 156). So, too, in their relations with the Goths the Romans were not always blameless: Fritigern's supporters were cruelly massacred (*Get.* 137), and Stilicho's attack on the Goths at Pollentia was treacherous (*Get.* 154); Honorius and Arcadius are chided for depriving the Goths of their subsidies (*Get.* 146). It is, of course, possible that some of these judgments do originate with Cassiodorus, but that can never be proved. What cannot come from Cassiodorus, however, is Jordanes' virulent anti-Arianism (*Get.* 132, 133, 138), which is at least one clear indication of his stepping beyond Cassiodorus in compiling the *Getica*.²⁵

21. For other similar comments: *Get.* 119, 134, 157, 193, 197, 214, 217, 218, 245, 259; for etymological points: *Get.* 27, 48, 70, 71, 72, 95; and other first-person statements: *Get.* 12, 14, 31, 37, 38, 45, 52, 57, 70, 74, 75, 104, 120, 125, 169, 261, 266, 316.

22. For other, generally less specific references: *Get.* 7, 25, 51, 67, 69, 74, 96, 103, 107, 112, 113, 168, 264, 265, 266, 267, 273. In addition there are the contemporary reports of travelers (*Get.* 27) and traders (*Get.* 21, 267).

23. Unlike J. J. O'Donnell, "Liberius the Patrician," *Traditio* 37 (1981): 67, I do not find Jordanes' statement here impossible. After Liberius had returned to Constantinople from Sicily (Procop. *Wars* 8. 24. 1), there was certainly time for him to be appointed in the early part of 551 when news of Athanagild's revolt first reached the capital. After all, Jordanes says only that Liberius' appointment had been announced (cf. n. 1 above), not that he had already left for Spain; and it may well be that Liberius did not himself lead the expedition in the end (cf. O'Donnell, "Aims," p. 239).

24. E.g., *Get.* 9, 10, 16, 39, 42, 48, 52, 54, 61, 74, 83, 94, 95, 96, 107, 114, 119, 129, 130, 133, 147, 152, 161, 169, 174, 176, 184, 197, 200, 240, 243, 245, 251, 263, 268, 290, 295, 299; cf. O'Donnell, "Aims," p. 230.

25. Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 5.1:xlili; Bradley, "Getica," p. 77; O'Donnell, "Aims," p. 230.

For a romanized Goth like Jordanes, writing in Constantinople in 551, the enemies of the emperor were the new intruders: the Bulgars, Antae, and Slavs. The Amali, however, are proclaimed a glorious race; but in submitting to Justinian they acknowledge an even more glorious ruler and “a valiant leader whose fame shall be silenced by no ages or cycles of years” (*Get.* 315). Jordanes looks forward to Justinian’s conquest of the Goths: though this might seem contradictory in Jordanes, himself a Goth, it would appear to be explained by his deep identification with the Roman Empire. If certain Goths, like Totila, choose to be enemies of the emperor, then he can easily dissociate himself from them. Certainly he does not support the Ostrogothic cause in Italy, but follows the Byzantine line: the war began in the just pursuit of vengeance for a cruel misdeed (*Get.* 307). It is noteworthy that as a trumpeter of Justinian’s victories, Jordanes concentrates in the *Getica* on Vitigis’ capitulation in 540 and entirely omits all reference to subsequent events in Italy.²⁶ The recent victories of Totila and the setbacks suffered by Justinian’s armies are overlooked; to include them would only detract from his express purpose of extolling Justinian. Yet if he were trying to win over dissident aristocratic opinion to the cause of reconciliation and future harmony in a joint Roman-Gothic regime in Italy, he would surely have dwelt to some extent on the illegitimacy of Totila’s reign in Roman eyes and on the claim of Matasuntha.²⁷

Only with the Goths firmly integrated into the Empire can someone like Jordanes look down on Vandals and Bulgars as outsiders and articulate the feeling that was growing in Constantinople: not that barbarian inroads were ruining the Empire, but that the Roman army, particularly its generals, had over the years taken the barbarians too lightly. According to Jordanes, it is “our own sins” that enable the Antae and Slavs to continue their raids at will (*Get.* 119) and “the penalty for our sins” that the Bulgars have become so well known (*Get.* 37). Likewise, Africa passed over to the Vandals thanks to the cowardice of emperors and the treachery of generals (*Get.* 172) and was only regained by the God-given triumph of Justinian. Such sentiment merely reflects a persistent element of Justinianic propaganda evident in certain of his laws from the 530s (e.g., *CJ* 1. 27. 1; *Nov.* 30).

It is perfectly understandable why, at the time Jordanes was writing and in the months before, the inhabitants of Constantinople should have felt uncomfortable and insecure. Successive invasions of Huns, Slavs, and Bulgars into the Balkans in the late 540s had stretched Roman defenses to the limit and prevented the deployment of the Roman army’s full strength in Italy. The Slavs had crossed the Danube in 548/49 and

26. Jordanes is here merely following the trend of contemporary propaganda, which regarded the capture of Vitigis as the symbol of victory in Italy (e.g., Men. frag. 4 [*FHG* 4:203]) and represented it as such in imperial iconography (e.g., Procop. *Aed.* 1. 10. 18; Corip. *In laud. Iust.* 1. 276–90).

27. Jordanes, in other words, here too reflects the official Byzantine view that Totila’s regime was a usurpation (Mommsen, *MGH-AA*, 5.1:xxii), as is so emphatically stated in the “Pragmatic Sanction” of 554 (*Nov. App.* 7, pp. 799–802 Schöll-Kroll).

pillaged Roman territory as far as Dyrrachium (Durres) while, according to Procopius (*Wars* 7. 29. 1–3), a frightened Roman army of fifteen thousand looked on. In mid-550 the Slavs again created havoc in the Balkans by capturing Topirus, a key town near the Egnatian way just twelve days' distance from Constantinople, and it was while Germanus and his army were engaging the Slavs around Serdica (Sofia) that the general took ill and died.²⁸ Subsequently, the Slavs defeated the Roman army at Adrianople and reached as far as the Anastasian Long Wall, just one day's march from the capital.²⁹ While Jordanes was at work on the *Romana* and *Getica*, therefore, hostile barbarians were encamped within easy striking distance of Constantinople, and when Narses set out for Italy his first objective was to clear a path through the barbarians in Thrace.³⁰ With fewer reserves to call on quickly, the imperial capital must have seemed in a very precarious position. If there was to be effective Byzantine resistance in the Balkans, the Italian war needed to be wound up quickly and decisively.

It should come as no surprise, then, to find that in the *Getica* Jordanes is not preaching a doctrine of peace and reconciliation (let alone deriving that doctrine from Cassiodorus) but is urging a policy of unrestrained aggression: the Empire and its army have vacillated too much in the past and have been too relaxed in dealing with the barbarians. If the *Getica* has any propaganda purpose at all, then one such overriding theme is the praise of Justinian as the vanquisher of the Goths (*Get.* 315–16). Certainly the author does hold out the hope of a time when Goths and Romans can live in peace, but he is not trying to stem imperial aggression against the hapless Goths. He envisages the union of Goth and Roman only under a reconquered Byzantine Italy; in this he shares the optimistic view of Justinian, who had not allowed the momentum of the reconquest to slacken in 551 after Germanus' death in 550. The plain facts are that by the time Jordanes was writing the *Getica* in February/March 551, the generals John and Justinian were poised in Dalmatia to move with a large army into Italy, while Justinian had already decided to abandon his stingy treatment of the army and had appointed Narses with unprecedented resources for an all-out attack on Totila.³¹ In Jordanes' estimation what was required was a show of strength both in Italy and in the Balkans.

28. Procop. *Wars* 7. 38. 1–23, 40. 1–8; cf. the general situation created by other barbarian nations (Lombards, Gepids, Heruli) in the late 540s: Procop. *Wars*. 7. 34. 1–47.

29. Ibid. 7. 40. 31–45.

30. Ibid. 8. 21. 21–22; the raids were later renewed (8. 25. 1–6).

31. Exactly when Narses was appointed is not known. Since in the spring of 551 John and Justinian (respectively the son-in-law and son of Germanus) were in Salona awaiting Narses' arrival (Procop. *Wars* 8. 21. 6), Narses must have been appointed some time earlier, probably soon after Germanus' death late in 550 and so well before the birth of the younger Germanus in February/March 551: A. Lippold, "Narses," *RE Suppl.* 12 (1970): 874; cf. R. Browning, *Justinian and Theodora* (London, 1971), p. 202: "The winter months had no doubt been spent in discussing the scale and strategy of the campaign." In any case, we can be fairly certain that Narses was not appointed only in March 551, between the *Getica* and the completion of the *Romana*, as subtly suggested by Momigliano, "Anicii," p. 274, acknowledging the far from conciliatory tone of the *Romana*.

This forceful opinion must be taken as Jordanes' own. It occurs also in the concluding paragraph of the *Romana*, where he signs off with the admission that he has told the full story of Rome's rise and fall, except for the *instantia cotidiana* of the Bulgars, Antae, and Slavs: "if anyone wishes to know more," says Jordanes, "he will find in the consular annals that the story of the Empire of our day is worthy of a tragedy, and he will find not only how the Empire expanded to include new lands but also how it lost these lands through idle governors" (*Rom.* 388). Yet Jordanes was not the only one in Constantinople at the time to hold this view so strongly.³² Procopius, for instance, also believed that the Empire needed to stiffen its resolve, and he criticized Justinian for condoning readily the blunders of his generals (*Wars* 8. 13. 14) and for failing to replace Belisarius in Italy with a general determined enough to capitalize on the situation left by Belisarius (*Wars* 7. 36. 5–6).

Although not as enthusiastic for Belisarius as he had been previously, Procopius does betray a note of sympathy in describing Belisarius' recall from Italy in 547 (*Wars* 7. 35. 1–8); and in the *Secret History*, written at the same time as the *Getica*, he is highly critical of Justinian's handling of the war in Italy (6. 25, 8. 26. 6). Even more striking, however, is the enthusiasm for Belisarius demonstrated by Jordanes. For him, Belisarius is a strong and admirable general, whose career culminated in his consulship of 535 and who is consistently referred to thereafter as "Belisarius the consul" (*Rom.* 366, 373, 378; *Get.* 171, 313, 315). He was responsible for the Vandal victory and triumph in 534 (*Rom.* 336–68); he was able to control the rivalry of his generals in Africa "with his usual good fortune" (*Rom.* 370); he was on the verge of defeating the Persians when recalled to Italy in 545 (*Rom.* 377) and later was able to drive Totila from Rome in 547 despite his inferior numbers (*Rom.* 381); his recall to Constantinople was the signal for Totila to subdue Italy (*Rom.* 382). Such opinion is particularly unexpected since at the time Jordanes was writing Belisarius was officially overlooked and in enforced retirement. By then, too, Narses had been appointed to succeed Germanus as commander-in-chief in Italy and was assembling his forces; but Jordanes fails to mention Narses. This seems to imply that the former notary of a Roman general took the opportunity to suggest publicly that Belisarius had been unfairly recalled and was still the best person to lead the troops in Italy despite Narses' appointment, which clearly dumbfounded many in the capital.³³ How widespread Jordanes' and Procopius' view was in Constantinople in 551, and whether or not it was part of an organized campaign to influence Justinian (with or without the support of Belisarius himself), it is impossible to say. Nonetheless, it is quite possible that Jordanes was at least reflecting the

32. For sources and comment, see C. Diehl, *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1901), pp. 145–71, with M. Cesa, "La politica di Giustiniano verso l'Occidente nel giudizio di Procopio," *Athenaeum* 59 (1981): 389–409.

33. Procop. *Wars* 8. 21. 7–17 (including the story devised in the West to explain the appointment as recounted to Procopius by a Roman senator).

expectations of some, that as long as Narses had not yet left for Italy it was still possible to replace him. But when Jordanes was writing the *Romana* and *Getica*, time was fast running out. Narses and his army finally set out in April 551,³⁴ not long after the completion of Jordanes' works, both of which were written against a background of hardened Byzantine resolve and the expectation of military victory. In this atmosphere there was no room for any policy of conciliation. No wonder such a policy is difficult to find in Jordanes.

The consistency of opinion from the *Getica* to the *Romana* provides a thread to link the two works to a single author of strong views and independent (if limited) abilities and reduces the contrast between them that is normally interpreted as a reflection of two different *Hauptquellen*, Symmachus and Cassiodorus. Moreover, it must be emphasized that Jordanes himself saw the *Romana* and *Getica* as sharing a common purpose, insofar as both illustrate the precariousness of earthly life and fortune,³⁵ and that both works were the products of specific commissions, the *Romana* having been requested by Jordanes' friend Vigilius,³⁶ the *Getica* by their mutual friend (*Rom. 4 communi amico*) Castalius. Unfortunately, we cannot know what brought these three together and what they had in common. Perhaps they had served together in the army years before and were all now in retirement.³⁷ In any event, both Vigilius and Castalius clearly looked to Jordanes as someone with the ability, time, and resources to respond to their requests for extensive historical tracts. Jordanes obviously possessed a certain reputation as a historian, if only among his intimates.

III. CASSIODORUS' INTERPRETATION OF RECENT GOTHIC HISTORY

In the light of the previous section, it becomes clear that before assuming Cassiodorus' view of Gothic history is but thinly concealed in the *Getica*, one ought to demonstrate what Cassiodorus' view of Gothic history actually was. The fact is, however, that we cannot be certain of Cassiodorus' viewpoint in his *Gothic History* beyond his stated purpose of romanizing Gothic history (*Variae* 9. 25. 4). Still, it is possible to gain

34. Theophanes, A.M. 6043 p. 227. 16–20 de Boor; cf. Malalas, pp. 484. 22–485. 3 Dindorf. Here, as so often elsewhere, Theophanes is a more reliable witness to the original text of Malalas than is the Oxford manuscript that forms the basis of Dindorf's edition; note that the April date is also contained in the Grottaferrata palimpsest fragments of Malalas (*Frag. Tusc.* 4 [PG 85:1821]).

35. O'Donnell, "Aims," pp. 224 ff.

36. This Vigilius can scarcely be the contemporary pope, as is often assumed. Jordanes addresses him as *nobilissime et magnifice frater*, a form of address used for more eminent imperial officials but never for a pope (M. B. O'Brien, *Titles of Address in Christian Latin Epistolography to 543 A.D.* [Washington, 1930], pp. 36 and 149); and such a well-educated man from a leading senatorial family (*PLRE* II, s.v. "Vigilius 4," p. 1166) is hardly likely to have commissioned a survey of basic historical facts from someone of Jordanes' background. Further, if this Vigilius was pope, it is surprising that there should be no mention of him in the *Romana*, especially since the chronological scope of the history would have allowed it and since the pope's arrival in Constantinople in 547 was noted in the source Jordanes shared with the anonymous continuator of Marcellinus (cf. Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 5.1:xxix; Momigliano, "Anicii," pp. 271–73).

37. Friedrich, "Fragen," p. 436.

some idea from his *Chronicle*, written to celebrate the consulship of Eutharic in 519.³⁸ The chronicle is brief (even by chronicle standards), but it does include most of the main events in Gothic history from Alaric's first entry into Italy in 400 to the marriage of Eutharic and Amalasuntha, Theoderic's daughter, in 515. If we take the chronicle as a sample of Cassiodorus' opinions under Gothic rule and compare it with the corresponding passages in Jordanes' *Getica*, we have another way of testing the hypothesis of Jordanes' complete dependence on Cassiodorus: similarity would suggest (but not invariably) a Cassiodoran origin for that part of the *Getica*, while differences would tend to point away from Cassiodorus. The two works may be compared as follows:

| Item | Cassiodorus' <i>Chronicon</i> | Jordanes' <i>Getica</i> |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Battle of Pol-lentia | 1172 (p. 154): a victory for the Goths, who put Stilicho to flight. | 154: detracts from Gothic victory by concentrating on treachery and disgrace of Stilicho and describing the subsequent pillaging of Liguria and Aemilia. |
| 2. Alaric's capture of Rome | 1185 (p. 155): notes the clemency of Alaric's Goths. | 159: notes Alaric's clemency but then describes how Athaulf and his men returned and "stripped [the city] bare like locusts." |
| 3. Marriage of Galla Placidia | 1194 (p. 155): Goths return Placidia to Constantius. | 164: emphasizes the indignity and servitude of her abduction by the Goths. |
| 4. Vandals' expulsion from Spain | 1215 (p. 156): responsibility of Goths. | 167: diminishes active role of Goths by explaining that the Vandals were invited into Africa by Boniface and were well on their way when the Goths moved against them. |
| 5. Battle of Catalaunian Plains | 1253 (p. 157): a victory of Gothic <i>virtus</i> over Attila and his Huns; ignores the fact that Theoderic's clan (the Amali) fought beside Attila, not against him. | 209: more detailed and complicated, but Goths are less prominent; based on Priscus and oral tradition (e.g., he reports that Andag, the father of the very man Jordanes served, was said by some to have thrown the spear that felled the Visigothic king). |
| 6. Ricimer | 1274 (p. 157); 1278 (p. 158); 1280 (p. 158); 1293 (p. 158): a despicable character responsible for murders of the emperors Majorian, Severus, and Anthemius, and the barbarian King Beorgor. | 236, 239: an excellent and outstanding man; Anthemius' death is lamented, but Ricimer is not implicated in any way. |

38. Ed. T. Mommsen, *MGH:AA*, 11 (Berlin, 1894; repr. 1961), pp. 120–61, with O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus*, pp. 38–42.

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| 7. Aspar | 1291 (p. 158): disparages the "affectator tyrannidis." | 239: far less hostile toward him, "Gothorum genere clarus." |
| 8. Death of Odoacer | 1331 (p. 159): excuses Theodoric because Odoacer was plotting against him. | 259: less kind to Theodoric, suggesting treacherous double-dealing in luring Odoacer to his death. |
| 9. Battle of Horreum Margi | 1344 (p. 160): defeat of the Bulgars by the virtue of our Lord King Theodoric "whereby Italy recovered Sirmium"; ignores the fact that it was an open conflict with the emperor Anastasius—understandably, in the climate of delicate East/West relations in 519. | 300–301: more detailed account; described (more accurately) as a battle between the Gepid outlaw Mundo and the Roman general Sabinian, with the Ostrogoths coming to Mundo's aid. Sabinian's Bulgar allies are overlooked (understandably so in 550–51). |

A comparison of the differing accounts of the same events in Cassiodorus' *Chronicle* and Jordanes' *Getica* reveals two consistently divergent interpretations. In the former there is certainly a conscious attempt to explain events in a manner favorable to Theodoric and the Goths; the attempt is conspicuously lacking in the latter. Indeed, in the *Getica* there are opinions and explanations that would hardly be acceptable in a history commissioned by Theodoric to glorify his regime and pedigree. Perhaps it could be argued, on the hypothesis that Cassiodorus revised his history in 551, that these discrepancies merely reflect the changed circumstances of Cassiodorus, writing in the imperial capital a quarter of a century after Theodoric's death. Yet this would then be difficult to reconcile with the main thrust of that hypothesis, that the whole revised edition was designed to portray the Goths and the history of their cooperative relations with Roman society and court in the best possible light. On the contrary, the differences would appear to vindicate Jordanes' independence in the *Getica* and point away from Cassiodorus as an ever-present *Hauptquelle*.

IV. THE ALLEGED POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE "GETICA"

The hypothesis that Cassiodorus revised and updated his *Gothic History* in 551 is based ultimately on the belief that a specific political context shaped the passage in Jordanes' *Getica* concerning the marriage of Germanus and Matasuntha and its issue. Jordanes' account runs as follows (*Get.* 314):

Mathesuentham vero iugalem eius [sc. Vitigis] fratri suo Germano patricio coniunxit imperator. de quibus post humatum patris Germani natus est filius idem Germanus. in quo coniuncta Aniciorum genus cum Amala stirpe spem adhuc utriusque generi domino praestante promittit.

It has been argued that because Cassiodorus alone could have portrayed Germanus as Anician, Cassiodorus must have updated his history in 551, to reflect the viewpoint of exiled Italian aristocrats in Constantinople who were pressing for a policy of reconciliation with the Gothic regime in Italy.³⁹ Yet that is to look at this passage in isolation.

Its position in the *Getica* is significant, not because it represents the culmination of a doctrine of reconciliation inherent in the work as a whole, but for the more prosaic reason that it is simply the last significant event to have taken place before the *Getica* was written. As we have seen, Jordanes has been describing events in Italy in a way that emphasizes Roman aggression and Gothic submission. The capture of Vitigis in 540 represented, according to Justinian, the conquest of the Goths for the greater glory of Justinian (*Get.* 313). Judiciously ignoring the embarrassing progress of events in Italy after 540, Jordanes ends with Vitigis' death in Constantinople, the marriage of his widow to Germanus, and the birth of their son, before launching into his concluding paragraphs.

The marriage of Germanus and Matasuntha was arranged by Justinian and, as far as both the emperor and Germanus were concerned, its primary motive was political; but it was intended not so much to reconcile the Goths to Roman rule, or the Roman rulers to the Goths, as to undermine the loyalty of Totila's forces.⁴⁰ According to Procopius (*Wars* 7. 39. 14–15), there was hope that when the Goths realized they were not simply fighting the emperor anymore, but the granddaughter of Theoderic and their former queen as well, their consciences would lead them to lay down their arms. This had actually begun to occur before Germanus' untimely death at Serdica in the autumn of 550. The marriage was not a sign of reconciliation but a careful ploy to erode the loyalty of the Goths with a view to their defeat and surrender. Nor can it be described as the "only hope" left to the Goths.⁴¹ There was now no hope left at all. Narses' army was busy honing its skills. Given the obvious significance of the marriage to contemporaries, there would be nothing unusual in Jordanes' describing it in strictly political terms; but although his narratives lead him to refer to the marriage itself on four occasions (*Rom.* 383; *Get.* 81, 251, 314), he refrains from any explicit comment on its political significance. In any event, the special point of Jordanes' account at *Getica* 314 is not the marriage itself, but its issue. On the baby Germanus rests the hope of the Anicii and Amali.

Jordanes does not describe the baby as the union of the Roman imperial house with the Gothic royal house, as he could have, but simply as the union of two venerable families. Obvious as it was to anyone in

39. Momigliano, "Cassiodorus," pp. 195–98. Schirren (*De ratione*, p. 90) proposed long ago that the *Getica* was a political pamphlet sponsored by Pope Vigilius and an Italian nationalist party to have the baby Germanus proclaimed emperor in the West and thereby to reconcile Roman and Goth. This theory has attracted no support; cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*², vol. 2 (London, 1923), p. 255, n. 1; T. Hodgkin, *Italy and Her Invaders*², vol. 4 (Oxford, 1896), pp. 568–69.

40. Bury, *History*², 2:254.

41. Momigliano, "Cassiodorus," p. 192.

Constantinople in 550 that the hope of a final Byzantine victory rested to a certain extent on the marriage's effect on the Goths, it was equally obvious in 551 that the fortunes of the two great dynasties rested with their offspring. So, just as there is no unique message of reconciliation in Jordanes' account of the marriage, there is nothing very special about the notion that the child Germanus was the hope of both families. That there was without Germanus no hope or guarantee of continuity for each family was not the case; it was simply that the infant's existence embodied the joint expectations of both. It is a nice personal touch on Jordanes' part, nothing more. It is not the statement of a poignant plea for reconciliation, but the statement of a self-evident political conception current in Constantinople at the time the *Getica* was written. Contemporaries were well aware that the marriage was no triumph of diplomacy but the product of brute force, and perhaps blackmail, on the part of Justinian—an opinion found not only in Jordanes (*Rom.* 273) but also in Procopius (*Wars* 5. 11. 27).

Indeed, appreciation of such political realities is evident in the very senatorial circles whose viewpoint Cassiodorus is alleged to be representing in the *Getica*. For example, by 549 Pope Vigilius, together with a host of other unnamed aristocrats, was urging Justinian to annihilate the Goths in Italy by sheer force of arms. The most vigorous petitioner of Justinian in this regard, however, was no less than the leading Roman senator—Flavius Rufius Petronius Nicomachus Cethegus (cos. 504)—and it would not surprise if his friend Cassiodorus too shared this hostile attitude to the Goths in 550.⁴² Certainly there is no evidence to discount the possibility. In any event, by 549 Justinian was no longer prepared to entertain any talk of compromise and reconciliation. An embassy from Totila, offering to surrender Sicily and Dalmatia and serve the emperor as a loyal ally, was swiftly dismissed. Justinian is said to have so hated the very name of the Goths at this time that he planned to obliterate it from the Roman world.⁴³ Later, in 550, Totila sent another ambassador, Stephen, to try to pacify Justinian and bring peace to Italy. So uncompromising was the emperor, however, that he refused even to admit Stephen to his presence.⁴⁴ Against this background we must place the marriage of Germanus and Matasuntha, the appointment of Narses, and the composition of Jordanes' *Getica*.

Jordanes therefore emerges from the foregoing analysis not as the bungling bishop he has often been taken to be but as a reasonably

42. Procop. *Wars* 7. 35. 9–11. It is dangerous to draw a tight net of friendship and common interest around the aristocratic and clerical refugees in Constantinople ca. 550. The letter of Vigilius (*Concilia* 9:357D Mansi) attesting the simultaneous presence in the capital of Vigilius, Cethegus, and Cassiodorus provides no hint of a relationship among the three or of a common attitude to the war in Italy; the concern of each was Justinian's "Three Chapters" edict. Similarly, since Jordanes is not an uncommon name, one cannot insist that the bishop of Crotone attested in another letter of Vigilius (*Concilia* 9:600) or the *defensor* of the church of Rome mentioned in a letter of Pope Pelagius in 556 (*Concilia* 9:718B) is to be identified with the author of the *Romana* and the *Getica*.

43. Procop. *Wars* 7. 35. 9–11.

44. Ibid. 7. 37. 6.

methodical and purposeful, yet probably self-educated, writer. This conclusion thus converges with the results of other recent research. Like Procopius, Jordanes was the secretary to an eastern general and learned at first hand about the Roman army and its enemies in the Balkans; like Procopius, he subsequently acquired a reputation as a student and narrator of past events, especially as a historian of the Goths, an occupation for which his background well equipped him. Jordanes' commissioned works suggest an experienced army official moving in the outer reaches of the military and court circles in the capital and generally sharing its horizons and viewpoint. He writes, apparently in a sort of semi-retirement after his *conversio*, as a devout elderly layman deeply mindful of the transience of earthly life but nonetheless possessed of strong views on the state of the Roman world and the immediate directions that imperial policy should take.

Sydney