



Reframing Empire: Byzantium and the Transformation of European Identity, C. 1400–1520

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Reframing Empire:
Byzantium and the Transformation of European Identity, c. 1400–1520

A dissertation presented
by
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to
The Department of History
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in the subject of
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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the social and political functions of ideas of empire in sustaining, subverting, and reshaping communities in late medieval and early modern Europe. Examining fifteenth-century imperial thought *in* and *about* the Byzantine empire drawn from rarely examined Greek and Latin texts, this dissertation shows how empire became a critical category in negotiations over political legitimacy and identity amidst the rapid reconfigurations of the Mediterranean world c. 1400–1520. In the dying Byzantine empire, oratorical celebrations of imperial authority bound elites together, but also magnified deep social and political divisions over church politics, imperial territory, and succession, hastening the empire's demise. This Byzantine oratory, performed at the imperial court, also provided tools for the reconceptualization of Byzantium's historical and ideological relationship to Latin Christendom and the Holy Roman Empire after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottomans. This cataclysmic event prompted intellectuals in the Latin West to use Byzantium's imperial past to justify contemporary programs of religious warfare, European harmony, and universal kingship. But it also sparked profound revisions to existing concepts of Europe, Christendom and the Roman Empire, granting the previously marginalized Byzantium a place at the heart of these cohering conceptions of community.

By examining the way ideologies of empire drew communal and cultural boundaries, this study connects political developments in the eastern Mediterranean with late medieval and

humanist political and historical thought, as well as modern scholarship on the formation of enduring concepts, such as the “West” and “Europe.” Drawing together the theories of empire articulated in Latin and Byzantine learned cultures, this dissertation illustrates the significance of the Byzantine legacy in the ideologies and politics of early modern Europe. Even more, it shows a new facet of empire’s persistent utility to thinkers and political actors in the late medieval and early modern world, even at a time when imperial states and institutions appeared decrepit. Reframing empire not only animated the politics of exploration, conquest, and state formation in early modernity. It also marked a critical development in the European colonization of a complex medieval past, and sketched the cultural frontiers of the European community that would persist into modernity.

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To Heather

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Abbreviations

<i>Annales Ecclesiastici</i>	Odorico Rinaldi, <i>Annales Ecclesiastici: ab anno quo desinit Card. Caes. Baronius</i> , 9 vols. [numbered 13–21] (Cologne, 1694–1727)
Anonymous, <i>Address to Demetrios Palaiologos</i>	Ἰωσήφ προσφωνημάτων πρὸς τὸν εὐσεβέστατον καὶ θεϊότατον δεσπότην ἀτάδελφον τοῦ κραταιοῦ καὶ ἀγίου ἡμῶν αὐθέντου καὶ βασιλέως κῆρ Δημήτριον τὸν Παλαιολόγον, in LPP IV, 211–20
Anonymous, <i>Encomium on John VIII</i>	Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην τὸν Παλαιολόγον, in LPP III, 292–308
Anonymous, <i>Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII</i>	Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν μέγαν βασιλέα κῆρ Μανουὴλ τὸν Παλαιολόγον καὶ τὸν εὐσεβέστατον αὐτοκράτορα τὸν κραταῖον καὶ ἅγιον ἡμῶν αὐθέντην καὶ βασιλέα κῆρ Ἰωάννην τὸν Παλαιολόγον, in LPP III, 200–22
Apostoles, <i>Oration to Constantine XI</i>	Μιχαὴλ Ἀποστόλη τοῦ Βυζαντίου προσφώνημα πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Παλαιολόγον ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ καὶ ὁμολογία τῆς αὐτοῦ πίστεως ὑποπτευομένης, in LPP IV, 83–87
Apostoles, “Die Ansprache”	Rudolf S. Stefec, “Die Ansprache des Michael Apostoles an Kaiser Friedrich III.,” <i>Byzantion</i> 84 (2014): 371–83
Argyropoulos, <i>Basilikos</i>	Ἰωάννου διδασκάλου τοῦ Ἀργυροπούλου βασιλικὸς ἢ περὶ βασιλείας πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Παλαιολόγον, in Spyridon Lampros, <i>Ἀργυροπούλεια</i> (Athens, 1910), 29–48
Beck, <i>KtL</i>	Hans-Georg Beck, <i>Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich</i> , 2nd ed., Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 12. Abt., 2. T., 1. Bd (Munich, 1977)
Bessarion, <i>Address to Alexios IV</i>	Archepiscopus Chrysanthos, “Βησσαρίωνος Προσφώνημα πρὸς τὸν εὐσεβέστατον βασιλέα τῆς Τραπεζούντος Ἀλέξιον τὸν Μεγ. Κομνηνόν,” <i>Ἀρχαίων Πόντου</i> 12 (1946): 117–30
Bessarion, <i>Discourse to Constantine Palaiologos</i>	Βησσαρίων Καρδινάλιος Κωνσταντίνῳ Παλαιολόγῳ χαίρειν, in Mohler III, 439–49
Blemmydes, <i>Imperial Statue</i>	Herbert Hunger and Ihor Ševčenko, <i>Des Nikephoros Blemmydes Βασιλικὸς Ἀνδριάς und dessen Metaphrase von Georgios Galesiotes und Georgios Oinaïotes</i> (Vienna, 1986)
Chalkokondyles I–II	Laonikos Chalkokondyles, <i>The Histories</i> , trans. Anthony Kaldellis, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 2014)

Chortasmenos, <i>Address to Manuel II</i>	<i>Rede an Kaiser Manuel II. Palaiologos bei seiner Rückkehr aus Thessalonike</i> , in Hunger, <i>Chortasmenos</i> , 217–24
Chortasmenos, <i>Address from Manuel Asanopoulos</i>	<i>Begrüßung Kaiser Manuels II. Palaiologos durch Manuel Asanopulos</i> , in Hunger, <i>Chortasmenos</i> , 198–99
CIC I–II	<i>Corpus Iuris Canonici</i> , ed. Emil Friedberg, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1879–81)
Cotta-Schönberg I–XII	<i>The Collected Orations of Enea Sylvio Piccolomini</i> , ed. and trans. Michael von Cotta-Schönberg, 12 vols. https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr
Cuspinianus, <i>De caesaribus</i>	Johannes Cuspinianus, <i>De caesaribus atque imperatoribus Romanis opus insigne</i> ([Strasburg], 1540)
DBI	<i>Dizionario biografico degli Italiani</i> , 90 vols. (Rome, 1960–)
Demetrios Chrysoloras	<i>Σύγκρισις παλαιῶν ἀρχόντων καὶ νεοῦ τοῦ νῦν αὐτοκράτορος</i> , in LPP III, 222–45
Dendrinios, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration”	Charalambos Dendrinios, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration on Manuel II Palaeologus († 1425),” in <i>Porphyrogenita. Essays on the history and literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in honour of J. Chrysostomides</i> , ed. C. Dendrinios, J. Harris, E. Charvalia-Crook, J. Herrin (Aldershot, 2003), 423–56
Dokeianos, <i>Address to Constantine Palaiologos</i>	<i>Ἰωάννου τοῦ ΔοκεIANOῦ Προσφωνημάτων τῷ πανευτυχεστάτῳ καὶ ἀγίῳ ἡμῶν αὐθέντῃ δεσπότη κυρίῳ Κωνσταντίνῳ τῷ Παλαιολόγῳ</i> , in LPP I, 232–35
Dokeianos, <i>Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos</i>	<i>Ἰωάννου τοῦ ΔοκεIANOῦ εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Παλαιολόγον</i> , in LPP I, 221–31
Dokeianos, <i>Letters to Constantine Palaiologos</i>	<i>Ἐπιστολαὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ ΔοκεIANOῦ</i> , in LPP I, 241–48
Dokeianos, <i>Address to Theodore Palaiologos</i>	<i>Ἰωάννου τοῦ ΔοκεIANOῦ Προσφωνημάτων τῷ κρατίστῳ καὶ ἀγίῳ ἡμῶν αὐθέντῃ καὶ δεσπότη Θεοδώρῳ τῷ πορφυρογεννήτῳ</i> , in LPP I, 236–38
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
Doukas	Doukas, <i>Istoria turco-bizantină (1341–1462)</i> , ed. Vasile Grecu (Bucharest, 1958)

Dio Chrysostom	<i>Dione di Prusa: orazioni I-II-III-IV (Sulla regalità), orazione LXII, (Sulla regalità e sulla tirannide): edizione critica, traduzione e commento</i> , ed. and trans. Gustavo Vagnone (Rome, 2012)
Dölger, <i>Regesten</i>	<i>Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches</i> , ed. Franz Dölger, vol. 5, 1341–1453 (Munich, 1965)
<i>EHB</i> I–III	<i>Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh Through the Fifteenth Century</i> , ed. Angeliki E. Laiou et al., 3 vols. (Washington, DC, 2002)
Eugenikos, <i>Discourse to Constantine XI</i>	Τοῦ νομοφύλακος Ἰωάννου διακόνου τοῦ Εὐγενικοῦ εἰς τὸν βασιλέα κῆρ Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Παλαιολόγον, in <i>LPP</i> I, 123–34
Gautier, <i>Théophylacte d'Achrida</i>	<i>Théophylacte d'Achrida. Discours, Traités, Poésies</i> , ed. Paul Gautier, vol. 1 (Thessaloniki, 1980)
Isidore, “Begrüßungsansprache”	Herbert Hunger and Herbert Wurm, “Isidoros von Kiev, Begrüßungsansprache an Kaiser Sigismund (Ulm, 24. Juni 1434),” <i>Römische Historische Mitteilungen</i> 38 (1996): 143–80
Isidore, <i>Encomium on John VIII</i>	Ἀγωνόμεον Πανηγυρικός εἰς Μανουήλ καὶ Ἰωάννην Ἡ' Παλαιολόγους, in <i>LPP</i> III, 132–99
Hunger, <i>Chortasmenos</i>	Herbert Hunger, <i>Johannes Chortasmenos (ca. 1370-ca. 1436/37): Briefe, Gedichte und kleine Schriften</i> (Vienna, 1969)
Hunger I–II	Herbert Hunger, <i>Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner</i> , 2 vols., Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 12. Abt., 5. T., 1–2. Bde (Munich, 1978)
<i>JKSAK</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses</i>
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischer Byzantinistik</i>
LdM	<i>Lexikon des Mittelalters</i> , ed. Robert Auty et al., 10 vols. (Munich, 1977–99)
<i>LPP</i> I–IV	Spyridon Lampros, <i>Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά</i> , 4 vols. (Athens, 1912–26)
Mansi I–III	Giovanni Domenico Mansi, <i>Pii II. P. M. olim Aeneae Sylvi Piccolomini Senensis Orationes Politicae et Ecclesiasticae</i> , 3 vols. (Lucca, 1755–59)

Manuel II, <i>Letters</i>	George T. Dennis, <i>The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus: Text, Translation and Notes</i> , Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 8 (Washington, DC, 1977)
Manuel II, <i>Oration to Thessalonians</i>	Basil Laourdas, “Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς τοὺς Θεσσαλονικεῖς, ἡνίκα ἐπολιορκοῦντο,” <i>Makedonika</i> 3 (1956): 290–307
Manuel II, <i>Precepts</i>	<i>Praecepta Educationis Regiae</i> , in PG 156, col. 313–84
Manuel Chrysoloras, <i>Epistolary Discourse</i>	C.G. Patrinelis and D.Z. Sofianos, <i>Manuel Chrysoloras and his Discourse Addressed to the Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus</i> (Athens, 2001)
Matschke-Tinnefeld	Klaus-Peter Matschke and Franz Hermann Tinnefeld, <i>Die Gesellschaft im späten Byzanz: Gruppen, Strukturen und Lebensformen</i> (Cologne, 2001)
Metochites, <i>Miscellanea</i>	G. Müller and Theodor Kiessling, <i>Miscellanea philosophica et historica</i> (Leipzig, 1821; repr. Amsterdam, 1966)
MGH AA Briefe d. spät. MA Epp. SS SS rer. Germ. N.S. SS rer. Germ. Staatsschriften QQ zur Geistesgesch.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auctores antiquissimi Briefe des späteren Mittelalters Epistolae (in Quart) Scriptores (in Folio) Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova series Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi Staatsschriften des späteren Mittelalters Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters
Mohler I–III	Ludwig Mohler, <i>Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist, und Staatsmann: Funde und Forschungen</i> , 3 vols. (Paderborn, 1923–42; repr. Aalen, 1967)
NDB	<i>Neue deutsche Biographie</i> , 26 vols. (Berlin, 1953–)
NE	<i>Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων</i>
ODB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , ed. Alexander Kazhdan et al., 3 vols. (Oxford, 1991)
OCP	<i>Orientalia christiana periodica</i>
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completes, Series graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1857–66)
Pletho, <i>Isthmus</i>	<i>Τοῦ Γεμιστοῦ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Ἰωάννην Η΄ Παλαιολόγον</i> , in LPP III, 309–12

Pletho, <i>On the Peloponnese to Manuel II</i>	Γεωργίου Γεμιστοῦ εἰς Μανουὴλ Παλαιολόγον περὶ τῶν ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ πραγμάτων, in LPP III, 246–65
Pletho, <i>On the Peloponnese to Theodore</i>	Πλήθωνος συμβουλευτικὸς πρὸς τὸν δεσπότην Θεόδωρον περὶ τῆς Πελοποννήσου, in LPP IV, 113–35
Pletho, <i>Address to Demetrios Palaiologos</i>	Πλήθωνος προσφωνημάτων πρὸς τὸν κτρ Δημήτριον δεσπότην τὸν πορφυρογέννητον, in LPP IV, 207–10
Polemis, “Two Praises of Emperor Manuel II”	Ioannis Polemis, “Two Praises of the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos: Problems of Authorship,” <i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i> 103.2 (2010): 707–10
PLP	<i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , ed. Erich Trapp, 12 vols. (Vienna, 1976–96)
Pseudo-Kodinos	Ruth Macrides, J.A. Munitiz, Dimitar Angelov, <i>Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies</i> (Farnham, Surrey, 2013)
REB	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
RGK I–III	<i>Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten, 800–1600</i> , 3 vols. (Vienna, 1981–)
RI XIV	J. F. Böhmer, <i>Regesta Imperii XIV. Ausgewählte Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Maximilian I. 1493–1519</i> , ed. Hermann Wiesflecker, Ingeborg Wiesflecker-Friedhuber, Manfred Hollegger, 4 vols. (Cologne and Böhlau, 1990–2004); subsequent entries published online at http://www.regesta-imperii.de .
RTA 19/1–3	<i>Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Ältere Reihe.</i> 19/1 = <i>Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III. Fünfte Abteilung: 1453–1454</i> , ed. Helmut Weigel and Henny Grüneisen (Göttingen, 1969). 19/2 = <i>Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III. Fünfte Abteilung: Reichsversammlung zu Frankfurt 1454</i> , ed. Johannes Helmrath (Munich, 2013). 19/3 = <i>Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III. Fünfte Abteilung: Reichsversammlung zu Wiener Neustadt 1455</i> , ed. Gabriele Annas (Munich, 2013).

Scholarios I–VIII	<i>Oeuvres complètes de George Scholarios</i> , ed. Louis Petit, X.A. Sideridès, Martin Jugie, 8 vols. (Paris, 1928–1936)
Setton I–IV	Kenneth Setton, <i>The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571</i> , 4 vols. (Philadelphia, 1976–1984)
Sphrantzes	<i>Memorii: 1401-1477; în anexă, Pseudo-Phrantzes, Macarie Mellisenos, Cronica: 1258-1481</i> , ed. Vasile Grecu (Bucharest, 1966)
Synesios	<i>Περὶ βασιλείας</i> , in <i>Synesii Cyrenensis Hymni et Opuscula</i> , ed. Nicolaus Terzaghi, vol. 2 (Rome, 1944), 5–62
Syropoulos	<i>Les mémoires du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438–1439)</i> , ed. and trans. Vitalien Laurent (Paris, 1971)
Themistios I–III	<i>Themistii Orationes quae supersunt</i> , ed. H. Schenkl and G. Downey, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1965–1974)
Thiriet I–III	F. Thiriet, <i>Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romainie</i> , 3 vols. (Venice, 1958–1961)
Wiesflecker I–V	Hermann Wiesflecker, <i>Maximilian I.: Das Reich, Österreich und Europa an der Wende zur Neuzeit</i> , 5 vols. (Vienna, 1971–1986)
Wolkan I–IV	<i>Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini</i> , ed. Rudolf Wolkan, 4 vols. (Vienna, 1909–18) [=Fontes rerum austriacarum. 2. Abt., Diplomataria et acta 61–61, 67–68]
Zakythinos I–II	Dionysios A. Zakythinos, <i>Le despotat grec de Morée</i> , rev. ed., 2 vols. (London, 1975)
Zonaras	<i>Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri XVIII</i> , vol. 3, <i>Libri XIII–XVIII</i> , ed. Theodore Büttner-Wobst, <i>Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae</i> (Bonn, 1897)

Unless otherwise noted, all references to biblical passages refer to Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta: id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, 9th ed. (Stuttgart, 1935); Kurt Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1968); Robert Weber, ed., *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, 1994).

Introduction:
Byzantium, Empire, and Christendom Between Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Europe and Christendom as Illusory Communities

In the last years of the Byzantine empire, Pope Nicholas V (r. 1447–1454) wrote a letter to Emperor Constantine XI (r. 1449–1453) encouraging him to enforce the ecclesiastical union agreed at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439 throughout his empire, where many Orthodox still repudiated it. “I don’t know . . . if a place in the kingdom of heaven can be given to those who dissent from Christian unity,” he wrote menacingly, a sentiment he assured the emperor was delivered with a “most loving spirit” (*amantissimo animo*).¹ The pope’s claim that the Byzantines might not join other Christians in the kingdom of heaven was mirrored by others who argued they had no place in the Christian community on earth. The twelfth-century bishop Otto of Freising had opened the seventh book of his history of the medieval empire and church by reminding readers that though he had titled his work *The Two Cities*, in reality it was a history of one, “that is, the church.”² His narrative, however, told the history of only the *western* empire, and only *Latin* Christians; the eastern empire and eastern Christians largely disappeared after the ninth century.

Not only was there no room for Byzantium in heaven and Christendom; even Europe was better reckoned without it. In the late fourteenth century, an emissary from the French king argued to Pope Urban V that the pontiff should remain in Avignon; after all Marseille, not

¹ For the letter, see PG 160, cols. 1201–12, here at 1203A–B: “Nescimus . . . in regno coelorum locum dari posse iis qui a christiana uirtute dissentiunt.”

² Otto of Freising, *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. Adolf Hofmeister, MGH SS rer. Germ. 45 (Hanover, 1912), 7.Prologus, 309: “memineritque nos supra dixisse a tempore Theodosii senioris usque ad tempus nostrum non iam de duabus civitatibus, immo de una pene, id est ecclesia, sed permixta, historiam texuisse.”

Rome, was the center of Europe, “once you set aside Greece, which is schismatic nowadays.”³

Such views conveyed the widespread conviction that the Byzantines, as well as other eastern Christians, did not merit inclusion in the late medieval communities of Christendom or Europe.⁴

Both Europe and Christendom were manifold rather than monolithic categories in the late Middle Ages.⁵ Late medieval Europe is often seen as a cosmopolitan world on the brink of a new burst of globalization, pulsing with connections that bound polities and people together from Muscovy to Madrid. But whether organized around rite or language, education or literary canon, coinage, saints, or law, Byzantium stood apart.⁶ At best, the Byzantines were viewed as

³ See C. E. Du Boulay, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1668), 409: “dempta Graecia quae hodie est Schismatica”; cited in Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh, 1957), 75 n. 1.

⁴ Of course, such views jostled alongside those of philosophers and theologians who continued to assert generally the fundamental unity of humanity, or at least the Christian community. See the extensive examples adduced in Otto Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, trans. Frederic William Maitland (Cambridge, 1900), 103–4 n. 7.

⁵ See the reflections in Peter Burke, “How to Write a History of Europe: Europe, Europes, Eurasia,” *European Review* 14, no. 2 (2006): 235–37, in which he enumerates the “multiple Europe” models of early modern historians, though his observations in general suit the Middle Ages as well; see also Timothy Reuter, “Medieval Ideas of Europe and Their Modern Historians,” *History Workshop*, no. 33 (1992): 176–80, who argues the rhetorical ambiguity in the term *Europa* was the source of its power. More generally on concepts of Europe and Christendom in the Middle Ages, see Richard Wallach, *Das abendländische Gemeinschaftsbewusstsein im Mittelalter* (Leipzig, 1928); Werner Fritzemeyer, “Christenheit und Europa. Zur Geschichte des europäischen Gemeinschaftsgefühls von Dante bis Leibniz,” *Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte* 23 (1931): 1–28; Jürgen Fischer, *Oriens-Occidens-Europa; Begriff und Gedanke ‘Europa’ in der Späten Antike und im frühen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1957); Denys Hay, “‘Europe’ and ‘Christendom’ a Problem in Renaissance Terminology and Historical Semantics,” *Diogenes* 5, no. 17 (March 1, 1957): 45–55; idem, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea*; Carlo Curcio, *Europa, storia di un’idea* (Florence, 1958), 108–76; Federico Chabod, *Storia dell’Idea d’Europa*, ed. Ernesto Sestan and Armando Saitta, 2. ed. (Bari, 1962) 23–47; Jean Baptiste Duroselle, *Europe: A History of Its Peoples*, trans. Richard Mayne (London, 1990), esp. 180–87.

⁶ Chabod, *Storia dell’Idea d’Europa*, 35–43; R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London, 1970), in which he compares the Catholic church to the modern state; see also his unfinished trilogy which examined the spread of scholastic education as a unifying force in Europe: idem, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1995–1997); Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton, NJ, 1993); Anthony Pagden, *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Washington, DC, 2002). Despite some homogenizing trends in religion, education, and political practice, William Chester Jordan has argued that particularist tendencies were in constant tension with such “cosmopolitanism”: see “‘Europe’ in the Middle Ages,” in *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*, 72–90; in some ways, especially economic, Byzantium remained implicated though subordinate in wider European and Mediterranean networks; see Angeliki E. Laiou-Thomadakis, “The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System; Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries,” *DOP* 34/35 (1980): 177–222.

marginal to the Latin Christian West and an emerging concept of Europe: not quite Roman, not quite Christian, not quite European. The result was that the unity of Christendom in the late Middle Ages was an illusion, conjured in one hand while concealing the Byzantine East with the other.⁷

Yet in early modern Europe, a new Byzantium emerged. Though the state and its people had been conquered and incorporated into a rising Ottoman empire, a historical Byzantium surfaced in dense tomes of scholarship not as a backwater of the European imagination, but as a lodestone of legitimacy. The history of this Byzantium offered precedents for potent assertions of royal prerogative, state sovereignty, and Christian authenticity. This historicized Byzantium derived much of its authority from its reintegration into the genealogy of the Roman Empire, as early modern scholars often rejected the medieval denunciations of “Greek” perfidy and illegitimacy. This annexation of Byzantium from Europe’s frontiers to its heartlands culminated in the histories of figures like Montesquieu and Gibbon, who despite their moralistic disdain for the eastern Roman empire of Byzantium, never doubted that the state, even in its death throes, existed in the same arc as the empire of the Antonines—a historical scheme rejected, if only implicitly, by medieval historians like Otto of Freising.⁸

How did Byzantium shed the political and religious stigma of the Middle Ages to become ideologically expedient in early modern political and polemical discourse? What prompted the reevaluation of the Byzantine imperial legacy that transformed it in the eyes of western

⁷ As Kantorowicz described it, the unity of this world was an illusion that “dissolves when the dome of Santa Sophia rises on the horizon.” See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, “The Problem of Medieval World Unity,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1942*, III (1944): 32. The Slavic polities on Europe’s eastern frontier suffered much the same fate.

⁸ Charles-Louis Montesquieu, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (Amsterdam, 1734); Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols. (London, 1776–1789). The historical schemes in which late medieval historians generally treated the Byzantine empire is treated in Chapter Four.

intellectuals from a schismatic Greek state to part of the Roman Empire? Much of the development in Byzantium's relationship to and orientation within Europe in early modernity has been attributed to the rapid spread of Greek texts during the Renaissance and the desire for the Greek pedagogy necessary to read them; to the catalyst of confessional polemics over the history and form of the apostolic and early church; and to the politics of crusade and the menace of Ottoman expansion.⁹ But these pillars rose upon the foundation of a profound and unrecognized transformation in the status of Byzantium that occurred between roughly 1400–1520. Between medieval and early modern Europe, Byzantine and western intellectuals reimagined Byzantium's relationship to both the Roman Empire and Europe: from a small monarchy with an exclusivist ideology of its imperial authority to a historical partner in the universal and eternal Roman Empire; from an isolated and impoverished state on the edge of Latin Christian Europe's consciousness to the strategic and ideological key to restoring the *respublica Christiana*; from a schismatic and illegitimate polity to a charged repository of monarchical and ecclesiological *exempla* and symbolism for early modern states and thinkers.

This reinvention of the empire granted a Romanized Byzantium an enduring political relevance in an early modern Europe that fetishized Roman antiquity. As a Roman imperial state, its cultural artifacts acquired fresh didactic authority, leading scholars to discover or invent new relevance for Byzantine histories, ceremonies, and laws.¹⁰ But it also helped revitalize the

⁹ Notable contributions on the subject include Louis Bréhier, "Le développement des études d'histoire byzantine," *Revue d'Auvergne* 18 (1901): 1–34; Ernst Gerland, "Das Studium der byzantinischen Geschichte vom Humanismus bis zur Jetztzeit," *Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie* 12 (1934): 1–61; Hans-Georg Beck, "Die byzantinischen Studien in Deutschland vor Karl Krumbacher," in *ΧΑΛΙΚΕΣ: Festgabe für die Teilnehmer am XI. Internationalen Byzantinistenkongress, München 15.–20. September 1958*, ed. Hans-Georg Beck (Freising, 1958), 66–121; A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Madison, WI, 1958), 1:12–51. The best analysis to date, however, remains Agostino Pertusi, *Storiografia umanistica e mondo bizantino* (Palermo, 1967). A rich recent contribution is Elisa Bianco, *La Bisanzio dei Lumi: l'impero bizantino nella cultura francese e italiana da Luigi XIV alla rivoluzione* (Bern, 2015).

¹⁰ On Byzantine ceremony, see Nathanael Aschenbrenner, "Contesting Ceremony, Constructing Byzantium: Reading Pseudo-Kodinos in Early Modern Europe," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 72 (2018): 197–214; on Byzantine law,

category of Roman Empire from an anemic legal fiction at the end of the Middle Ages into an ideological engine for global schemes of exploration, conquest, and state formation in early modernity. The Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (d. 1519) had inherited from his father only the empty carapace of an empire, a state reduced to penury and devoid of ideological ambition; he infused it with new vitality through dynastic maneuvering that connected his scions with royal families in Hungary, Poland, Spain, and England. But he also granted the Roman Empire an ambitious vision for restoration, expansion, and domination. For Maximilian, this project was a European one, centered on recovering his imperial rights in Italy and the eastern imperial throne in Constantinople.

Maximilian failed to achieve either, but a renewed ideological imperative for the Roman Empire was his bequest to his heir Charles V (r. 1519–1556).¹¹ The young Charles’s chancellor announced in an oration celebrating the emperor’s election that the recovery of Constantinople would inaugurate a restoration of the Roman Empire and its unification under his leadership.¹² Elsewhere, freebooters invoked the Romans as models of bold conquest on new continents.¹³

see Bernard Stolte, “Joannes Leunclavius (1541–1594), Civilian and Byzantinist?,” in *Reassessing Legal Humanism and Its Claims: Petere Fontes?*, ed. Paul J. du Plessis and John W. Cairns (Edinburgh, 2016), 194–210.

¹¹ Scholars have attributed to Gattinara in particular a decisive role in the development of this imperial ideology: Karl Brandi, *The Emperor Charles V: The Growth and Destiny of a Man and of a World-Empire*, trans. C. V. Wedgwood (London, 1939). More recently, John M. Headley, “The Habsburg World Empire and the Revival of Ghibellinism,” *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7 (1975): 93–127; John M. Headley, *The Emperor and His Chancellor: A Study of the Imperial Chancellery under Gattinara* (Cambridge, 1983); Harald Kleinschmidt, *Charles V: The World Emperor* (Stroud, 2004), 81–83; Rebecca Ard Boone, *Mercurino Di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire* (London, 2014), 5–6, 21.

¹² The oration is published in Johann Christian Lünig, *Orationes procerum Europae: eorundesque ministrorum ac legatorum*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1713), no. 26, 214–15: “ut huiusmodi Imperium sub Carolo magno divisum, et ut plurimum a Christianae religionis hostibus occupatum, sub Carolo maximo valeat instauri, ad ipsiusque vivi et veri pastoris obedientiam reduci.”

¹³ See the Bernal Díaz’s account of Hernán Cortés’s speech at Vera Cruz, in *The Conquest of New Spain*, trans. J. M. Cohen (London, 1963), 131; on the way the Spanish mobilized classical Roman antecedents in New Spain, see David A. Lupher, *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2003).

And in 1572 Luís Vaz de Camões's Portuguese national epic *The Lusiads* imagined Vasco de Gama's describing Europe to an African king. Among the lands the explorer enumerated was Constantinople:

Hemus and Rhodope are subjugate
Unto the Ottoman, whose powers compel
Byzantium at his most unworthy will,
Unto great Constantine foul injury still.¹⁴

No longer a distant province, Byzantium had been rehabilitated from its schismatic medieval past and inscribed in the catalog of European lands under the sign of its first Christian Roman emperor.

This dissertation is a study in the imperial thought and identity of late medieval and early modern Europe. I investigate not only ideas of empire, but how these ideas animated political ambitions and conflicts, revolving around Byzantium's imperial identity and heritage, from the Bosphorus to Britain. At Byzantine courts in Constantinople and Mistra, at raucous imperial diets in Germany, within the walls of a prison in Renaissance Rome, and among the scholars and fabulists at Maximilian I's court in Vienna, I show how successive reimaginings of Byzantine and Roman imperial history, territory, status, and legitimacy led to the emergence of new concepts of Roman Empire and European identity by the early sixteenth century. Beginning with the ritual celebrations of imperial power in oratory staged in Constantinople, I trace this panegyric practice and the unanticipated consequences that followed in its wake: the spread of divisive disputes over imperial power, territory, and legitimacy; the collapse of elite unanimity around the emperor and his policies; and the ultimate demise of the state. But the political collapse of Byzantium fueled imperial reinventions in new venues. Prelates who regarded

¹⁴ Luís Vaz de Camões, *The Lusiads*, trans. Leonard Bacon (New York, 1950), Canto III.12, p. 84.

anxiously the ambitious advances of the Ottomans sought to bind the *respublica Christiana*, the Christian commonwealth, to a conception of the Roman Empire that invested Constantinople with restored imperial status. Others struggled to incorporate this imperial Constantinople into paradigms of universal monarchy, either Ottoman or papal. Finally, the Holy Roman Emperor himself, breaking with centuries of tradition, drew the Byzantine past into his own imperial representation, providing the guiding conceptions for a new history of Europe that put Byzantium at the center of the stage, and fused the concepts of Roman Empire and Europe into powerful new amalgam.

This dissertation makes several critical contributions to medieval and early modern political and intellectual history. First, it offers a fresh interpretation of the fall of the Byzantine Empire through the lens of fifteenth-century imperial oratory, a rich body of material that has previously attracted little attention. Second, it shows for the first time how western intellectuals employed elements of Byzantine imperial discourse to rejuvenate their own agendas of religious warfare, political reform, and universal empire. Finally, it examines anew the formation of distinctive, if not exclusive, sense of the European past, wrapped around an ideal of a unified Roman Empire, a conception that included rather than displaced Byzantium. Interweaving texts, literatures, and histories too often studied separately—eastern and western; Greek and Latin; medieval and early modern—I show how new ideas of eastern empire hastened both the end of Byzantium and the reinvigoration of universal Christian kingship, forging a more inclusive sense of European identity and emboldening its global ambitions.

A Transcultural History of Imperial Thought

The study of imperial ideologies has advanced with loping strides in the last decades. For Byzantium, many scholars long adopted an essentialist view of Byzantine imperial ideology, the *Kaiseridee*, which had changed little after the fourth century.¹⁵ Imperial panegyrics were little more than repetitions of fawning clichés drawn from antiquity, preserved in an ossified literary practice.¹⁶ If such views were right to emphasize important continuities running through Byzantine political thought, their unimaginative readings of imperial oratory have been discarded. Dimiter Angelov's 2007 monograph conclusively demonstrated the numerous ways such speeches encoded praise, admonition, and critique; orators, while promoting an "official ideology" that emphasized many of the elements of the old *Kaiseridee*—sacral authority, exemplified virtue, solar comparisons—nevertheless assembled the constituent elements in creative ways to celebrate the most relevant aspects of kingship, be it military virtue or dynastic stability.¹⁷ Angelov's approach explicitly challenged not only those who essentialized imperial ideology, but also what he called the "normative" approach that looked to political action instead of political speech to discern the norms governing Byzantine politics. This "normative" approach had been proposed by Hans-Georg Beck, who derived his sense of a distinctive Byzantine political ideology—more republican than imperial—from the evidence of political

¹⁵ See Herbert Hunger, *Prooimion: Elemente der byzantinischen Kaiseridee in den Arengen der Urkunden* (Vienna, 1964).

¹⁶ A view exemplified by Donald M. Nicol, who declared dismissively that, "His audience would have expected the familiar style. To have inserted any new thought, to have expressed any new idea, would have been bad taste and possibly dangerous." See Donald M. Nicol, "Byzantine Political Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350–c.1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge, 1988), 60.

¹⁷ Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330* (Cambridge, 2007).

behavior in the empire, an approach adopted by several later scholars.¹⁸ Even if some still dispute the most valid sources to discern *political* ideology (as opposed to imperial ideology more narrowly), Angelov's scholarship has ensured that imperial oratory is rightly understood as a deceptively flexible and politically responsive practice.

New studies have built on Angelov's insights to examine the rich material of imperial oratory elsewhere in Byzantium, including the fifteenth century. Both Tonia Kiousopoulou and Florin Leonte have employed imperial orations to recover the ideology of empire among the emperor, his court, and urban elites in fifteenth-century Byzantium.¹⁹ Kiousopoulou, however, sought to illustrate the emergence of a collaborative mode of government in late Byzantium, and thus treated the orations of the fifteenth century impressionistically rather than comprehensively.²⁰ Leonte's dissertation constitutes a much closer study of the rhetoric and ideology circulating in the court of Manuel II, but it does not examine the imperial oratory performed after Manuel's reign—a body of material just as large. This division works well for Leonte's purposes, an analysis of Manuel II and his role in the rhetorical revival that occurred

¹⁸ For the “normative” approach of Beck, see *Senat und Volk von Konstantinopel. Probleme der byzantinischen Verfassungsgeschichte* (Munich, 1966); idem, *Res publica Romana: vom Staatsdenken der Byzantiner* (Munich, 1970). Two additional studies that blended the two approaches and drawn on both political action and political speech are Hélène Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris, 1975); Tonia Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager: Power and Political Ideology in Byzantium Before 1453*, trans. Paul Magdalino (Geneva, 2011). See also the useful reflections of Paul Magdalino, “Forty Years on: The Political Ideology of the Byzantine Empire,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40, no. 1 (2016): 17–26. Beck's approach has gained a forceful new advocate in Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), who has argued that Byzantine political society retained elements of its origins as the Roman republic and has denigrated scholars' reliance on “propaganda” as a source for discussing political ideology.

¹⁹ See Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*; Florin Leonte, “Rhetoric in Purple: The Renewal of Imperial Ideology in the Texts of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos” (PhD diss., Central European University, 2012). For a nuanced analysis of the abundant panegyrics of the twelfth century, see Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge, 1993).

²⁰ And occasionally erroneously, when she attributes one of the anonymous panegyrics to Isidore of Kiev, an error possibly derived from a hasty reading of Hunger I, 131 n. 99; in any case, her analysis, while stimulating, lacks a comprehensive survey of these speeches, their contexts, and their political purposes: Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 123.

under his auspices. But it cleaves the early fifteenth-century rhetoric and oratory from the speeches and ideas that circulated after Manuel, ignoring the latter and eliminating essential context for the former. Nor does he orient his findings in a broader European or Mediterranean context.²¹ The orations of the fifteenth century constitute a distinct corpus, as I show in Chapter One, since the practice of imperial oratory emerged during Manuel's reign (1391–1425) from something of a hibernation and continued vigorously thereafter until the very last years of Byzantium. Therefore, a new examination of the imperial ideologies of these final decades must examine this corpus together in order to perceive the continuities, but also the striking ruptures that developed in the ideas and practice of imperial oratory.

Among western medievalists, the study of imperial thought has advanced as well, as scholars have detected the multiple concepts of empire in the Middle Ages, even if they do not number late Byzantine imperial ideologies among them. The study of ideologies of empire and kingship has thrived for over a century as a vibrant branch of *Geistesgeschichte*. Percy Ernst Schramm led a turn away from the flagging and listless constitutional approach to medieval politics that had dominated German scholarship before the First World War. First, he focused his study of medieval kingship on the symbolism of iconography, not as simply unadorned illustrations of textually articulated theories but as primary sources themselves. Later in his career, he wrote a pioneering series of studies on the intricate rituals and ceremonies of medieval coronations among early medieval kings like the Franks and the Anglo-Saxons.²² Extending

²¹ Exceptions to the lack of western engagement in Byzantine scholarship on imperial thought include Ekaterini Mitsiou, "Vier byzantinische rhetorische Texte auf westliche Herrscher," in *Emperor Sigismund and the orthodox world*, ed. Ekaterini Mitsiou et al. (Vienna, 2010), 27–39; see also the polemical but fascinating Anthony Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos: Laonikos Chalkokondyles on the Ottoman Empire, the Fall of Byzantium, and the Emergence of the West* (Washington, DC, 2014), 74–76, 216–20.

²² Percy Ernst Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio; Studien und Texte zur Geschichte des römischen Erneuerungsgedankens vom Ende des karolingischen Reiches bis zum Investiturstreit*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1929); his "Ordines-Studien" on medieval

aspects of Schramm's approach, Ernst Kantorowicz recovered ideas of medieval kingship from liturgy, art, and law, an idiosyncratic method that culminated in his masterpiece of erudition *The King's Two Bodies* in 1957.²³ Kantorowicz was one of the rare western medievalists intimately familiar with Byzantine history and literature, and his dense argumentation and footnotes, often worlds within worlds, disclosed his ambition to set western medieval kingship in a diachronic Mediterranean frame.²⁴

Anglophone scholars of imperial ideology have matched neither the ecumenicity of Kantorowicz's method nor the breadth of his learning. Following the rich study of the Carlyles, figures like Geoffrey Barraclough and Robert Folz have revealed the diversity in the concepts of medieval empire, while simultaneously eliding the connections and conflicts between eastern and western emperors.²⁵ Medieval empire, they argued, contained multitudes—but Byzantium was not among them. When Byzantium did appear, it usually signified an essentialized Christian imperial fusion articulated by Eusebius in the fourth century, or served as foil for Charlemagne's

coronation rituals are reprinted in idem, *Kaiser, Könige und Päpste: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 4 vols. (Stuttgart, 1968–1971).

²³ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley, 1946); idem, *The King's Two Bodies: a Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ, 1957).

²⁴ See, for instance, Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 69–70, 476 n. 56; this inclination, and his characteristic range, are both on display in his fascinating article, “Kaiser Friedrich II. und das Königsbild des Hellenismus,” in *Varia variorum. Festgabe für Karl Reinhardt* (Münster, 1952), 169–93.

²⁵ See R. W. Carlyle and A. J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1903–28), esp. vol. 3: *The Theories of the Relation of the Empire and the Papacy from the Tenth Century to the Twelfth*; and vol. 6: *Political Theory from 1300 to 1600*, 37–51, 111–27, 188–91; Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Medieval Empire; Idea and Reality* (London, 1950); Ewart Lewis, *Medieval Political Ideas*, 2 vols. (New York, 1954) 2:430–505; Robert Folz, *The Concept of Empire in Western Europe from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Sheila Ann Ogilvie (London, 1969). Additional summaries of medieval imperial theorists can be found in James Muldoon, *Empire and Order: The Concept of Empire, 800–1800* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2002), 1–100; Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought: 300–1450* (London, 1996), 67–82.

restoration of western empire in the ninth century.²⁶ The neglect of Byzantium in this tradition was implicitly justified by the concept of “western Europe” or “western Middle Ages,” applied selectively to include Constantine I but ignore Constantine XI. And while scholars have uncovered vibrant debates over empire even in the fifteenth century, whether in spite of imperial decrepitude or because of it, the horizons of such disputes remain the three-way conflict between Holy Roman Emperor, council, and pope.²⁷

The fifteenth century is shared between medieval and Renaissance—now more often early modern—scholars, and the latter historians have shown marginally greater interest in connecting a contemporary and political Byzantium (as opposed to an essentialized Eusebian or Carolingian Byzantium) with the intellectual currents and eddies which washed over humanists. Here Byzantium’s import has been explored more in the realm of identity construction and discourses of alterity than in connection to imperial ideology, however. Nancy Bisaha and Margeret Meserve have together shown how humanists used an arsenal of scholarly tools like philology and historiography to sharpen the frontiers between East and West, civilization and barbarity.²⁸ Humanists sought to make the Ottomans both a barbarous menace to civilization and didactic exemplars, hoping their ideological palisades would prove more impermeable than those of earth and stone. Moreover, both Bisaha and Meserve emphasized the fall of

²⁶ See Folz, *The Concept of Empire in Western Europe*, 19–25; Muldoon, *Empire and Order*, 46–63; Francis Oakley, *Empty Bottles of Gentilism: Kingship and the Divine in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (to 1050)*, (New Haven, 2010), 79–110.

²⁷ See J. H. Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire: The Idea of Monarchy, 1400-1525* (Oxford, 1992), 97–123; Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1250-1450* (Cambridge, 1992), 85–116; Francis Oakley, *The Watershed of Modern Politics: Law, Virtue, Kingship, and Consent (1300–1650)* (New Haven, CT, 2015), 14–50, dubbed this period one of the “politics of nostalgia,” though he limits his analysis to fourteenth-century thinkers like Dante, Augustinus Triumphus, and William of Ockham. See also the older study on Antonio da’ Roselli: Karla Eckermann, *Studien zur Geschichte des monarchischen Gedankens im 15. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1933).

²⁸ Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia, 2004); Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).

Constantinople as a critical reagent in hardening humanist depictions of Turkish barbarity. In this, they mark a critical development in the historiography on humanist historiography and historicism, which has accorded imperial Byzantium and its demise little import in the development of the genre.²⁹

These studies of Meserve and Bisaha provide an interesting contrast to the historiography on the history of humanist political thought, which has evinced little interest in questions of Byzantium's imperial relationship to empires ancient and contemporary. Some of this neglect derives from the lingering influence of Hans Baron and his thesis of "civic humanism." Under the influence of Baron's pioneering work on the emergence of humanism in Florence under the pressure of Milanese aggression after 1402, scholars in the second half of the twentieth century imputed to humanists a cultivated inclination toward republicanism, liberty, and participatory urban governance.³⁰ While Baron's efforts to read the literature of early *quattrocento* humanists in the context of political and social developments were admirable, it has become clear both that he overestimated the rupture between the humanism of Florence and its earlier forms elsewhere in

²⁹ Important exceptions in Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, 1948), 57, 72, 76, who traced to Theodore Bèze and especially Pierre Bayle the spurious theory that refugees Constantinople had sparked the Renaissance in Italy; and Frederic N. Clark, "Dividing Time: The Making of Historical Periodization in Early Modern Europe," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2014), who identifies the importance of the fall of Constantinople for periodizing schemes advanced by Conrad Gesner, Jean Garnier, and Christopher Cellarius; otherwise, see Beatrice R. Reynolds, "Latin Historiography: A Survey, 1400-1600," *Studies in the Renaissance* 2 (1955): 7-66; Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London, 1969); Nancy S. Struener, *The Language of History in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and Historical Consciousness in Florentine Humanism* (Princeton, NJ, 1970); Paula Findlen, "Historical Thought in the Renaissance," in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza (Malden, MA, 2002), 99-120. Even Pocock, who devotes significant space to examining the development of the *translatio imperii* in the context of late medieval imperial history, hardly mentions the Byzantines: J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Vol. 3. The First Decline and Fall* (Cambridge, 2003), 98-150; notable exceptions include Eric W. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981); William Caferro, "Dante, Byzantium, and the Italian Chronicle Tradition," in *Dante and the Greeks*, ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Washington, DC, 2014), 227-46.

³⁰ Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1955).

Italy, and that he oversold the republican commitments of figures such as Bruni.³¹ In fact, humanists offered “a flexible and persuasive language of praise and justification for the states and rulers they served”—including republics, principalities, and even the Holy Roman Empire.³² But Baron’s elevation of republicanism to the signal development in humanist political thought, echoed and amplified by figures like Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock, seems to have vitiated examinations of imperialism among humanists beyond Machiavelli.³³ Recent studies by Thomas Dandeleet and Alexander Lee have sought to restore some balance to this equation by recovering the vitality of humanist defenses of empire in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—without, however, finding a place for Byzantium.³⁴

In place of imperial ideology, Renaissance and early modern historians have identified the cultural impact of Byzantium on two aspects of the post-Byzantine world: the Renaissance

³¹ See the trenchant critique in James Hankins, “The ‘Baron Thesis’ after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 2 (1995): 309–38. Baron’s moon further waned under the influence of Paul Oskar Kristeller, who reoriented the anglophone study of humanism away from ideology and toward rhetoric, an approach that seemed to condemn Baron’s idealistic humanist: not a freedom fighter, but a “hired gun,” to use a memorable phrase of Hankins, (“Forging Links with the Past,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52, no. 3 [1991]: 511). On Kristeller’s view of humanism, see his classic article: Paul Oskar Kristeller, “Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance,” *Byzantion* 17 (1944–45), 346–74. A more recent contribution by Ronald Witt has cautioned, however, that Kristeller’s reputation for advocating an ideology-free humanism somewhat misrepresents his position: “Kristeller’s Humanists as Heirs of the Medieval Dictatores,” in *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Angelo Mazzocco (Leiden, 2006), 21–36.

³² Anthony Grafton, “Humanism and Political Theory,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge, 1991), 26.

³³ See Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978) 1:152–89; idem, *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 2002) 2:1–9 (“Introduction: The Reality of the Renaissance”); J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 1975). In a clarifying contribution, Eric Nelson has argued that “princely humanism” characterizes the vast majority of Renaissance political thought, but that this commitment galvanized striking republican and absolutist reactions on the margins: Eric Nelson, “The Problem of the Prince,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, 2007), 319–37. On Machiavelli, see Mikael Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire* (Cambridge, 2004).

³⁴ Thomas James Dandeleet, *The Renaissance of Empire in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2014); Alexander Lee, *Humanism and Empire: The Imperial Ideal in Fourteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford, 2018); several of the thinkers examined by Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire*, were humanists, including Piccolomini and Sanchez de Arévalo, who will be examined below.

humanist project of reading and disseminating the literature of antiquity; and the preservation of Byzantine cultural and political forms in eastern Europe states like Romania and Muscovy, as well as the Orthodox Church. For the former, scholars have identified Byzantine influences in particular on book culture, the classical tradition, and the revival of ancient philosophy.³⁵ Yet how Byzantines and Western intellectuals negotiated contested concepts, claims and identities has remained underexamined. In a recent contribution that only illustrates the fruitfulness of such questions, Han Lamers demonstrated that Byzantine intellectuals in Italy engaged in the conscious transformation of their identity.³⁶ Renouncing their claims to be Roman, these scholars presented themselves instead as ancient Hellenes—both to secure lucrative positions and to avoid antagonizing Italians who were jealous of their own connection to the Roman past. But we have no similar study of how Byzantine and western conceptions of empire collided in similar cultural spaces. Elsewhere, scholars—predominantly of Byzantine or Slavic history—have traced Byzantine cultural influence in the post-medieval Balkans and Russia.³⁷ The enduring Byzantine and Orthodox influence in these lands was indeed significant. Nevertheless, this literature reinforces scholarly consensus that the Byzantine legacy shaped only marginal European politics and cultures, corroborating and extending Byzantium’s adjacent and ambiguous status in the medieval tradition into early modern and modern Europe.

³⁵ See, for example, Kenneth M. Setton, “The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 100, no. 1 (1956): 1–76; Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice: Studies in the Dissemination of Greek Learning from Byzantium to Western Europe* (Cambridge, 1962); Nigel G. Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy: Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1992); James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1994).

³⁶ Han Lamers, *Greece Reinvented: Transformations of Byzantine Hellenism in Renaissance Italy* (Leiden, 2015).

³⁷ See Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance: Continuation de l’“Histoire de la vie byzantine”* (Bucharest, 1935); Lowell Clucas, ed., *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe* (Boulder, CO, 1988); John J. Yiannias, ed., *The Byzantine Tradition After the Fall of Constantinople* (Charlottesville, VA, 1991); on Byzantium in modern Greek culture, see David Ricks and Paul Magdalino, eds., *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity* (Aldershot, Hampshire, 1998).

I have sketched briefly two parallel traditions of historiography, one Byzantine, the other western, that lamentably have little to say to and about one another. In a way, this disposition reflects that of late medieval people themselves, as thinkers in both the Byzantine and the Latin intellectual traditions spent most of their time pretending as though the imperial “other” either did not exist, or at least in no way derogated their own imperial claims. But we know that such posturing was just that—Byzantine intellectuals did know that the German emperors disputed the legitimacy of their kingship and the claim to Romanness at the heart of it; western intellectuals understood that the Byzantines insisted they were Romans, yet cleverly deferred acknowledgement of that identity.³⁸ Both sides are captured in the Ottonian ambassador Liudprand of Cremona’s account of his brazen confrontation with Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (d. 969), in which the emissary defended Otto I’s seizure of Rome in 962. “Your power was dozing, I think, as well as that of your predecessors, who are called emperors of the Romans in name alone, not in reality.”³⁹

In following the pretensions of historical actors, we miss an opportunity to interrogate the studied disregard each political and imperial culture cultivated toward the other, to examine these mutually exclusive claims of imperial legitimacy, and to scrutinize the cultural capital associated with being “Roman” in the imperial sense that was so fiercely debated in the Middle Ages. A limitation of existing scholarship on empire is that it imposes on disciplinary frontiers—

³⁸ This is precisely the point of the clever Latin ethnonym that emerged in the late Middle Ages “Romaeorum,” which acknowledged Byzantine self-identification as Romans but displaced it from their own “Romanorum”: the letter from Nicholas V to Constantine XI enjoining him to persuade his subjects to embrace the church union was translated into Greek by Theodore Gaza; see the address (PG 160, col. 1201): “Ad Constantinum Romaeorum Imp.” which Gaza translated to the customary “Πρὸς Κωνσταντίνον τὸν βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων.”

³⁹ See Liudprand of Cremona, *Legatio*, ed. Joseph Becker, MGH SS rer. Germ. 41 (Hanover, 1915), 5, p.178: “Dormiebat, ut puto, tunc potestas tua, immo decessorum tuorum, qui nomine solo, non autem re ipsa imperatores Romanorum.”

Byzantine and Western; Greek and Latin; medieval and early modern—on a much more fluid and interconnected world.⁴⁰ We might ask whether these categories are not as analytically constrictive as the boundaries of the nation-state were in nineteenth and twentieth-century historiography. As the explosion of world and global, transnational and oceanic histories in the last two generations has illustrated, drawing historical connections that transgress such frontiers can yield fruitful new questions and answers.⁴¹

Crossing these boundaries will also help us see how the stakes of debates over Roman imperial legitimacy and history were more politically charged than they have seemed. Examining the Latin sources alone highlights arguments over the foundation for the emperor universal lordship or how he and the pope shared their supreme sovereignty. In reality, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III (r. 1440–1493) could not even retain his capital against the predations of petty Austrian lords. He appeared more a crow scrapping over carrion than the “lord of the world” as Roman Law and some medieval jurists bombastically insisted.⁴² But by looking at how Latin sources struggled to come to grips with an ascendant Ottoman empire in Constantinople, we see that arguments over imperial history and ideology energized schemes for crusades and conversion, ideas of apocalyptic monarchy and Roman imperial revival. The emphasis on the intellectual over the political has made medieval empire appear a sclerotic and antiquated category, watching forlornly the development of muscular new territorial states and burgeoning

⁴⁰ Not a tendency that has only affected scholarship on empire of course; see Anthony Grafton’s learned demolition of the divide between humanism and science in “Humanism and Science in RudolFINE Prague,” in *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 178–203.

⁴¹ Though initially global history was an early modern and modern preserve, even medieval history is experiencing a global turn: see *The Global Middle Ages*, in *Past & Present* 238, suppl. 13 (2018).

⁴² For the protocol, see *Corpus Iuris Civilis, I: Digesta*, ed. Theodor Mommsen and Paul Krueger, 19th ed. (Berlin, 1966), Dig.14.2.9; on the subject, Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200–1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition* (Berkeley, 1993), 8–37; Muldoon, *Empire and Order*, 87–100.

nationalisms. The universal, whether empire or church, looked in decline and the particular on the rise. But searching out the ideological conflicts in the fifteenth century, I argue, allows us to rewrite the medieval trajectory of empire, and to understand how early modern Europeans redefined its meaning. As historians have shown, empire's restored political vitality played a role in the formation of new regimes of conquest, domination, and exploitation across several oceans, as well as the consolidations of state power and representations of sovereignty in Europe.⁴³

My dissertation applies this approach to writing what we might call a transcultural history of imperial ideology, examining the conflicts between Byzantine and western ideas of empire in the fifteenth century as well as how these ideologies ramified further into the early modern world. Some elements of this method have already been employed with signal success. Anthony Pagden and James Muldoon have traced the impact of imperial concepts from medieval law in particular on the formation of ideologies and practice of empire in early modern Europe.⁴⁴ Richard Koebner, Thomas Dandeleit, and Muldoon have identified distinctively humanist conceptions of empire in the political, cultural and artistic endeavors of early modern states. But the same cannot be said for Byzantine imperial thought, which, judging by its absence from current scholarship, was assumed to have perished with last emperor in the Ottoman assault on Constantinople. As a result, Anthony Kaldellis with his customary provocation insisted that both Byzantine and western medievalists need a study of western views of Byzantine Empire, though

⁴³ Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1975); Richard Koebner, *Empire* (Cambridge, 1961); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven, CT, 1995); David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000); Muldoon, *Empire and Order*, esp. 115–50.

⁴⁴ See Pagden, *Lords of All the World*; Muldoon, *Empire and Order*.

his suggested title—"You Are Not Romans!"—only tells part of the story, as this dissertation demonstrates.⁴⁵

Therefore, this study examines imperial thought in and about Byzantium in the context of several historiographies marked by the absence or underrepresentation of the imperial east: the study of late medieval and humanist political thought, humanist historiography, and emergent cultural, geographic, and moral concepts of the West and Europe. In doing so, we can see not only how Byzantium's imperial legacy quickened late medieval and early modern politics, but how its heritage remained central to European endeavors to create a new sense of itself with the tools of scholarship and politics.

On Method: Empire as Ideology

In tracing ideas of Byzantine empire through Greek and Latin sources, I regard them as elements of imperial ideologies. In this dissertation I use "ideology" and "ideological" to signify politically motivating ideas: ideas that *intend* to do some political work. This definition is very similar to the recent explanation of John Haldon, who describes ideology as "a set of notions that has evolved to legitimate and justify a specific order—usually a political order."⁴⁶ Haldon's essay, in which this quote appears, engages Kaldellis's book, *The Byzantine Republic*, on issues of ideology, state formation and identity, and proposes a persuasive model for examining the ways historical actors

⁴⁵ Kaldellis, *Laonikos Chalkokondyles*, 219–20.

⁴⁶ John Haldon, "Res Publica Byzantina? State Formation and Issues of Identity in Medieval East Rome," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40, no. 1 (2016): 10. Also informative to my reflection on the history of imperial thought as a history of ideology has been the work of Quentin Skinner: see idem, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53; idem, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, esp. 1:ix–xv.

engage with beliefs and ideas by using the concept of the “symbolic universe” as the totality of cultural knowledge, which both informs and is reproduced by the social self-representation of actors within it. The advantage of his approach, as he explains, is that it gives historical actors greater agency in the ways they manipulate “a wide range of concepts and ideas in order to situate themselves with regard to others and the world around them.” Understanding the imperial thought explored in this study within this frame is critical since puts the political purpose of these ideas at the center of the investigation. I argue that the theories of empire explored below were central to the negotiation of real political power in the fifteenth century, not scholarly or linguistic games. This approach also explains the difference between the investigation of “ideology” and “ideologies.” As Barraclough and Folz have emphasized in the western medieval context, it would be a conceptual error to reduce the multiplicities of imperial ideas over the course of late medieval and Byzantine history into a single ideology or concept of empire. No such conceptual coherence existed. Instead, there were multiple visions, admonitions and recommendations regarding the emperor and his empire—some that carried the day, others that flourished and faded. To imagine otherwise would begin from a flawed, essentialist premise.

My approach to ideology does not always look to distinguish “ideological” from “rhetorical,” or conviction from convenience. In some cases, we can discern a difference between a purely pragmatic assertion and a deep conviction; in most cases, we cannot. Nor does it matter. Since these ideas were articulated with an eye toward catalyzing or justifying political action, the object of their illocution is unaffected by the relationship between the speaker’s convictions and his expressions. When Enea Sylvio Piccolomini suggested to German princes, for instance, that Constantinople represented part of the late ancient Roman Empire—a politically charged construct I explore in Chapter Four—the effectiveness of this plea, meant to galvanize support for a crusade, depended more on the disposition of the audience and the nature of the claim than

on the listeners' evaluation of whether Piccolomini *really* believed in the statement. Renouncing the value of distinguishing conviction from convenience grounds the study of these ideas in intended action, not ephemeral and amorphous belief.

Many of the ideas of empire I examine—perhaps even most of them—failed to achieve their intended political action. Rather than evidence of insignificance, these failures constitute one of the critical points of emphasis in the study. First, to examine only those ideas that won on the agonistic political and intellectual battlefield would be to construct a kind of teleology, one that would be analytically flawed. Second and more interestingly, the successive failure of the ideological claims made about Byzantium at the level of political action conveys the contingency and unpredictability of the historical process I recover. Fifteenth-century imperial orators in Constantinople celebrated the emperor as sole ruler of the providential Roman Empire; they did not praise him with an eye to assimilating imperial Byzantium to a new concept of Roman Empire or Europe. Such an outcome was only the product of repeated failures: failure to preserve political unanimity around the emperor, failure to mobilize a crusade, failure to actually reconquer Constantinople. Only at the end of this contingent series of attempts and their subsequent failures did a new Byzantium, a new Roman Empire, and a new Europe emerge.

On Terminology: Greeks, Romans, Byzantines

A word on terminology and categories is required. Kaldellis's suggested title for a study of western views of Byzantine Empire, perhaps only half-facetiously called "You Are Not Romans!", gestures to a terminological issue that this study engages obliquely—and one on

which Kaldellis himself has written extensively: the identity of the Byzantines and their state.⁴⁷ Byzantinists will hardly need to be told, though other readers might, that Byzantines had almost always called and considered themselves Romans (Ῥωμαῖοι) and their state the empire of the Romans (ἡ βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων). At the heart of disputes between westerners and Byzantines over imperial identity and affiliation in the fifteenth century was the issue of to what degree non-Byzantines accepted that Roman identity. Scholarly consensus up to now, more assumed than substantiated, has held that westerners—from the ninth to the fifteenth century—rejected a “Roman” Byzantium and instead viewed Byzantines as “Greeks.” Kaldellis has rightly argued that this constituted an ideological claim that cleared the field for their own assertions of Roman continuity. But more problematically, he has argued that this identification of Byzantines with Greeks continued unabated until the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ As I show in the dissertation, the actual history of this conflict was more complex than this account would have it. In fact, a characterization, perhaps equally reductive, of the argument of this dissertation would be that this ideological project among Latin intellectuals “re-Romanizes” the Byzantine state long viewed in the West as “Greek.”

Byzantine historians—though others are less distinct in their usage—today have almost universally adopted the ethnonym “Byzantines,” a term that emerged from a complex series of scholarly and political negotiations in early modern Europe. I (and most contemporary scholars, I think) take it as a neutral and non-pejorative shorthand for the otherwise accurate, if

⁴⁷ Kaldellis is correct in asserting that the issue has been undertheorized in Byzantine scholarship. On identity, see, among others, Gill Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge, 2008); Ioannis Stouraitis, “Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107 (2014): 175–220; Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*; idem, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), which I have not yet had a chance to examine.

⁴⁸ See his remarks on this issue in Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos*, 207–36.

cumbersome, description: “the medieval people who called themselves Ῥωμαῖοι but were nonetheless culturally and politically distinct from both the ancient Romans and other medieval people who claimed the identity.” Readers so inclined can read the longer phrase in places where I use “Byzantine.” In contrast to Kaldellis, a leading critic of the term and its enduring ideological baggage as one employed to deny the Roman identity of the Byzantines, I find it useful to distinguish between the ancient and late ancient Romans, and of course the inhabitants of Rome, and the subjects of the medieval imperial state centered in Constantinople.⁴⁹ I do not use the term “Byzantine” to deny their Roman identity; on the contrary, that element of their imperial ideologies will be central to this study. In the analysis below, I use “Byzantine” in places where a neutral term is required; but I also remain sensitive to the actors’ categories and their manipulation of political and historical identity, issues which stand at the heart of Chapters Four and Six in particular.

Structure and Sources

In order to answer the questions guiding this study, I contend, we must look not only at western considerations of the eastern empire in the fifteenth century, but the way Byzantine thinkers themselves wrestled with the impending destruction of their state. Therefore, I trace the ideological transformation of Byzantium in two halves, each drawing on different bodies of sources and incorporating published and unpublished materials for its two parts. Part I,

⁴⁹ For Kaldellis’s critiques of the term, see Anthony Kaldellis, “From Rome to New Rome, from Empire to Nation-State: Reopening the Question of Byzantium’s Roman Identity,” in *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (Oxford, 2012), 387–404.

encompassing the first three chapters, examines the changing landscape of Byzantine imperial thought c. 1400–1453, building its analysis on the rich corpus of imperial and princely orations (mostly panegyrics), complemented by the existing epistolary and historical sources of the period. In Chapter One, I assess the function of political rhetoric and imperial oratory in fifteenth-century Byzantium from the perspective of both orators and emperors. I argue that these rhetorical performances not only were a venue for the thriving economy of patronage and social capital—acquiring prestige among the *literati* and forming beneficial relationships with the powerful—but also fashioned elite consensus around the emperor and his agenda.⁵⁰ By engaging the audience in celebration of these elements of imperial rule, these orators stabilized the imperial office by cultivating elite consent to praise of the emperor, his political-metaphysical role, and his policies. Surveying the chief orators and texts of the period, I argue that the social context—including the profession, location, and patronage—of these orators was far more diverse than in previous centuries. With fewer connections to the emperor’s Constantinopolitan court and far broader experience with western courts and cultures, the collective profile of these orators illustrates the fading pull of the imperial center. Moreover, I argue that these figures should be considered more independent of imperial control than their conventional description as disseminators of propaganda has suggested.

Chapter Two examines the core elements of this ideological consensus that orators fostered with their orations, such the emperor’s sacral kingship, virtuous dynasticism, and the imperative to preserve social justice. Especially under the reign of Manuel II (d. 1425), orators used these ideological emphases to bolster political unanimity around the emperor and his rule.

⁵⁰ For the idea of “social capital,” a form of credit earned by affiliation with a group that allows the holder to take advantage of a network of relationships, I draw on the discussion in Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York, 1986), 241–58.

This recourse to oratorical conventions gave orators the tools to support imperial authority—but also to undermine it. As I show in Chapter Three, in the last two decades of the empire orators increasingly disagreed over contentious issues like the emperor’s role in ecclesiastical affairs, the relationship of Constantinople to imperial territory, and John VIII’s plans for imperial succession. Embedding contentious assertions within conventions of panegyric, orators began to use the practice of imperial praise to advocate divisive policies, eroding some of the stability that their oratory had previously forged. Under the cloud of uncertain imperial succession, some orators even celebrated the emperor’s brothers with the oratory once reserved for emperors, a dynamic which empowered these rivals and further weakened the tenuous authority of the last emperors. Thus, as I show in the conclusion to Part I, the ideas, rhetoric, and orators who had once helped bind the empire together came to collaborate in its ultimate dissolution.

Part II examines the successive reimaginings of Byzantium and its relationship to Europe and the Roman Empire among western intellectuals, whom I follow through a jungle of late medieval Latin literature, including oratory, epistolography, polemics, and historiography. The Ottoman seizure of Constantinople, I argue, ruptured the old channels of debate on the nature of Byzantium and inspired a gradual reimagination of the Byzantine imperial legacy. Perceiving an emboldened enemy on their eastern frontiers, important figures saw political opportunity in figuring Byzantium within a reconceptualized universal Roman Empire. Chapter Four draws on the Latin letters and political orations of two figures who struggled to mobilize a crusade after the fall of Constantinople. To make their appeals more convincing, Johannes Vitéz and Enea Sylvio Piccolomini revived a long-dormant imperial terminology, casting Constantinople as the *imperium orientale*, the “eastern empire,” as it had been called in late antiquity. This rhetorical gambit, employed in enormously popular crusade orations that circulated widely through Europe, enjoined audiences to imagine Constantinople as part of a

Roman Empire that encompassed all Christian peoples, not as the capital of a religiously contumacious state.

Chapter Five examines a bitter dispute over the Constantinople's imperial status preserved unpublished in a fifteenth-century Latin manuscript in the Vatican Library. Focusing on an obstinate Byzantine emigré and a papal partisan, I examine the arguments and political ambitions of these two zealots who put Constantinople's imperial status at the center of their writings that offered contrasting visions for universal Mediterranean monarchy. The Byzantine emigré, George of Trebizond, insisted that Constantinople's role as center of the Roman Empire made Mehmed II the new Roman Emperor and lord of the world by virtue of his possession of the city—a claim so provocative it landed him in a papal prison. Meanwhile, his warden there, Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, arose as his interlocutor and opponent, contending that only the pope could claim to be the Roman Emperor; but in doing so, he was forced to reckon with the claims of Byzantine imperial ideology that his medieval forerunners had ignored for centuries.

Chapter Six illustrates how disputes over Constantinople's imperial status, which had simmered among scholars adjacent to Europe's leading princes, boiled over to reshape the imperial ideology of the Holy Roman Emperor himself. Combining diplomatic records, genealogical studies of the Habsburg dynasty, elaborate visual depictions of power, and humanist historiography, I chart the profound revision in Byzantium's relationship to the Roman Empire and Europe that emerged under the aegis of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. This emperor, who had almost from birth obsessed over recovering Constantinople, abandoned centuries of precedent and medieval imperial ideology to incorporate the eastern empire into representations of his imperial image. The capstone to Maximilian's appropriation of the Byzantine past was a new humanist history of Roman emperors written by the emperor's advisor, Johannes Cuspinianus. Here Cuspinianus for the first time depicted Byzantine emperors as equal

rulers within the unified Roman Empire, erecting a scholarly armature for Maximilian's ideological vision and inaugurating a new frame for the European past, one that included rather than excluded Byzantium as part of an integrated imperial Middle Ages. These scholarly projects made the Byzantine past another thread that stretched from Maximilian to the first Augustus, from the imperial court in Wiener Neustadt to the triumphs and temples of ancient Rome. In doing so, this scholarship formed the foundation for Maximilian's revival of universal imperial aspirations, a project he passed to Charles V and Philip II—and other many others who sought new ways to legitimize their ambitions in early modernity.

Chapter One

Political Rhetoric and Imperial Orators in Fifteenth-Century Byzantium

Introduction

In the last decades of the Byzantine empire, political rhetoric and imperial oratory enjoyed a new spring. In ornate speeches of praise or panegyric before the monarch Byzantine thinkers performed their reflections on the normative principles of kingship, and the imperatives of the empire and emperor, who was supposed to model virtue for his subjects and rule them as God ruled all of creation. This form of rhetoric, the speech of praise, had been a part of Roman imperial ritual for almost a millennium and a half, and part of Greek political and philosophical discourse in the eastern Mediterranean for centuries before that.¹ Product of an accumulated tradition of over two thousand years that presented a comforting mirage of stability, fifteenth-century imperial oratory was like Virgil's Charon, aged but nonetheless vigorous and green. Century after century, orators had followed the same ancient models, praised the same virtues, quoted the same authors, and oozed with the same deference.

And yet, if the ritual, models, and language of oratory seemed immobile, the stage and the actors had changed dramatically. Over the course of several centuries the empire had dwindled from the dominant state in the early medieval Mediterranean to a second-rate kingdom whose monarch was compelled to provide military service as a vassal to the Ottoman sultan. Such conditions make the brief vogue for imperial panegyric in the fifteenth century even more striking. Part I of this dissertation argues that both the social-political role of imperial oratory and

¹ See the concise historical survey in Björn Hamsch, "Herrscherlob," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 3 (Tübingen, 1996), cols. 1377–92.

some of the imperial ideologies expressed in these speeches changed in the last decades of the empire, with ultimately baleful effects on the state. But before we explore the transformations in the late Byzantine ideas of empire, it is essential to understand the social and political role of imperial oratory, as well as come to grips with the orators themselves.

I argue that in addition to constituting an essential medium for social definition, patronage acquisition, and the inculcation of moral and political values, the political rhetoric that flourished in the last fifty years of the empire also constituted a venue for renewing political consensus around centralized imperial authority. Recognizing this consensus function is essential to understanding the political significance of the core themes of imperial ideology, and how orators deployed them to respond to the challenges the empire faced. These orators, as I show in the second half of this chapter, represented a diverse set of late Byzantine intellectuals: laymen and ecclesiastics, state ministers and lowly teachers, Orthodox fanatics and Catholic converts. Their diversity only makes the unanimity they forged around the core tenets of imperial ideology all the more striking. But it also suggests that regarding them and their rhetorical activity as propaganda, as scholarship has done uncritically, is too reductive for figures who had a number of different relationships to the state and the emperor. This preliminary inquiry into the role of oratory and the identity of the orators constitutes essential background to understanding the tenets of that ideological consensus, and how it eventually collapsed.

This preliminary task is all the more critical because the rich material at hand, the imperial oratory and rhetoric produced between 1400 and 1453, has not attracted much scholarly attention. Only relatively recently has scholarship begun to attend to the sophistication and nuance lurking behind the seemingly mechanical repetitions of imperial virtues and untrammelled sovereignty in imperial panegyric. As Dimiter Angelov and Margaret Mullett have argued, such speeches proffered advice (delicate or direct), reminded the ruler of his obligations,

or even critiqued his shortcomings by comparison with an ideal prince.² They also served the orator himself, as Niels Gaul has shown, providing him a mechanism for the accumulation of social capital in a world that prized linguistic sophistication and mastery of ancient literature.³ These excellent studies however have focused on extant materials from the fourteenth century at the latest. More recently, Florin Leonte has shown how Manuel II (r. 1391–1425) fostered a revival of rhetoric and oratory as part of project of literary self-aggrandizement.⁴ Leonte’s work ends with the reign of Manuel II, almost three decades before the end of the empire. Such speeches may have made sense when the emperor had successes to celebrate, as Manuel did; but what of the later decades? Were imperial orations merely distractions from the conflagrations engulfing the Byzantine world, the orators “so many ostriches hiding their heads in the sands of past imperial glories,” as Ihor Ševčenko memorably put it?⁵ As for ostriches, Ševčenko gave a qualified “no.” George Dennis, on the other hand, saw in the flourish of imperial oratory under John VIII and Constantine XI no acknowledgement of imperial decline, merely evidence of self-delusion.⁶ But to understand the relevance of such speeches, they must be read in light of contemporary politics; to do so requires an approach that both takes seriously the ideological

² Dimiter G. Angelov, “Byzantine Imperial Panegyric as Advice Literature (1204–c. 1350),” in *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot, England, 2003), 55–72. Margaret E. Mullett, “How to Criticize the Laudandus,” in *Power and Subversion in Byzantium*, ed. Dimiter Angelov and Michael Saxby (Aldershot, 2013), 247–62.

³ Niels Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die späbyzantinische Sophistik: Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten der frühen Palaiologenzeit* (Wiesbaden, 2011).

⁴ Leonte, “Rhetoric in Purple.”

⁵ Ihor Ševčenko, “The Decline of Byzantium Seen Through the Eyes of Its Intellectuals,” *DOP* 15 (1961): 168.

⁶ George T. Dennis, “Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, DC, 1997), 135.

claims made and looks behind the lacquer of convention to ask how and when those elements were applied.

This chapter begins by sketching the political situation at the dawn of the fifteenth century, showing how Emperor Manuel II marshaled his resources to restore some measure of centralized imperial authority to the beleaguered empire. Then, I connect those developments to the changes in the production and performance of oratory at the imperial court. Next, I explore the social and political functions of imperial oratory, arguing that its role in forging consensus stands at the heart of the practice in the fifteenth century. Finally, I survey the imperial orators of the fifteenth century and their texts, which will constitute the bulk of the material analyzed in the subsequent chapters of Part I, by examining the social, cultural, and intellectual trends they represented.

Political Recovery, Rhetorical Revival

Byzantium at the end of the fourteenth century teetered on the brink of extinction. The Ottomans, aided in their penetration into the Balkans by the divisive civil war between John VI Kantakouzenos and John V Palaiologos, had rapidly subjugated territories and princes from Gallipoli to Serbia. By the last years of the fourteenth century, the emperor Manuel II was imprisoned in his capital, while the sultan Bayezid I besieged Constantinople intermittently between 1394 and 1402. This cordon compelled many inhabitants to flee to the enemy and depopulated the city.⁷ Those who remained suffered from profound starvation and food

⁷ See the vivid description of the siege in Paul Gautier, “Un récit inédit du siège de Constantinople par les Turcs (1394-1402),” *REB* 23, no. 1 (1965): 106.

profiteering, conditions severe enough to prompt the emperor to depart his imperiled capital to seek aid at the courts of western European monarchs.⁸ The sudden appearance of Tamerlane in 1402, then, constituted a kind of *deus ex machina* salvation for Byzantium. Following several years of campaigning on the eastern frontiers of the Ottoman empire, Tamerlane defeated Bayezid I at the Battle of Ankara in July 1402.⁹ Not only did he humiliate the sultan, reportedly carting Bayezid around as a spectacle for the rest of his brief life, but his campaign and victory had the felicitous effect of raising the siege of Constantinople and distracting the Ottomans for several years with civil war.¹⁰

The empire that arose from this near destruction was disparate and decentralized. This trend away from central authority was older than the Palaiologan dynasty, but the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century emperors continued this development by assigning large territories to members of the imperial family.¹¹ An arrangement that made financial and administrative provision for imperial sons and brothers, it also brought administrative benefit to the emperors trying to rule fractured and dispersed imperial territories. This system, in the narrow sense,

⁸ On the conditions in the city, see Doukas, 13.7–14.5; Chalkokondyles I, 2.27 merely says that many died or escaped to the barbarians; on the prices of grain, see Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 152–53.

⁹ On the Battle of Ankara and its aftermath, see John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1969), 216–18; Klaus-Peter Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara und das Schicksal von Byzanz: Studien zur spätbyzantinischen Geschichte zwischen 1402 und 1422* (Weimar, 1981). For Byzantine reports on the battle and Bayezid's captivity, see Chalkokondyles I, 3.55–63; Doukas, 16.2–17.7, including the memorable story of Bayezid's first audience with the Tamerlane, where the sultan's arrival is narratively marked by the conclusion of Tamerlane's chess game with the move *šahruch*, from the Arabic *shāh māt* or “the king is dead” (see n. 97 in the translation of Magoulias); see also the oration on Bayezid's siege in Paul Gautier, “Un récit inédit,” 116.15–20, where the emphasis is on Bayezid's humiliation and mockery; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 163.2–3, where he is bound with iron fetters.

¹⁰ On the Ottoman civil war which ensued, see Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War 1402–1413* (Leiden, 2007).

¹¹ Ljubomir Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration under the Palaiologoi* (Amsterdam, 1988), 10–32; Maksimović represents an older school of historiography that analyzed the changing nature of administration and land tenure relationships as modes of Byzantine feudalism.

represented a way to allocate political, judicial and financial control to supposedly faithful members of the imperial family, chiefly sons and brothers.¹² Ideally, assigning appanages to imperial relatives would permit a projection of the emperor's authority to the most distant corners of the empire. Reality, of course, was different: the princes were their own men, and they and their agents often pursued their own agendas.¹³

In the first years of the fifteenth century, the two most important territorial allocations were Thessalonike, recovered from the Ottomans in 1403 and granted to John VII, Manuel II's nephew, who ruled it as "*basileus* of all Thessaly."¹⁴ The other was the Morea, which since 1349 had been ruled by a *δεσπότης*, a brother or son of the emperor based in the provincial city of Mistra near ancient Sparta.¹⁵ These territories retained great independence under the imperial princes ruling them, including exemptions from taxes and the ability to conduct their own foreign policy.¹⁶ This process of cascading authority did not stop with the imperial family

¹² These territorial and administrative allocations have been called the "appanages" (see, for instance, Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration*, 25–26), but John W. Barker, "The Problem of Appanages in Byzantium," *Byzantina* 3 (1971): 103–20, cautions against the use of the term, chiefly because these territories were never hereditary. Though for our own period, the distinction between a principle and a necessity vanishes, since neither John VII in Thessalonike, or Theodore I in the Morea, had any surviving male children. However, the evidence from the previous period strongly indicates that there was no precedent for hereditary transmission of appanages. See Barker, "The Problem of Appanages," 116–20; Zakythinos II, 46.

¹³ See the trenchant remarks of Barker, cited above, where he locates the origins of this practice in the imperial contests of the fourteenth century. As Barker notes, these contests belie the idea that the cadet was always loyal to his emperor; indeed, Manuel II ruled Thessalonike from 1382–87 in defiant independence from his father, John V; see Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessalonica, 1382–1387*; Barker, *Manuel II*, 46ff.

¹⁴ On the settlement and John VII's reign in Thessalonike, see Doukas, 18.2; Peter Wirth, "Zum Geschichtsbild Kaiser Johannes' VII. Palaiologos," *Byzantion* 35, no. 2 (1965): 592–600; Barker, *Manuel II*, 243–45; Nicolas Oikonomidès, "John VII Palaeologus and the Ivory Pyxis at Dumbarton Oaks," *DOP* 31 (1977): 329–37.

¹⁵ On the foundation of the despotate, see Zakythinos I, 94–284; on the first despot, Matthew Kantakouzenos, see Donald M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus), ca. 1100–1600* (Washington, DC, 1968), 122–29.

¹⁶ Tax exemptions rose to an epidemic in the fifteenth century; on urban exemptions and privileges, see Évelyne Patlagean, "L'immunité des Thessaloniciens," in *ΕΥΨΥΧΙΑ. Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1998), 2:591–601; Haris Kalligas, "Monemvasia, Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries," in *ΕΗΒ* II, 884–86; on rural exemptions and privileges, see Raúl Estangüi Gómez, *Byzance face aux Ottomans: exercice du pouvoir et contrôle du territoire sous les derniers*

members. The grant-holders themselves further distributed the authorities and territories granted to them. The historian George Sphrantzes recounted how Constantine Palaiologos (1405–1453), brother of the emperor John VIII and later emperor himself as Constantine XI, received the territory of Selymbria on the Thracian coast and granted it in turn to Sphrantzes himself.¹⁷ And it was not just imperial family members who further delegated the administration of territory. In addition to the privileges and dispensations offered by appanage holders, the central authority in Constantinople had increasingly turned over its claims to revenues and land management through various forms of land grants known as *πρόνοια*.¹⁸ As a result, control of the territories, resources, and revenues of the empire descended through a series of allocations to elites who were not always responsive to imperial authority.

In spite of the significant advantages reaped by elite holders of various privileges, the aristocracy in general was under enormous pressure. Where their wealth had previously been based on large land holdings, the dramatic reduction in imperial territory and productivity of remaining lands, along with the continuing insecurity of the period had devastated the wealth of this social group. Though a treaty with the Ottomans after the Battle of Ankara had restored a number of Byzantine territories, in general there was far less land to be owned by such magnates in the fifteenth century. The Constantinopolitan aristocracy had suffered particular financial

Paléologues (milieu XIVe–milieu XVe siècle) (Paris, 2014), 71–84. These exemptions were incorporated into a broader discourse about “freedom” (ἐλευθερία) in late Byzantium: see Dimiter Angelov, “Three Kinds of Liberty as Political Ideals in Byzantium, Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries,” in *Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Sofia, 22–27 August 2011. Volume I: Plenary Papers*, ed. Iliya Iliev (Sofia, 2011), 311–31.

¹⁷ Sphrantzes, 25.3.

¹⁸ The *πρόνοια* has been a subject of some debate, as older historiography (cf. Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration under the Palaiologoi*) took it as evidence of the “feudalization” of Byzantine administration. For an exhaustive review of imperial “pronoiarization” policies in the fifteenth centuries, see Mark C. Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium: The Institution of Pronoia* (Cambridge, 2012), 550–78. As we will see below, George Gemistos Pletho was a holder of an imperial *pronoia* for territories in the Morea.

diminishment by the strain of Bayezid's long siege of the capital.¹⁹ Consequently, aristocrats turned in ever greater numbers from land ownership and exploitation to commercial activity as the source of their income.²⁰ By the fifteenth century, the greatest concentration of remaining land-owners and aristocrats were living in the Morea, where conditions fostered resistance to the political authority of both the despot and the emperor, sparking frequent clashes between imperial authority and local magnates.²¹

Such forces were bound to collide with the aspirations of Manuel II, who strove to reassert centralized imperial authority, or at least fight decentralization, in the ebb of Ottoman power after Ankara in 1402. He tried to restore some economic balance in an eastern Mediterranean where Byzantine merchants were exploited by making diplomatic appeals to Venice.²² He rebuilt the the Hexamilion wall near the isthmus at Corinth as a project to boost imperial security and economic prosperity in the Peloponnese, a project that demanded new taxes.²³ In ecclesiastical politics, he sparked resistance among some prelates by asserting his

¹⁹ On the economic decline of the aristocracy in general, see Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development," *Viator* 4 (1973): 131–52; in Constantinople, see Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 172–76.

²⁰ Nicolas Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires grecs et latins à Constantinople: XIIIe-XVe siècles* (Montréal, 1979); Laiou-Thomadakis, "The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System," 204–5; Klaus-Peter Matschke, "Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money," in *EHB* III, 803–05, where he calls this group "aristocratic entrepreneurs."

²¹ Zakythinos II, 211–26, on the aristocracy of the Morea, which he divides between the interlopers—those magnates sent from Constantinople and associated with the despot's court—and the locals, who were ill-disposed to brook the intrusion of any outside authority.

²² Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara*, 225–29.

²³ See his description of outcome of the fortification and accompanying campaign to pacify rebels in the Morea from a letter in 1416: Manuel II, *Letters*, Ep. 68, p. 208: "What is more, they were able to sell their surplus at a high price if they wished. Even better, or by no means worse, they were able to fatten herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and their other livestock. For since they no longer lived in fear of barbarian incursions, nothing hindered them from making use even of the outlying borders, cultivating them as they wanted, be it in the plains or in the formerly accessible places" (trans. Dennis). On the campaign against the rebel magnates that he pursued on this trip, see Barker, *Manuel*

rights, which had apparently lapsed under John V, to name bishops for vacant sees.²⁴ And despite the notional independence of the Morean despot conferred by the appanage system, Manuel II remained closely involved in affairs the Morea, making trips to the peninsula in 1403, 1408 and 1415 to attend to affairs and ensure stable governance.²⁵

Against the background of Manuel's attempts to restore imperial authority, his patronage of the oratory that flourished once again during his reign appears as another tactic to this end. The tradition of reciting rhetorical compositions before an audience was deeply etched in Byzantine memory and social praxis, and orations to the emperor in particular were the highest form of this art. Naturally, the practice ebbed and flowed, and the social condition for this practice changed in crucial ways over the last two centuries of Byzantium. Under the Komnenians (c. 1081–1180), the abundant court oratory celebrated the emperor, with over seventy prose and verse compositions for Manuel I alone.²⁶ But the Komnenians' heavy emphasis on rhetorical performance in ceremonial celebration of the emperor did not survive the abrupt decline of the Komnenian dynasty and change of imperial venue to Nicaea after the seizure of Constantinople by Latin crusaders in 1204. For nearly forty years the emperors in Nicaea were rarely acclaimed in prose panegyrics; rather, these were displaced by panegyric verses recited

II, 314–15; Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 3352; Thiriet II, no. 1592. On the expenses of the campaign, see the testimony of *Mazaris's Journey to Hades*, trans. Classics Seminar 609, SUNY Buffalo (Buffalo, 1975), 84.25–86.6.

²⁴ Manuel II called a synod in March 1416 to settle his rights in ecclesiastical matters; see Syropoulos, 2.2–3; Vitalien Laurent, “Contributions à l'histoire des relations de l'église byzantine avec l'église roumaine au début du XVe siècle,” *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique* 26 (1945): 180–184; idem, “Les droits de l'empereur en matière ecclésiastique. L'accord de 1380/82,” *REB* 13 (1955): 5–20. For the *prostagma* issued at the conclusion of the synod, see Dölger, *Regesten* no. 3358.

²⁵ Part of the purpose of the trips was to settle the succession of the despotate after his brother Theodore I died in 1407. He appointed his son Theodore as despot in his stead, but the boy had not reached his majority. The second trip in 1415 coincided with Theodore II's advancement to full control of the despotate. See Barker, *Manuel II*, 290–317.

²⁶ Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 414–15, 426–27; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 30–31.

during the *πρόκυψις* ceremony, performed on feasts like Christmas, Epiphany and Easter, in which the emperor appeared on a platform between a sword and torch.²⁷

The recovery of Constantinople in 1261 led to the restoration of imperial oratory and education more generally.²⁸ Michael VIII, who acquired the imperial office by blinding and deposing his young co-emperor and dynastic rival John IV Laskaris, was in sore need of rhetorical celebration and legitimation. His new patriarch Germanos III duly obliged, dubbing the emperor a “New Constantine” and reviving under the patriarchate the office of official rhetorician, now the “rhetor of rhetors.”²⁹ This reform in bureaucracy and practice hardly outlasted Michael VIII, however; for although Andronikos II was a great patron of oratory and admirer of rhetorical eloquence, the thirteen orations dedicated to him were occasional pieces, written to celebrate martial successes and imperial coronations, rather than in connection with

²⁷ See the evocative description of the ceremony in Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 41–42. On the *prokypsis*, see the study in August Heisenberg, *Aus der Geschichte und der Literatur der Palaiologenzeit* (Munich, 1920), 82–97. The performative and symbolic characteristics of these occasions were afforded ample opportunities to compare the emperor to the sun. Nicholas Eirenikos, in his *prokypsis* poem proffered to John III Vatatzes at his wedding, compared the bride, Anna-Constance of Hohenstaufen, to the moon and the emperor to the sun, who “fills all things with his light.” Heisenberg, *Palaiologenzeit*, 102.68–103.72:

Ἔσθης, σελήνη βασιλῖς, ἐπὶ τῆς τάξεώς σου,
ἀφ’ ὧφους ἐξανέτειλας, σελήνη σελασφόρος.
ὁ γίγας γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος, ὁ μέγας Ἰωάννης
ἐπλήρθη σοι κατέναντι καὶ κατελάμπρυνέ σε,
ἐπλήρσε πάντα σου φωτός . . .

²⁸ On Michael VIII Palaiologos’s endeavors to restore the crumbling city’s walls, palaces, and churches and monasteries, see Alice-Mary Talbot, “The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII,” *DOP* 47 (1993): esp. 249–55. For the educational developments under Michael VIII, see C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries, 1204–ca. 1310* (Nicosia, 1982), 31–65; Sophia Mergiali, *L’enseignement et les lettrés pendant l’époque des Paléologues (1261–1453)* (Athens, 1996), 15–42.

²⁹ For these developments, see Ruth Macrides, “The New Constantine and the New Constantinople – 1261?,” *BMGS* 6.1 (1980): 22–28, esp. 27 n. 75, which lays out the titular variations on “rhetor” attested in the sources. Michael VIII’s appellation as “New Constantine” appears in *Georges Pachymérès. Relations historiques*, ed. Albert Failler and Vitalien Laurent, 2 vols. (Paris, 1984) 2:391.6–7; *Manuelis Holoboli orationes*, ed. Maximilien Treu, 2 vols. (Potsdam, 1906) 1:20.6–7; for other sources, see Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 23 n. 55. On the office of the rhetor of rhetors, see Jean Darrouzès, *Recherches sur les ΟΦΦΙΚΙΑ de l’église byzantine* (Paris, 1970), 110–11. Manuel Holobolos was the first to hold this office, reciting panegyric orations to Michael VIII at Christmas. For his three Christmas orations, see *Manuelis Holoboli orationes*, 1:30–98; these are dated to 1265–1266–1267 in Macrides, “The New Constantine,” 15–19.

periodic court or liturgical ceremonies.³⁰ After the reign of Andronikos II, even the occasional imperial oratory seems to have faded into abeyance.³¹ From the middle of the fourteenth century, orations were no longer performed on such occasions, or seemingly at all. Indeed, there are very few imperial orations from the second half of the fourteenth century whatsoever.³²

Only under Manuel II did imperial oratory, along with other forms of rhetoric and literature, emerge again. The years around 1413–15 marked a major transition in the production of imperial oratory and, not coincidentally, in the burgeoning security and stability of the empire; prior to that, though Manuel and other intellectuals exchanged texts and ideas, encomiastic rhetoric was rare.³³ But by 1415 Manuel had pacified the Morea, stabilized the empire's political precarity following the Battle of Ankara in 1402; outlasted John VII's rule in Thessalonike, a challenge to his sovereignty; survived a brief outbreak of the plague in 1409–10; and settled his sons, although still minors, in the appanages of Thessalonike and the Morea. Perhaps most important, the internecine warfare among Bayezid's sons had concluded and Manuel's ally Mehmed had emerged as a victor.³⁴ Before 1413–15, we can date only two imperial orations and

³⁰ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 42–48.

³¹ See Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 44–49; Ida Toth, “Rhetorical Theatron in Late Byzantium: The Example of Palaiologan Imperial Orations,” in *Theatron: rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter = Rhetorical Culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Michael Grünbart (Berlin, 2007), 436–37. On the various types of rhetorical productions for special occasions, see Hunger I, 145–57.

³² A few exceptions are the orations of Demetrios Kydones to John VI Kantakouzenos (c. 1347) and John V Palaiologos (c. 1371), and the oration of Manuel to his father (John V) upon the emperor's recovery from illness (c. 1389). For Kydones: Giuseppe Cammelli, “Demetrii Cydonii ad Ioannem Cantacuzenem imperatorem oratio I,” *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 3 (1922): 67–76. *Démétrius Cydonès: Correspondance*, ed. Raymond-J. Loenertz, vol. 1 (Vatican City, 1956), pp.1–23; Manuel II, *Λόγος πανηγυρικός περὶ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως νύξιας*, in J.-F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Nova* (Paris, 1844), 223–38.

³³ Leone, “Rhetoric in Purple,” 76, argues for 1415 as the break point. Only the orations of Isidore of Kiev (c. 1403) and Makarios Makres (c. 1408) stand as examples of imperial oratory from before 1415.

³⁴ Barker, *Manuel II*, 280–89; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 159–94; on Mehmed and Manuel's mutual affinity, see Doukas 22.4–5.

a few panegyric homilies; after 1413–15, we can securely date the orations of Demetrios Chrysoloras, John Chortasmenos, as well as the discourses of Manuel Chrysoloras, and the memoranda of George Gemistos Pletho. Whether the resumption of imperial oratory materialized as a consequence of greater political stability or in response to enduring challenges to Manuel’s centralizing policies is difficult to say; perhaps both contributed to the revitalized practice.

The Role of Political Rhetoric in Late Byzantine Society

Manuel II’s revival of imperial oratory gave the old functions of rhetorical performance restored relevance. Once more oratory provided a venue for intellectuals to acquire social standing, to earn imperial favor, and to inculcate young boys with the moral and political ideals of the educated elite. Of course, rhetoric had always been performative in Byzantium. Compositions were often read aloud in literal performances. Orations, letters and poems were meant primarily to be heard, rather than perused, and were composed with an ear to the melodies and cadences of the spoken language.³⁵ But rhetoric was a performance in other senses as well. It became central to social performances that permitted the self-definition of intellectual elites and the acquisition of social capital; it mediated the symbiotic relationship between monarch and orator, which exchanged celebrations of imperial power for patronage and preferment; and it offered a proving ground for the literary and political education of young boys (and rarely, girls). These functions have been well-documented in Byzantine society; another has received less attention. I

³⁵ Hunger I, 68–69.

argue that political rhetoric, especially imperial oratory, served to fashion consent to imperial authority among the empire's elites.

To begin with, rhetorical education gave Byzantine intellectuals a common foundation for their social identity. This pedagogy, which trained all young writers to consciously imitate an archaic idiom—chiefly idealizing Demosthenes and Plato—meant that there was a shared language as well as literary heritage for writers to work in. As Paul Magdalino put it, “[rhetoric] invited constant borrowing from the entire spectrum of literary learning: philosophy, poetry, history, theology, medicine and even law. For rhetoric was the point at which all other branches of learning met.”³⁶ This assimilating role played by rhetoric also made it the most capacious mode of discourse for the demonstration of erudition, and this demonstration was the final essential form of performance. Rhetorical productions, be they orations or letters, were an indispensable enactment of erudition in a culture where literary skills were the hallmark of the intellectual elite as well as the qualities that distinguished the possessors socially from the δῆμος, the rabble.³⁷

Thus, rhetoric constituted an essential part of a literary-educational complex that promoted a kind of limited cultural homogenization, binding the rhetorically trained together through a common education, which imbued them with a shared literary and moral repertoire.³⁸

³⁶ Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 335.

³⁷ Ihor Ševčenko, “Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century,” in *Actes du XIV^e Congrès International des études byzantines*, vol. 1, (Bucharest, 1974), 88–89; Paul Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism: The First Phase: Notes and Remarks on Education and Culture in Byzantium from Its Origins to the 10th Century*, trans. Helen Lindsay and Ann Moffatt (Canberra, 1986), 295–96; Matschke-Tinnefeld, 259–62; this social function could be affected through other literary activity as well, like hagiography: see Ihor Ševčenko, “Levels of Style in Byzantine Literature,” *JÖB* 31.1 (1981): 302.

³⁸ This dynamic bears some similarity to the function of classical education in late antiquity, as described in Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1988). Here the chief goal was the indoctrination of students with the *doctrina et mores* “through which a social and political elite recognized its members” (14).

One result of this common literary and moral training, and its concomitant social and intellectual regulation, was the sense that rhetorical eloquence was the *sine qua non* of social merit. Their friendships were deeper, their political *ethos* was stronger.³⁹ This socially demarcating function of rhetoric was essential to Byzantine intellectuals and *literati*. As one scholar said of the twelfth century, “It becomes clear that literacy is no indicator at all in our task of defining literary society: what is at stake is ‘rhetoricity’; the ability to understand and derive entertainment or instruction from . . . works written at the lowest in the middle style, and for most in the high style.”⁴⁰ The performance of rhetoric represented the quintessential activity for self-definition and representation in Byzantine society, for “performing” yourself as a member of an intellectual and social elite and for acclaiming or rejecting the membership of others. The performance itself and the social space for this performance, therefore, played an important role in fostering the socialization and competition among intellectuals for status and honors, which could be ephemeral, as social renown, or tangible, as court offices or titles.⁴¹

The court was only the most exclusive stage for this form of rhetorical performance; it could also occur before the patriarch or in the homes of aristocrats. This was the practice known in twelfth-century sources as the *theatron*: a gathering of intellectuals congregating to read and to

³⁹ Matschke-Tinnefeld, 245–46.

⁴⁰ Margaret E. Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople,” in *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. Michael Angold (Oxford, 1984), 183.

⁴¹ For a sophisticated analysis of some aspects of the phenomenon of rhetorical performances in the early Palaiologan period, see Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, 17–61. On the broader implications of seeing performance as a frame for communication, and its potential to transform social structures, see Richard Bauman, “Verbal Art as Performance,” *American Anthropologist* 77.2 (1975): 290–311; important for my thinking about performance and its social and psychological effects has been Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh, 1956), esp. 10–46. The precedents for the social role and value of rhetorical eloquence extend to the very roots of Greek literature. These are succinctly summarized in Herbert Hunger, *Aspekte der griechischen Rhetorik von Gorgias bis zum Untergang von Byzanz* (Wien, 1972); see also Christiane Walde, “Rhetoric,” in *Brill’s New Pauly*, vol. 12 (Leiden, 2008), cols. 530–49. For epideictic rhetoric specifically, see Laurent Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric: Questioning the Stakes of Ancient Praise* (Austin, 2015).

listen, to perform and to watch, and perhaps most importantly, to judge and be judged.⁴² This practice ritualized the encounter between a performer-rhetorician, an audience of those duly trained to appreciate his efforts, and the lord before whom the performance occurred, be he emperor, patriarch or wealthy patron. No matter what occasion the rhetorical piece ostensibly celebrated or praised, such as a wedding or a liturgical feast, the performance before the lord therefore transformed into a celebration of his lordship, an occasion which “thus combined the functions of examination, interview, lecturing, entertainment, literary publication, and much more besides, for it was essentially the ritual by which the man of learning paraded his credentials and aspirations in a celebration of the status quo in which he hoped to succeed.”⁴³ The performance of this ritual before the emperor, in the form of an encomium, was essential for entry into civil service and participation in the most elevated spheres of political and intellectual culture.⁴⁴

This practice, in the institutionalized form of the *theatron*, thrived even in the early fourteenth century. Thomas Magistros visited the imperial *theatron* of Andronikos II to defend a friend against calumny; his performance so impressed the emperor that he offered Magistros a

⁴² On the phenomenon of *theatra*, see Michael Grünbart, ed., *Theatron: rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2007). For the Komnenian period, Margaret Mullett, “Aristocracy and patronage in the literary circles of Komnenian Constantinople,” in *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. Michael Angold (Oxford, 1984), 174–80; on *theatra* in the Palaiologan period, see Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, 17–61; Igor P. Medvedev, “The so-Called ΘΕΑΤΡΑ in as a Form of Communication of the Byzantine Intellectuals in the 14th and 15th Centuries,” in *Η ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ ΣΤΟ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΟ*, ed. N. G. Moschonas (Athens, 1993), 227–35; on the practice under Manuel II, see Florin Leonte, “Rhetoric in Purple,” 70–78.

⁴³ Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 339. It is essential to note here that Magdalino treats this phenomenon of the “rhetorical ‘theatre’” more generally than does Mullett, who argues that there is no evidence that a *theatron* in a specific sense was organized in the courts of Alexios I, John II or Manuel I (Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage,” 174). Magdalino’s essential thrust, however, is surely correct, insofar as whether the occasions of oratory before the emperor were called *theatra*, the social role played by the performance of rhetoric in them was the same.

⁴⁴ The position of the master of rhetors, an imperial appointee among the twelve teachers who represented the top of the educational hierarchy in Constantinople, took on the role of annual Epiphany orations some time in the twelfth century. See Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 326–27, 426–27; on twelfth century imperial oratory, see *ibid.*, 414–15.

position at the imperial court.⁴⁵ Such meetings among intellectuals, not always convivial, provided venues for the social competition to which rhetoric and style were the keys, as the vituperative exchanges between Theodore Metochites and Nikephoros Choumnos illustrate.⁴⁶

Both of these aspects of the *theatron* were evident in the rhetorical performances presided over by Manuel II. Careers could be made, livings secured. One of his letters described the material advantage a successful composition could secure. “You have indeed succeeded in convincing us, and your hope has been fulfilled. Now, our own hope will be fulfilled if you set yourself to supervise the instruction of the two youths.”⁴⁷ But if position and reputation could be acquired, they could be also be destroyed. In another letter, Manuel II rebuked the recipient: “you always employ [falsehood] as your model, your trainer and your teacher . . . But then, you always provide the audience with a chance to jeer, inasmuch as you present yourself before all as a noble athlete.”⁴⁸ Just as common approbation could deliver material advantage, common opprobrium could revoke it. Thus, rhetorical compositions and their performance before the emperor were events of immense significance, where the stakes were not just symbolic or social, but financial as well. As this letter shows, those who distinguished themselves before Manuel II could expect promotions or appointments and accompanying salaries.

⁴⁵ On this episode from 1312/13, see the extensive analysis in Gaul, *Thomas Magistros*, 62–120.

⁴⁶ See the study of this intellectual fracas in Ihor Ševčenko, *Études sur la polémique entre Théodore Métochite et Nicéphore Choumnos* (Brussels, 1962); Medvedev, “The so-Called ΘΕΑΤΡΑ,” 232–33.

⁴⁷ Manuel II, *Letters*, Ep. 27.1–15, translation from Dennis. The addressee here is Theodore Kaukadenos (PLP 11561). The two youths are presumably Manuel’s children, though the mention presents some issues of chronology, on which see p. 70, n. 1 for discussion and bibliography.

⁴⁸ Manuel II, *Letters*, Ep. 28.16–19, translation from Dennis. The letter is addressed only to “A Certain Foolish Person” and Dennis observes that it is possible it only represents a rhetorical exercise. See also Medvedev, “The so-Called ΘΕΑΤΡΑ,” 231–33.

Oratory was not only a form of ritualized competition for intellectual elites. It also carried other benefits, which accrued less to the benefit of the orator or the emperor, than to the imperial office and late Byzantine society at large. An indispensable function of rhetorical performance remained the transmission and reaffirmation of cultural and political values. One way it did this was through education and indoctrination. Rhetorical composition and oratory constituted the training ground for the young boys who hoped to join the ranks of the teachers, bureaucrats, and diplomats who served the emperors in the fifteenth century. In learning the sophisticated language necessary for participating in the Byzantine literary and social elite, young people would also learn the forms and *topoi* of imperial praise, which they then ritually recited and absorbed.

A sharp example of the way education inculcated the values of the imperial state emerges from a short oration to Manuel II composed by John Chortasmenos. Then a teacher of rhetoric in Constantinople, Chortasmenos delivered a sophisticated oration on the occasion of the emperor's return from the Peloponnese in 1415/16, an oration preserved in his autograph manuscript now in Vienna at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. But he also copied another oration in his manuscript, a much shorter one, titled ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ Ἀσανοπούλου Μανουήλ—"as if from Manuel Asanopoulos." The editor, Herbert Hunger, speculated that this Manuel was a pupil of Chortasmenos and the son of Andreas Asanes, himself a cousin of the emperor. The oration's title, its brief and formulaic quality, as well as its opening lines, which describe the speaker's delight as "no less than my father's," all indicate that Chortasmenos wrote the oration to be delivered by a young student as an introduction to the performance of oratory before the emperor. In this brief piece, the student lauds the emperor's successful settlement of

affairs in the Peloponnese, his guardianship, his striking prudence and beneficence.⁴⁹ We can almost imagine this young boy, on the cusp of adolescence, standing to address his monarch, hoping to gratify his father—with his teacher’s words, but his own quavering voice. This brief episode not only shows us how a panegyrist like Chortasmenos may well have been rewarded, with a position as tutor to one of the emperor’s relatives, but also how that education taught the essential elements of the imperial ideal to a new generation.⁵⁰

Beyond a curricular tool for young boys, oratory was also affirming for the audience of the performance itself. One of the foremost voices for viewing panegyric as socially constructive has been the great French scholar of rhetoric in antiquity, Laurent Pernot. As Pernot points out, speeches of panegyric were political acts—a performance which implied a certain honor, by position or rank—as well as sanction by political authority. This political and social nature of oratory is why Pernot has stressed that epideictic rhetoric, far from being useless or decorative, was essential to a community’s self-definition; that it was a social practice which chiefly served to echo and reinforce communally acknowledged values. It created what Pernot calls a moment of communion, where a social group ritually presents a show of unity around shared ideals. “Its purpose is not to say the truth, but to reaffirm and re-create afresh the consensus around prevailing values. Epideictic rhetoric is the social order’s rejuvenating bath. It instantiates a

⁴⁹ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II from Manuel Asanopoulos*.

⁵⁰ Nikephoros Basilakes describes this phenomenon, the teacher writing a piece for his student, in the preface to his speeches, as an explanation for the fact that his imperial oration “gambols like a child beside his mother.” *Nicephori Basilacae orationes et epistolae*, ed. A. Garzya (Leipzig, 1984), 8.24–28. See also Robert Browning, “An Anonymous βασιλικὸς λόγος Addressed to Alexius I Comnenus,” *Byzantion* 28 (1958): 33, 36–40; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 38 n. 9. In the fifteenth century, see the address of John Dokeianos, LPP I, 239–40, which seems to have been written for an imperial princess.

moment of communion, in which a community, or a microcommunity, presents itself with a show of its own unity.”⁵¹

Viewing panegyric in this way, as a constructive and socially collaborative process, allows us to understand the political action of imperial orators with more agency and independence from the imperial center than has been previously acknowledged. Without this change of perspective, we are inclined to view their rhetorical activity as unavoidably in service to the state, parroting the emperor’s view of his authority and prerogatives.⁵² But from this new vantage point, we see orators as dynamic and innovative political actors, using their craft to reinvigorate their *politeia* and to participate in the negotiation and allocation of political power.

How did this work in practice? How can we detect orators’ politically unifying function in action, especially at our current historical remove? One way to catch the barest glimpse is by looking at how the orators shaped the communal reaction to the *laudandus*. Most frequently we get a glimpse of this dynamic when the orator turns his allocution from the subject of praise to the audience. These moments only happen rarely, once or twice in any oration, but when they occur, we see the way the orator could yoke the crowd to his purpose. Although the composition of that audience is almost always undefined, the nature of the oratorical appeals to them are clear. Orators addressed them directly in ways that pull them in, ask them to cooperate in celebrating or marveling at imperial achievements and qualities. Chortasmenos’s oration “as if from Manuel Asanopoulos” has the young man compare his own delight upon the emperor’s

⁵¹ Most recently, see Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric*, here at 98. Also suggestive is the work of Johannes Helmrath and Jörg Feuchter on oratory and premodern assemblies; see, for instance, Jörg Feuchter and Johannes Helmrath, eds., *Politische Redekultur in der Vormoderne: die Oratorik europäischer Parlamente in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008); idem, “Oratory and Representation: The Rhetorical Culture of Political Assemblies, 1300–1600,” *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 29, no. 1 (2009): 53–66.

⁵² See the treatment in the otherwise excellent Estangüi Gómez, *Byzance face aux Ottomans*, 447–54.

return with that of “those present here and even my own father.” By equalling, but not surpassing, the joy of the audience, the orator united them in common acclamation of the emperor.⁵³ In an oration delivered upon the ascension of Constantine XI in 1449, John Argyropoulos also summoned the audience, metaphorically the whole *genos* of the Hellenes, to acknowledge their good fortune.⁵⁴ In both of these cases, the orator’s invocation of the audience was intended to bind their will to his and show communal assent to the values he praised.

The orator did not have to address the audience to achieve the same purpose. He could instead conjure a common memory. Isidore of Kiev’s first oration to Manuel II, declaimed soon after the emperor’s return from his long sojourn in the courts of European princes in the summer of 1403, recalled how all the emperor’s subjects came to see him return to Constantinople. Alighting from his ship, Manuel had been like “another sun from the west—all venerated you . . . For they thought your shining presence was like the resurrection of those slain in battle.”⁵⁵ In this case, the audience was asked to remember the broad acclaim accorded to the emperor on a festive occasion of civic rejoicing. These examples show how the orator’s address to the audience demanded that they participate in the valorization of the emperor for precisely those elements of imperial ideology I explore in Chapter Two. These moments reveal how the orators are using

⁵³ Chortasmenos, *Address from Manuel Asanopoulos*, 3–4: “Χαίρω μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀρωμένοις, ὧ βασιλεῦ, οὐδὲν ἔλαττον τῶν ἐνταῦθα παρόντων καὶ τοῦ γε ἐμοῦ πατρός.”

⁵⁴ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 37.13–14.

⁵⁵ Polemis, “Two Praises of Emperor Manuel II,” 708.55–61: “Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τῆς τριήρεως ἀπέβης, καὶ ἀνέτειλας ὥσπερ τις ἐκ δυσμῶν ἄλλος ἥλιος, ἅπαντες μακρὰν προσεκύουν σοι, ἕτεροι δὲ πίπτοντες τοὺς σοὺς ἡσπάζοντο πόδας, οἱ πολλοὶ δὲ ἐκρότουν τῷ χεῖρι, καὶ τῷ πόδε περιέστρεφον, καὶ οὐκ εἶχον ὑφ’ ἡδονῆς, ὃ τι ἄρα καὶ γένοιτο. Ἀνάστασιν γὰρ ἡγοῦντό τινα τῶν πεπτωκότων ὑπὸ τῷ τῆς μάχης χρόνῳ, τὴν σὴν φαιδρὰν παρουσίαν, καὶ ἦν ἀκοῦειν τὴν τότε ἡμέραν, Πάσχα λογιζομένην καὶ πιστευομένην”

those core elements of ideological consensus to reinforce social unanimity around the ideals of their choosing, primarily a virtuous, sacral monarch.

We need to recognize, however, that although the practice was social and ostensibly collaborative, binding the community together in assent and praise, it remained fundamentally conscriptive. These audience appeals were performative in the sense that they neither anticipated nor permitted a voluntary audience response. The nature of the occasion and the petition forestalled any meaningful choice on the part of the audience regarding participation in this praise. The disingenuousness of the orator and his morally dubious power to draw acclamation from the audience, two aspects always latent in panegyric performance, elicited a famous late antique lament from Augustine in his *Confessions*, who lamented his role in proclaiming falsehoods and compelling others to assent to them.

How wretched I was! So too you brought me to an awareness of my own wretchedness on that very day when I was preparing to recite my panegyric on the emperor, in which I told a number of lies and won acclaim from people who knew they were lies even as I uttered them. My heart was pounding with all these anxieties, agitated by feverish and corrosive speculations.⁵⁶

But if fifteenth-century imperial orators shared Augustine's anguish on this score, they have left no trace of it. Whether they viewed this discomfort as an acceptable compromise, or no longer perceived the practice in such Augustinian terms is impossible to say.

Venue and Audience

The role of oratory in forging consensus and the rhetorical tracks left by the audience allocutions show that orators did not just play for a crowd of one; rather they spoke to both the emperor and

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Confessions. Volume I: Books 1-8*, trans. Carolyn J.-B. Hammond (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 6.9, p. 255.

the assembled audience, even if we know little about which members of society constituted this crowd or where such orations were held. From sparse clues we can only advance tentative hypotheses. Tonia Kioussopoulou has argued that the topography of fifteenth-century Constantinople and its absence of open, public spaces meant that the orations were likely performed in the imperial palace of Blachernai, located in the northwestern corner of the city nestled between the land walls and the Golden Horn, or perhaps Hagia Sophia; both are reasonable suggestions.⁵⁷

In fact, none of the imperial orations from the fifteenth century describe the setting or performance as explicitly as Nikephoros Choumnos's panegyric to Andronikos II, which enumerates the gathering attended by all segments of society: men and women, the young and old, rich and poor alike.⁵⁸ The orations tend to refer to the audience simply as οἱ παρόντες, "those present."⁵⁹ Only rarely did an speaker identify his witnesses or location more specifically. The orations and homilies of Joseph Bryennios, a priest and member of the intellectual and literary circle of Manuel II, occasionally indicate delivery in the palace.⁶⁰ His oration calling for the reconstruction of the city, probably delivered around 1403, seems to have been delivered in

⁵⁷ See Kioussopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 13–26 on social space in Constantinople, 118 on imperial orations. On the Blachernai palace, see R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: développement urbain et répertoire topographique* (Paris, 1950), 124–28; Steven Runciman, "Blachernae Palace and Its Decoration," in *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice*, ed. Giles Robertson and George D. S. Henderson (Edinburgh, 1975), 277–83.

⁵⁸ Nikephoros Choumnos, "Τοῦ σοφωτάτου ἐπὶ τοῦ κανικλείου κυροῦ Νικηφόρου τοῦ Χούμνου Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα κῆρον Ἀνδρόνικον τὸν Παλαιολόγον," in Jean-François Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1830), 52–53; cited in Toth, "Rhetorical Theatron in Late Byzantium," 440.

⁵⁹ For instance, in Chortasmenos, *Address from Manuel Asanopoulos*, 198.3–4; Argyropoulos, *Oration of Consolation to Emperor Constantine on the Death of his Mother*, in Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, 23.11; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 37.13; Dokeianos, *Address to Constantine Palaiologos*, 233.9.

⁶⁰ On Bryennios (PLP 3257), see Hélène Bazini, "Une première édition des œuvres de Joseph Bryennios: les Traités adressés aux Crétois," *REB* 62, no. 1 (2004): 83–132, with extensive bibliography.

the palace, before the emperor, patriarch, office holders, clergy and the “whole citizenry.”⁶¹ George Scholarios, in an oration lamenting the misfortunes of his life, recalled the crowds that would gather in the *triklinos*, the emperor’s reception chamber in the imperial palace, to hear him “preach the divine *logos*.”⁶² None of those speeches, however, was an imperial oration, and it would be precarious to assume they shared the same audience. For most imperial orations the crowd was likely to have been smaller, probably consisting of the emperor and his court, social and intellectual elites—both lay and clergy—who possessed the “rhetoricity” to follow and appreciate the sophistication of the discourses. We can generalize this group as “leading men,” as Dokeianos does in panegyric to Constantine Palaiologos.⁶³

Manuel II’s reign offers a brief glimpse at another venue of rhetorical performance, social gatherings where authors presented their discourses before the emperor and an assembled entourage. His letters reveal some aspects of this phenomenon, including the reading of a text to general acclaim, and the emperor’s role as the supreme arbiter of quality.⁶⁴

What you wrote was read before a small but not undistinguished audience. . . Everyone had something different to applaud, and all joined in applauding the whole work. I, too,

⁶¹ Joseph Bryennios, *Περὶ τοῦ Πόλεως ἀνακτίσματος*, in *Ἰωσήφ μοναχοῦ τοῦ Βρυεννίου τὰ εὐρεθέντα*, ed. Eugenios Boulgares, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1768), 273–83: “τοῦ αὐτοῦ Δημηγορία Συντομωτάτη, εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ ῥηθεῖσα Παλάτιον, ἐπὶ παρουσία τοῦ Πατριάρχου, καὶ τῶν ἐν Τέλει, καὶ τοῦ Κλήρου, καὶ πάσης τῆς Πολιτείας, περὶ τοῦ τῆς Πόλεως ἀνακτίσματος.”

⁶² Scholarios I, 288.36–89.2: “Οἱμοι καὶ πῶς ἔχω μνησθῆναι τῶν ἀκροατηρίων ἐκείνων ἀδακρυτί, τοῦ βασιλέως, τῶν ἀδελφῶν, τῶν μεγιστάνων, τῶν ἐπισκόπων, τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ κλήρου, τῶν μοναχῶν, τῶν ἐξ ἀγοράς, τῶν ἀστῶν, τῶν ξένων, οἷς ἐν τῷ τρικλίνῳ προκαθημένους τὸν θεῖον λόγον ὠμίλουν;” These and other examples are adduced by Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 118 n.27.

⁶³ Dokeianos, *Encomium to Constantine Palaiologos*, 223.29, where he explicitly describes them as τῶν ὧδε παρόντων λογάδων, or “the leading men present here.”

⁶⁴ For the enthusiastic reception of readings, see Manuel II, *Letters*, Epp. 9, 27; for Manuel II as judge of literary style, see Ep. 47.40, in *Correspondance de Manuel Calecas*, ed. Raymond-Joseph Loenertz (Vatican City, 1950); Leone, “Rhetoric in Purple,” 75.

found everything to be excellent, even though I sat in silence while the others stamped their feet and shouted with joy.⁶⁵

This passage shows works of rhetoric—letters and discourses—could be read aloud to a performatively appreciative audience. As this passage indicates, the status of letters is more complex than that of orations. Several important discourses from the fifteenth century were written as letters, such as the *Epistolary Discourse* of Manuel Chrysoloras or Bessarion's letter to Constantine Palaiologos on reforming the Morea.⁶⁶ Their epistolary nature might at first suggest an audience of one, yet Manuel II's account of letters read aloud shows that similar texts were performed for communal judgment.⁶⁷ Authors were conscious of this possibility as well; in the late fourteenth century, Demetrios Kydones expressed his anxiety that his letter would be read before a critical audience.⁶⁸ Therefore, I treat both orations and letters as performative political rhetoric, shared through either oral delivery or textual circulation.

The high-register language of oratory with many esoteric and *recherché* qualities suggests that only the intellectual elite, those who had obtained a Byzantine rhetorical education, would be able to fully follow these orations. But some evidence indicates that a few speeches were directed to broader audiences. Manuel Palaiologos, while he was ruling Thessalonike during a siege by the Ottomans in 1383, delivered an oration to the inhabitants of the city exhorting them to resist the onslaught of their enemies. Throughout his speech, an extended discourse on

⁶⁵ Manuel II, *Letters*, Ep. 27.1–15, translation from Dennis. The addressee here is Theodore Kaukadenos (PLP 11561). The two youths are presumably Manuel's children, though the mention presents some issues of chronology, on which see p. 70, n. 1 for discussion and bibliography.

⁶⁶ Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Discourse*; Bessarion, *Discourse to Constantine Palaiologos*.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, Manuel II, *Letters*, Epp. 9, 27. On the fuzzy boundary between letters and orations, see Judith R. Ryder, *The Career and Writings of Demetrius Kydones: A Study of Fourteenth-Century Byzantine Politics, Religion and Society* (Leiden, 2010), 140.

⁶⁸ *Démétrius Cydonès*, vol. 1, Ep. 78.20–24, p. 111; cited in Ryder, *The Career and Writings of Demetrius Kydones*, 138.

freedom and slavery which aimed to galvanize the martial spirit of the city's men, Manuel spoke as if addressing the whole community of men capable of fighting, not all of whom would have been highly educated.⁶⁹ In the copy of the oration that survives, his Greek appears consistent with the elevated idiom of other high-register rhetoric. It is possible that the oration as delivered was lexically and syntactically simpler, closer to the spoken tongue; but it is also possible that Manuel chose to speak in a high-register as a performance of authority. As Franz Tinnefeld has argued, even the sermons delivered by metropolitans in Thessalonike are linguistically sophisticated, suggesting that people who attended could either follow readily enough or at least follow the general points.⁷⁰

The contours of the full audience of imperial oratory remain invisible in most cases. Nevertheless, if we consider the way that orators and emperors exploited the occasion and genre to promote their own agendas and bolster the monarch's legitimacy, we should imagine that orations were highly responsive to the those witnessing the performance, mediating between the audience and the emperor.

Profiles of Orators: Authors and Texts

The diversity of imperial orators in the fifteenth century stands out against the profiles of those of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁷¹ The early Palaiologan revival of imperial oratory in the

⁶⁹ Manuel II, *Oration to the Thessalonians*, 296.25.

⁷⁰ Franz Tinnefeld, "Intellectuals in Late Byzantine Thessalonike," *DOP* 57 (2003): 169–70, who argues that "we can assume that at least their general contents were accessible to a majority of the audience, and the details were perhaps imparted by oral exchange."

⁷¹ Compare especially with Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 64–77.

late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, marginalized under the Laskarids, centered on the imperial and ecclesiastical office-holders in Constantinople, with the bulk of rhetoricians enjoying positions in these bureaucracies. But by the fifteenth century, those previous strongholds of the intellectual elite had crumbled; both the state and the church employed fewer educated men, and the court position of “master of the rhetors” had long since lapsed. By examining the biographies of the orators active in the fifteenth century, we can orient their speeches in the historical and political context essential for understanding them. Moreover, comparing their backgrounds, employment, and political commitments will illustrate some of the most powerful social dynamics among intellectuals of the fifteenth century: the patronage at the courts in Constantinople and the Morea; the powerful genealogies of teachers and students; the careers of pedagogy and diplomacy which crossed cultural, as well as political, frontiers. In the sections below, I will introduce these orators, their texts and their intersections with these dynamics.

The first common feature of these orators is that they were all men, highly educated in the abstruse language of high-register Greek, steeped in the literature of Greek antiquity, and committed to the stylistic imitation of those models. The fundamental characteristic shared by this group was not social, but educational. Their possession of a specific form of rhetorical education enabled them to not only communicate with one another, but also define themselves against other socio-cultural groups in late Byzantium.⁷² Therefore, this was an intellectual elite,

⁷² See the definition of Tinnefeld, “Intellectuals in Late Byzantine Thessalonike,” 153: “[those] sufficiently trained in grammar, vocabulary, and style of ancient Greek, particularly Attic, authors to read and write in that language . . .” Thus, Tinnefeld includes all known authors of high-style works, or indeed any sender or recipient of rhetorical letters, as well as any members of the civil service. For other definitions of the Ševčenko, “Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century,” 69–92, and subsequent remarks on Ševčenko in Alexander Kazhdan, “The Fate of the Intellectual in Byzantium,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27.1 (1982): 89–97; see also H.G. Beck, *Das literarische Schaffen der Byzantiner* (Vienna, 1974) 11–14, where he argues that the “literary” class is not marginal but fully integrated in Byzantine society; Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, DC, 1982), 101–02. More recently, see the extensive treatment of intellectuals as a diverse social group, which, despite a few oversights, remains a very good synthesis: Matschke-Tinnefeld, 221–385. On the nature of education in the Palaiologan period, see E. B. Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan*

not a strictly social one: the category of “intellectuals” cut across other social groups, including members of the imperial family, aristocracy, high and middle office holders in both state and ecclesiastical hierarchies, as well as the scribes who copied manuscripts.⁷³ Many were quite poor.⁷⁴ Membership in this intellectual and cultural elite gave them a shared idiom, but it did not condemn them to intellectual or ideological homogeneity. On the contrary, it gave these men the linguistic tools, as well as literary and historical models to defend and attack a wide array of positions.

The education necessary to ascend to the rarified stratum of these intellectuals remained a largely private enterprise, and much depended on the ability of the student to find a suitable teacher. This dynamic affected the respective development of educational centers in the late Byzantine state, drawing intellectually promising young men away from places like Trebizond (Bessarion) or Thessalonike (Argyropoulos) toward centers with better teachers and richer opportunities, like Constantinople and Mistra. However, such private teaching evidently did not pay all that well, because almost all teachers had other remunerative occupations as well: Pletho was also a provincial judge, as well as a property owner; Apostoles copied manuscripts and served as one of Bessarion’s bookhounds across the eastern Mediterranean. While several held imperial office, only Demetrios Chrysoloras was a high ranking official, serving John VII as his μεσάζων

Renaissance (1261–c. 1360) (Leiden, 2000); Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium*, both of which cover the early Palaiologan period; for the later period, see Mergiali, *L’enseignement et les lettrés pendant l’époque des Paléologues*.

⁷³ Matschke-Tinnefeld, 232ff; the authors have compiled a prosopographical list of 174 “intellectuals” from the 13–15th centuries which they use for their analysis. However, this number should be viewed cautiously as a “no lower than” approximation; they have sensibly not included anonymous authors, but bewilderingly (and intentionally) ignored those who wrote after 1453, including the historians Kritoboulos, Laonikos Chalkokondyles, and Doukas. Moreover, they have also left out some authors, presumably by mistake, like the rhetorician and teacher John Dokeianos and Michael Apostoles.

⁷⁴ Ševčenko, “Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century,” 90–92.

or chief minister during John's reign in Thessalonike, before returning to Constantinople and taking a position in the Senate there. Others, like Dokeianos and Apostoles, never held state or church offices and depended on their teaching to survive.

Scholars have estimated this group of *πεπαιδευμένοι*, or “educated men,” comprised altogether no more than 10–15% of Byzantine society.⁷⁵ Within this group, the imperial orators were a much smaller and less diverse subsection. They include no women, though we know that several women in the fifteenth century were renowned for their erudition and politically active.⁷⁶ Manuel II's *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage* described himself crossing rhetorical swords with his own mother over the subject of marriage and fatherhood—a duel he showed her winning through incisive logic and argumentation.⁷⁷ Manuel II's wife Helena Palaiologina also exercised political authority in a moment of crisis, settling the imperial succession upon Constantine rather than his older brother Demetrios after the death of John VIII in 1448.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Matschke-Tinnefeld, 232; the estimations in Ševčenko, “Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century,” 69, of 91 writers in the fourteenth century, or one in 2500–4450 inhabitants of Constantinople, are surely too conservative. They seem to include neither the abundant scribes, nor all the recipients of the extensive letter collections from that century. A later estimation has offered closer to 400 intellectuals in the fourteenth century; see Apostolos Karpozilos, “Books and Bookmen in the 14th Century. The Epistolographical Evidence,” *JÖB* 41 (1991): 271–72.

⁷⁶ Sphrantzes, in a brief digression from his history, relates the life of a certain Thomais, who became renowned for her learning. Thomais was adopted by the Kabasilas family, she spent some time at the nunnery of Saint Theodora in Thessalonike with a certain “Palaiologina,” whose many hymns on Saints Demetrios and Theodora and other poetry Sphrantzes claims to have read (18.2, 18.7). The erudition of this Thomais, however, seems to have been limited to the Christian, rather than the classical, tradition.

⁷⁷ *Manuel Palaiologos. Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage*, ed. and trans. Athanasios D. Angelou (Vienna, 1991). Manuel II's historical, rather than literary, mother was a correspondent of Demetrios Kydones and deeply involved in political affairs: see Angelou, *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother*, 39–41; *Démétrius Cydonès*, 2:Epp. 222, 256. To another learned woman, Isidore of Kiev wrote an erudite interpretation of the alleged oracle regarding the wall across the Isthmus of Corinth. The text, which has not been fully edited and published, is in BAV, Vat. gr. 1852, 105r–106v; a selection has been published in D. A. Zakythinos, “Μανουὴλ Β΄ Παλαιολόγος καὶ ὁ καρδινάλιος Ἰσίδωρος ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ,” in *Mélanges offerts à Octave et Melpo Merlier, à l'occasion du 25e anniversaire de leur arrivée en Grèce*, 3 vols. (Athens, 1956–57), 3:45–69. Zakythinos has suggested quite plausibly that the addressee was Cleopa Malatesta, the wife of Despot Theodore II Palaiologos.

⁷⁸ This is one of the four women sharing nearly the same name, Helene Palaiologina (PLP 21366); in Sphrantzes 29.3, Helene is only one of the parties who “chose Constantine as emperor” (τὸν κὺρ Κωνσταντῖνον εἰς βασιλέα

Nevertheless, the influence of such women remained an anomaly. Although there were probably many educated women, their voices were excluded from political discourse and they have left little or no trace in the debates on empire and kingship.⁷⁹

Beyond our imperial orators' common status as male intellectuals, it is their diversity that stands out. Their backgrounds, employment, and loyalties varied as widely as their intellectual, religious, and social commitments. Several were ecclesiastics (John Chortasmenos, Isidore of Kiev, Cardinal Bessarion and John Eugenikos), others were laymen (George Gemistos Pletho, John Dokeianos, Manuel Chrysoloras, Demetrios Chrysoloras). Some remained steadfastly Orthodox (John Chortasmenos, Demetrios Chrysoloras, John Eugenikos, John Dokeianos), others converted to Catholicism (Manuel Chrysoloras, Isidore of Kiev, Cardinal Bessarion, John Argyropoulos). Among those who lived to see the issue of ecclesiastical union ostensibly settled in Florence during the summer of 1439, Isidore of Kiev, Bessarion, and later Apostoles and Argyropoulos supported it, while Eugenikos and Dokeianos remained staunchly opposed. Several, like Isidore of Kiev, had traveled to Italy and other courts in Europe, and so retained connections with the growing throng of western scholars interested in Greek letters; others, like John Dokeianos, ventured no further than their respective Byzantine courts, at least until the Ottoman conquest.

κρίνουσι); likewise Chalkokondyles 7.61; see also Manuel's remarks on her influence and authority in Manuel II, *Funeral Oration*, 103.3–4: “μητε μὴν τὴν τῆς μητρός, πάντων οὐσαν ισχυροτέραν υἱέσιν ἂν δεῖ πράττουσιν.”

⁷⁹ An exception to the absence of women's voices are the two orations ἐκ προσώπου τῆς αὐθεντοπούλας in the primary manuscript of the writings of John Dokeianos in Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, Ms. 0137 (Gr. 1 Zacour). These orations are edited in Anna Calia, “Meglio il turbante del sultano della tiara Latina: Giovanni Dokeianos e la transizione bizantino-ottomana a Costantinopoli nel secondo Quattrocento,” (PhD diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2016), 290–304; Calia follows Peter Topping, “Greek Manuscript 1 (the Works of Ioannes Dokeianos) of the University of Pennsylvania Library,” *The Library Chronicle* 29 (1963): 8, and Lampros (LPP I, va') in concluding that the unnamed princess here is Helena Palaiologina (PLP 21363), daughter of Demetrios Palaiologos, for whom Dokeianos served as a tutor.

The re-emergence of imperial oratory and the literary florescence of the Constantinopolitan court in the early fifteenth century bear witness to the formative role played by the learned emperor Manuel II. Alongside burgeoning political stability, Manuel's extensive patronage of educated men and cultivation of literary culture bore fruit in the second decade of the fifteenth century. Manuel had long been a prolific writer, who assiduously crafted his literary persona.⁸⁰ Not only is his corpus one of the most varied and substantial of all Byzantine emperors—including letters, theological treatises, works of moral and political philosophy, as well rhetoric, and religious polemic—but his literary accomplishments and erudition were a frequent point of emphasis in panegyrics celebrating him.⁸¹ Many of these works engaged the issues of statecraft, kingship, empire, and virtue. Among these was his oration urging the inhabitants of Thessalonike to resist the siege of the Ottomans in 1383. Just a few years later, he wrote a panegyric to his own father, John V, upon the occasion of the emperor's recovery from an illness.⁸² After returning from his journey to the courts of western Europe in 1402, he wrote a

⁸⁰ Manuel's basic biography is well-known, and his life—as a political actor, at least—well-charted. See Jules Berger de Xivrey, “Mémoire sur la vie et les ouvrages de l'Empereur Manuel Paléologue,” *Mémoires de l'Institut national de France, Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 19, no. 2 (1853): 1–201; the standard work remains Barker, *Manuel II*, though its emphasis is firmly on Manuel as political actor, as opposed to a literary or social figure; see also Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessalonica*. A better view of Manuel as a literary personality emerges in George Dennis's edition of the emperor's correspondence, Manuel II, *Letters*. Recent research is doing a great deal to fill out the lacunae left by the current scholarship; see the recent dissertations: Leonte, “Rhetoric in Purple,” which outlines the intellectual and social milieu centered on and fostered by Manuel II; and Siren Çelik, “A Historical Biography of Manuel II Palaiologos (1350-1425)” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2016), which uses Manuel's rich literary corpus to give us an image of Manuel that is more a true biography than Barker's depiction of Manuel's official persona.

⁸¹ See, for instance, Polemis, “Two Praises of Emperor Manuel II,” 710.104–08; Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 191–94; Demetrios Chrysoloras, 232.7–9; Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Discourse*, 118.30–31. Though Manuel himself clearly took pride in his learning and cultivated his image as an author, he also affected a more self-deprecating view of his literary achievements; see, for instance, Manuel II, *Letters*, Ep. 52.9–32, in which he claims that his writings and those of his contemporaries are but bronze to the gold of the ancients.

⁸² Manuel II, *Λόγος πανηγυρικός περὶ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως υἱείας*. Leonte, “Rhetoric in Purple,” 123, argues that this oration was also intended to ingratiate himself to his father, whom he had repeatedly defied as ruler of Thessalonike, and as a plea to be restored to the imperial succession.

number of other works which dealt with kingship and the virtuous ruler. These include a long treatise on the duties of kingship, *Precepts of Royal Education*, for his oldest son John; his reflections on virtue, somewhat misleadingly known as the *Seven Ethico-political Orations*; and his funeral oration for his brother Theodore, the Despot of the Morea, who died in 1407.⁸³

Manuel II is justly renowned not only for his own literary *oeuvre*, but his stimulus to literary production among those around him. A recent study of the literary activity of the emperor and his circle has given crucial analytical depth to this group of *literati* around the emperor, who break out into several different groups: those who participated in his *theatron*; those who had positions in his retinue or court requiring literary production; and finally those who were his close correspondents and intellectual interlocutors.⁸⁴ Manuel II used this stratified network and his own position at the center to construct and propagate his unique vision of his own imperial authority. One of the chief ways he did this was through the allocation of material benefits to late Byzantine intellectuals. Manuel's letters reveal the sinews of this patronage. Through them we see him in action: encouraging his friends, soliciting and returning critical

⁸³ Unfortunately our only edition of the *Precepts* is that of Leunclavius from 1578, reprinted in Migne (PG 156, col. 313–84); Manuel's *Ethico-political Orations* have been the subject of a recent re-edition and study in Christina Kakkoura, "An Annotated Critical Edition of Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus' 'Seven Ethico-Political Orations'" (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2013). Berger de Xivrey, "Mémoire sur la vie et les ouvrages de l'Empereur Manuel Paléologue," 194–97, dates them both to around 1406, while Barker simply observes that given their didactic nature, they must have been composed during the adolescence of John VIII, i.e. around 1406, but not entirely in that year: Barker, *Manuel II*, 344–45 n. 84. For Manuel's funeral oration, see *Manuel II Palaeologus: Funeral Oration on his Brother Theodore*, ed. and trans. Juliana Chrysostomides (Thessaloniki, 1985).

⁸⁴ Leonte, "Rhetoric in Purple," 70–107. Among those with positions at court, but who were not intellectual partners of the emperor, Leonte includes George Baiophoros, and Demetrios Pepagomenos; among his close correspondents, Leonte notes the divide between the pro-Latin and the pro-Orthodox camps. Pro-Latin partisans included Demetrios Kydones, Manuel Kalekas, Maximos Chrysoberges, and Manuel Chrysoloras—all saw Kydones as their teacher, had connections to humanists in Italy, and were involved in translating the Dominican liturgy. In the Orthodox camp, Leonte numbers Nicholas Kabasilas Chamaetos, patriarch Euthymios, Gabriel of Thessalonike, Joseph Bryennios, and Makarios Makres.

evaluations of rhetorical works, praising the literary life, and dispensing approbation. Two evident recipients of his patronage were Demetrios Chrysoloras and John Chortasmenos.

Demetrios Chrysoloras, scholar and statesman, remained one of Manuel II's most frequent correspondents and closest friends, as well as a clear beneficiary of the emperor's largesse.⁸⁵ The only high-ranking imperial officer among fifteenth-century orators, he served as chief minister to John VII, Manuel II's nephew who ruled as *basileus* in Thessalonike from 1403 to 1408. John VII and Manuel II's uneasy relationship did not, however, dampen the intimacy between Chrysoloras and Manuel. The minister delivered a celebratory oration in the summer of 1403 on the anniversary of the Battle of Ankara, which gave the emperor credit for Bayezid's defeat.⁸⁶ And from Thessalonike Chrysoloras continued to send the emperor rhetorical works and letters that betray a friendship transcending the patron-client relationship. In one response, Manuel teased his friend for buying a horse and abandoning his learning for "arms, spoils and wars, shooting at wild beasts, raising dogs."⁸⁷ As a resolute defender of Orthodox dogma and a loyal partisan of the emperor, Chrysoloras returned to Constantinople after the death of John VII (d. 1408) and appeared as a member of the imperial retinue and Senate of Constantinople at

⁸⁵ On Chrysoloras see PLP 31156; ODB I, 454; Giuseppe Cammelli, *I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'Umanesimo, vol. 1, Manuele Crisolora* (Florence, 1941), 198–201; Manuel II, *Letters*, xxxv–xxxvi; Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, 91–93.

⁸⁶ Edited with prefatory remarks in Paul Gautier, "Action de grâces pour l'anniversaire de la bataille d'Ankara (28 juillet 1403)," *REB* 19, no. 1 (1961): 340–57; Chrysoloras's title and position under John VII is confirmed in a letter from John Chortasmenos (Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, Ep. 22, p. 171); other than his office in service of John VII, almost nothing is known of his time in Thessalonike; on the office of the mesazon, see Jean Verpeaux, "Contribution à l'étude de l'administration byzantine: ὁ μεσάζων," *Byzantinoslavica* 16 (1955): 270–96.

⁸⁷ See Manuel II, *Letters*, Ep. 41, 43, 46. In Ep. 41, Manuel claims it is Demetrios who knows so well the factors that stay the emperor's hand and tongue when he has not written in months; in Ep. 43, Manuel teases Chrysoloras for buying a "warrior's horse"; in Ep. 46 Manuel thanks Chrysoloras for sending him an *ethopoïia*, a kind of character sketch that was one of the fundamental rhetorical exercises practiced in the *progymnasmata*, which remains unidentified. The final letter to Chrysoloras (Ep. 61) refers to Chrysoloras's "Hundred Letters" which Dennis dates to 1417 on the unconvincing grounds that it was a distillation of Chrysoloras's encomium, itself written after Manuel's return from the Morea in 1415/16. Why Dennis arbitrarily chooses 1417, as opposed to 1416 or 1418, however, is unexplained.

synods in 1409 and 1416.⁸⁸ The latter synod was likely around the same time as the emperor's final letter to his friend, thanking him for the epistolary panegyric that Chrysoloras had written for him, his *Hundred Letters*. This work was itself based on Chrysoloras's previous encomium of Manuel, which embedded his praise of the emperor and his virtues in an extended comparison with luminaries from Greek antiquity.⁸⁹

Another member of the emperor's retinue was the monk, polemicist, and hagiographer Makarios Makres.⁹⁰ Born in the Thessalonike during early in Manuel's reign as *basileus* there, he distinguished himself early on with his learning and later became a monk at the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos, where he finished his education. He was acquainted with the Manuel both through his parents in Thessalonike, as well as through his spiritual father, who was the recipient of some of Manuel's writings. Makarios wrote an imperial oration to Manuel II, probably delivered in Thessalonike during the emperor's sojourn there after John VII's death in late 1408.⁹¹ His relationship with Manuel II yielded repeated invitations to the city—several he

⁸⁸ The synodal tome from 1409 is edited in Vitalien Laurent, "Le trisépiscopat du patriarche Matthieu Ier (1397-1410). Un grand procès canonique à Byzance au début du XVe siècle," *REB* 30 (1972): 127–45. Chrysoloras is mentioned as an οἰκεῖος of the emperor at 136.32. On the οἰκεῖος, someone with a personal link to the emperor analogous to a family member, see Jean Verpeaux, "Les οἰκεῖοι. Notes d'histoire institutionnelle et sociale," *REB* 23, no. 1 (1965): 94–98.

⁸⁹ Maximilian Treu, "Demetrios Chrysoloras und seine hundert Briefe," *BZ* 20 (1911): 106–128; Demetrios Chrysoloras, *Cento epistole a Manuele II Paleologo*, ed. Ferruccio Conti Bizzarro (Naples, 1984).

⁹⁰ On Makres (PLP 16379), see Astérios Argyriou, *Macaire Makrès et la polemique contre l'Islam: édition princeps de l'éloge de Macaire Makrès et de ses deux œuvres anti-islamiques, précédée d'une étude critique* (Vatican City, 1986); Sophia Kapetanaki, "An Annotated Critical Edition of Makarios Makres' Life of St Maximos Kausokalyves; Enconium on the Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils; Consolation of a Sick Person, or Reflections on Endurance; Verses on the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos; Letter to Hieromonk Symeon; A Supplication on Barren Olive-Trees" (PhD diss., University of London, 2001), 9–43.

⁹¹ The text is published in Dendrinos, "An Unpublished Funeral Oration." Dendrinos, editing this text from a *codex unicus* for the first time, claims that it is a funeral oration, more an assertion than an argument. The text is missing both its beginning and its end, and Dendrinos argues that the characteristic portions of the funeral oration—the lamentation, consolation and epilogue, which distinguish it from the encomium—were contained in the now-missing end of the oration. Polemis, "Two Praises of Emperor Manuel II," however, counters persuasively that the "funeral oration" for Manuel II is actually a panegyric delivered to the same emperor in Thessalonike during the emperor's sojourn there shortly after John VII's death in September 1408, based on an extensive comparison of *loci communes*,

accepted, at least one he declined—and the offer to become ἡγούμενος, or abbot, at the renowned Stoudios monastery in Constantinople, the sort of reward the emperor could confer on his favorites. After Manuel II’s death, Makarios became close to John VIII, for whom the monk served as an ambassador to Pope Martin V in 1430 during negotiations for an ecumenical council.⁹² Despite serving as an emissary of union negotiations, however, Makarios remained a staunch defender of Orthodoxy throughout his life.

paleographical evidence from the single manuscript witness, and our knowledge of Manuel’s literary circle. For the evidence proposing Makarios as the author, see *ibid.*, 700–04. The evidence for the date and nature of the composition is more complicated, though no less persuasive. “[T]he characteristic stylistic devices of a Byzantine monody or funeral oration are absent from the text. Neither rhetorical exclamations, nor pathetic addresses to the dead, nor any other expressions of sorrow are to be found in it. The emperor is almost always addressed in the present or perfect tense (e.g., pp. 448, 239–40, or 449, 271–73). The author describes his text as a hymn (p. 448, 244), not as a dirge, as we would normally expect, if his intention had been to compose a funeral oration” (p. 699–700). A passage in chapter 15 is crucial in resolving the nature of the oration. Polemis translates: “And now you have come on time (Καὶ νῦν, καιρὸν δ’ ἐφίκοις) O my emperor, suddenly transforming into calmness the tempest caused by the death of the admirable *basileus* who took into the grave a great part of our happiness; you have averted the storm that was menacing the city of Philippus, giving to all people good hope; each of them thinks that he will enjoy many more gifts from you. . . .” (ch. 15) For Dendrinios the emperor addressed here is John VIII, while the “admirable *basileus*” is Manuel II; for Polemis though, the emperor addressed is Manuel II and the “admirable *basileus*” is John VII. Though neither Dendrinios nor Polemis spells it out, the difference in their readings, and thus their historical interpretation rests primarily on the word ἐφίκοις, a form—otherwise unattested in the TLG—which is an aorist optative 2nd singular *active* form of the deponent verb ἐφικνέομαι “I arrive at, reach” (see the attestation of the expected middle form ἐφίκοιο in the fourteenth-century *Die Briefe des Michael Gabras*, ed. G. Fatouros [Vienna, 1973], Ep. 359.17). Polemis reads this as a simple aorist, “you reached”; Dendrinios, on the other hand, implies that he reads it as a cupitive optative, “may you reach” (p. 439: “followed by a plea addressed to Manuel’s son, Emperor John VIII, to restore peace in the city.”) Polemis then reads the participles μεταβαλὼν, “changing, averting,” and παρεσχικῶς, “having furnished,” finitely, describing Manuel II’s actions *after* he reached the city. Dendrinios evidently reads these same participles as part of the plea, the necessary outcome of John VIII’s desired arrival. If we accept Polemis’s identification of the author with Makarios Makres, the author would have been intimately familiar with classical literature and grammar. His extensive use of the particle ὅν in the oration suggests that he fully understood the distinction between the cupitive and potential optatives, which would lend credence to the reading of Dendrinios, i.e., that the optative should be read, classically, as a wish (cf. the proper construction of the potential optatives at 444.107; 447.209). On the other hand, Dendrinios’s reading—a plea to John VIII to restore order in the city—assumes a troubled situation in Thessalonike, which undoubtedly existed in the years between the death of Manuel II in 1425 and the city’s final seizure by the Ottomans in 1430. Yet a passage from ch. 13 of this oration paints a very different picture: “the city of Philippus (i.e., Thessalonike) . . . after the long shadow and night and winter of slavery . . . it sees now free light, and lives again, running once more toward her former freedom.” This depiction of the city is impossible to resolve with Thessalonike just a few years before the conquest by the Ottomans. It accords much more with the city in the relatively optimistic and peaceful years after brief ebb of Ottoman power in the wake of the Battle of Ankara. Thus, I agree with Polemis that we should read this text as an encomium to Manuel II and date it to the emperor’s visit to the city of Thessalonike after the death of John VII in 1408.

⁹² Kapetanaki, “Annotated Critical Edition,” 9–14; on his role as ambassador to the pope, see Syropoulos, 2.16.

Alongside Chrysoloras and Makres, another imperial orator who enjoyed patronage at Manuel's court was the rhetorician, philosopher and teacher John Chortasmenos.⁹³ A timorous and cowering courtier who advised avoiding magistrates, scholarly disagreement, and any excellence that might draw envy, Chortasmenos nonetheless established himself as a scholar of considerable breadth in rhetoric and philosophy, as his extant commentaries and *prolegomena* show.⁹⁴ Chortasmenos, a scholar of modest origins, spent most of his career in ecclesiastical, rather than imperial, service: first as notary to the patriarchal chancery from c. 1391 to c. 1415; then as a private teacher; and finally as a prelate, rising to Metropolitan of Selymbria, where he served until his death sometime around 1436/7.⁹⁵ As a teacher, Chortasmenos became a

⁹³ PLP 30897; ODB I, 431; the most recent, albeit brief, treatment of his life is in the modern edition of his writings, Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, 11–48.

⁹⁴ An autograph manuscript, surviving at Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna preserves works on mathematics, astronomy, a treatise on syllable division, a compendium of moral admonitions, as well as several rhetorical compositions; these texts are edited in Hunger, *Chortasmenos*. His moral admonitions in particular (ibid., 238–42) advise timid and insipid behavior to preserve imperial favor and social standing. His work on rhetoric remains unedited in Florence, Cod. Riccard. gr. 58, fols. 1–46r; the manuscript contains diagrams, epitomes and selections from a number of works of the rhetorical canon, including the *progymnasmata* of Aphthonios, as well as Hermogenes's treatise on forms, Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and the prefatory letter to Pseudo-Aristotle's *Rhetoric to Alexander*; for a brief description, see Girolamo Vitelli, *Indice de' codici greci: Riccardiani, Magliabechiani, e Maruselliani* (Florence, 1894), 508–09. For Chortasmenos's *Prolegomena to Logic*, see Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, 210–14. In addition to his own studies and writings, Chortasmenos was notable as a copyist, with 32 surviving manuscripts preserving his hand. RGK I, 191 (p.112–13; 11 mss); II, 252 (p.107; 4 mss); III, 315 (p.125; 17 mss). See also Ernst Gamillscheg, "Die Handschriftenliste des Johannes Chortasmenos im Oxon. Aed. Chr. 56," *Codices manuscripti & impressi* 2 (1981): 52–57.

⁹⁵ In a letter to Manuel II requesting assistance for his mother, Chortasmenos writes πένης μὲν εἶναι ὁμολογῶ (Ep. 35.12, in Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, 185), even though the "poor scholar" was something of a *topos* for Byzantine intellectuals (Ševčenko, "Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century," 71, 85); indeed, Hunger identifies this line as a reference to the psalmic language of entreaty (cf. Ps. 39.18; 69.6). As Ševčenko points out, Chortasmenos's collection of manuscripts alone argues against considering him truly impoverished. Hunger doesn't date the letter specifically but regards it as a part of the first codicological unit of the manuscript, which was copied around 1407/8. On Chortasmenos's career as a teacher, see Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, 14–19; Hunger proposes that his career as a private teacher, during which he trained brilliant young scholars like Georgios Scholarios (b. 1405) and Bessarion (b. 1408), came between his employment in the Patriarchal chancery and his adoption of a monastic lifestyle; the years between his tonsure as a monk and his appearance and his elevation to Metropolitan of Selymbria are murky. We do not know when he was ordained as a hieromonk (his title according to the inscription of Cod. Ricc. gr. 58, f. 1r), what monastery he lived in or when he became a metropolitan. It is to the period of his life as a cleric that we must attribute his panegyric *vita* of Constantine I and his mother Helena, written under the name Ignatios of Selymbria.

confidant of Manuel II's son John and testified to the emperor in a letter about John's abundant sagacity during one of Manuel's absences.⁹⁶ Around 1416 Chortasmenos wrote two panegyrics to Manuel II, delivered on the emperor's return from Thessalonike, one from himself and one for a young boy, probably his student.⁹⁷ The title of Chortasmenos's second panegyric suggests that Chortasmenos was serving as the youth's tutor and that the boy was still deep in his rhetorical education, probably around fourteen or so.⁹⁸ In the context of Chortasmenos's career, then, his panegyrics to Manuel II appear to have either gained or recompensed imperial favor. Indeed, Chortasmenos's position as tutor to the son of a close friend of the emperor may well have been

⁹⁶ Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, Ep. 49, 204.20–26: “ἡ δὲ περὶ τὴν εὐσέβειαν σπουδή, τὴν, ὥς ἂν εἴποι τις, ἀγαθῶν ἀπάντων μητέρα, καὶ ἡ περὶ τὰ ὡς ἀληθῶς τίμια αἰδώς, τίτι τῶν εὐφρονούντων οὐ παντὸς πλούτου καὶ τῆς νομιζομένης εὐτυχίας παρὰ πολὺ τιμιώτερα ταῦτα; καὶ πλείω τούτων ἐγὼ κατιδὼν ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ πείρα [καταμαθὼν] {πιστωσάμενος} τὸν τῆς συνέσεως αὐτοῦ πλούτον, ἐν οἷς ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ κοινῇ διεiléχθην ἐκείνῳ μετὰ τὴν σὴν ἀποδημίαν, δίκαιον ῥήθην, ὦ βασιλεῦ,”

⁹⁷ For Hunger's assiduous reconstruction of the chronology, through which he dates these two orations to the end of Manuel's second trip to the Peloponnese in 1416, see Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, 55–58. This date, however, is rejected by Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 116 n. 20, who prefers the earlier date of 1409, relying on the arguments of Ivan Djurić, *Le crépuscule de Byzance* (Paris, 1996), 142–43. However, Djurić, and Kiousopoulou after him, misrepresent the preponderance of evidence presented by Hunger for the later date (“se référant à certaines exagérations panégyriques employées pour décrire le jeune empereur”); in fact Hunger, drawing on a range of textual *and* codicological evidence, does not hesitate to date the text, but rather acknowledges the complexities before coming down on the side of the later date. The Italian translation of Djurić's book, originally published in Serbo-Croatian, is superior to the French translation cited above, which lacks, among other things, a bibliography; therefore subsequent references will be to Ivan Djurić, *Il crepuscolo di Bisanzio: i tempi di Giovanni VIII Paleologo (1392-1448)*, trans. Silvia Vacca (Rome, 1995). The second oration is Chortasmenos, *Address from Manuel Asanopoulos*. Hunger posited that this Manuel is the young son of Andreas Asanes, a distant relation and the recipient of Manuel's treatise on dream interpretation in 1389. Andreas Asanes also appeared—with Manuel's close friend Demetrios Chrysoloras—among the members of the Senate at the synod of Constantinople in 1409. Andreas Asanes (PLP 1486) is described as the emperor's ἐξάδελφος (cousin) in Manuel II's *prostagma* to the Lavra monastery on Mt. Athos regarding tax exemptions for the monastery's holdings on Lemnos: Paul Lemerle, André Guillou, Nicolas Svoronos, and Denise Papachryssanthou, eds., *Actes de Lavra, vol. 3, de 1329 à 1500* (Paris, 1979), no. 157, p. 142; Dölger, *Regesten* 3304. In the synodal tome of 1409, Andreas Asanes and Demetrios Palaiologos Goudeles are οἱ τε περιπόθητοι ἐξάδελφοι αὐτοῦ: Laurent, “Le trisépiscopat du patriarche Matthieu Ier,” 134.253–55. For Manuel's discourse to Andreas, see Jean-François Boissonade, *Anecdota Nova* (Paris, 1844), 239–46. Andreas does not, however, appear in any of Manuel's surviving correspondence.

⁹⁸ Nikephoros Basilakes describes this phenomenon, the teacher writing a piece for his student, in the preface to his speeches, as an explanation for the fact that his imperial oration “gambols like a child beside his mother.” *Nicephori Basilacae orationes et epistolae*, ed. A. Garzya (Leipzig, 1984), 8.24–28. See also Robert Browning, “An Anonymous βασιλικὸς λόγος Addressed to Alexius I Comnenus,” *Byzantion* 28 (1958): 33, 36–40; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 38 n. 9. In the fifteenth century, see the addresses of John Dokeianos, written for Demetrios Palaiologos's daughter Helena, referenced below.

the fruit of Manuel's extensive patronage, though both of these hypotheses must remain provisional.

A contemporary of Demetrios Chrysoloras, Makres, and Chortasmenos, who enjoyed Manuel II's favor at some distance from Constantinople, was the teacher and imperial emissary Manuel Chrysoloras.⁹⁹ Most renowned for his role in the revival of Greek learning in the early *quattrocento* Italy, Chrysoloras taught first in Florence. There he trained a gifted generation of enthusiastic young Hellenists who would themselves go on to further the study of Greek language and literature in Italy in the fifteenth century, including Guarino of Verona, Leonardo Bruni and Palla Strozzi.¹⁰⁰ Manuel Chrysoloras also served as an agent of imperial diplomacy.¹⁰¹ After his sojourn as a teacher, he traveled as ambassador for Manuel II to Venice, Paris, London, Bologna, and finally to the Council of Constance where he died in April 1415. The two Manuels, diplomat and emperor, shared an intellectual lineage as students of the great Byzantine scholar

⁹⁹ On Chrysoloras, see PLP 31165; ODB I, 454; Cammelli, *Crisolora*; Dennis, *Letters*, xxxiv–xxxvii, xlv, lvi; Hunger, *Chortasmenos*, 96–101; Barker, *Manuel II*, *passim*, esp. 261–67; Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Discourse*, 35–52.

¹⁰⁰ On Manuel Chrysoloras's role in the Italian Renaissance, see the recent study by Lydia Thorn-Wickert, *Manuel Chrysoloras (ca. 1350–1415): eine Biographie des byzantinischen Intellektuellen vor dem Hintergrund der hellenistischen Studien in der italienischen Renaissance* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006); among abundant older scholarship, see also Setton, "The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance," 57ff; Michael Baxandall, "Guarino, Pisanello and Manuel Chrysoloras," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965): 183–204; Ian Thomson, "Manuel Chrysoloras and the Early Italian Renaissance," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 7.1 (1966): 63–82; Christine Smith, *Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Eloquence, 1400–1470* (New York, 1992), 133–70; On Chrysoloras's role in Greek pedagogy specifically, see Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy*, 8–12; Federica Ciccolella, *Donati Graeci: Learning Greek in the Renaissance* (Leiden, 2008), 97–138; Paul Botley, *Learning Greek in Western Europe, 1396–1529: Grammars, Lexica, and Classroom Texts* (Philadelphia, 2010), 7–12. Chrysoloras's innovation in his grammar reduced the number of declensions to be memorized from 56 to 10, an organization based on genitive, rather than nominative forms.

¹⁰¹ On the reputation of Chrysoloras among humanists, which veered into stereotype for some, see Hartmut Wulfram, "Ein Heilsbringer aus dem Osten. Manuel Chrysoloras und seine Entindividualisierung im italienischen Frühhumanismus," in *Byzanzrezeption in Europa: Spurensuche über das Mittelalter und die Renaissance bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. Foteini Kolovou (Berlin, 2012), 89–116. On Byzantine diplomacy in the Palaiologan period, see Stavroula Andriopoulou, "Diplomatic Communication between Byzantium and the West under the Late Palaiologoi (1354–1453)" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2010); Sebastian Kolditz, *Johannes VIII. Palaiologos und das Konzil von Ferrara-Florenz (1438/39): das byzantinische Kaisertum im Dialog mit dem Westen*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 2013), 2:481–94.

Demetrios Kydones, and Manuel Chrysoloras remained throughout his life a close friend and frequent correspondent of the emperor. He sent to the emperor his discourse comparing the old and new Romes that he wrote during his sojourn in the Italian city in 1411. The letter shows a deep knowledge of the history and monuments of pagan and Christian Rome, as well as the candid acknowledgement that all earthly empires are transient.¹⁰² Manuel Chrysoloras must have also circulated the letter among other humanists, for it was praised as an example of his surpassing eloquence in a funeral oration written for the Byzantine scholar.¹⁰³ In a second letter, written to Manuel II from the papal court in Bologna in the summer of 1414, the scholar responded to the Manuel II's request for feedback on his funeral oration for his brother Theodore, who had died in 1407. Chrysoloras used the discourse to enumerate the steps necessary to revive the Hellenic *genos* from its cultural torpor.¹⁰⁴

Constantinople was not the only cultural magnet for ambitious young men in fifteenth-century Byzantium; the despot's court in Mistra in the Peloponnese also drew young strivers to its halls. In distinction from Constantinople, however, the attraction in Mistra was not so much its prince, but the teacher and philosopher George Gemistos Pletho.¹⁰⁵ As a teacher of ancient

¹⁰² See the most recent edition, from Chrysoloras's autograph in the Biblioteca Laurenziana: Cristina Billò, "Τοῦ Χρυσωλорᾶ Σύγκρισις Παλαιᾶς καὶ Νέας Ῥώμης," *Medioevo greco* 0 (2000): 1–26. Scholars long believed this letter was written to John Palaiologos (despite its repeated references to the author's extensive correspondence with the addressee, who could only be Manuel II); this view was corrected by Antonio Rollo, "Sul destinatario della Σύγκρισις τῆς παλαιᾶς καὶ νέας Ῥώμης di Manuele Crisolora," in *Vetustatis indagator. Scritti offerti a Filippo di Benedetto*, ed. Vincenzo Fera and Augusto Guida (Messina, 1999), 61–80. On the date, see *Manuele Crisolora. Le due Rome: Confronto tra Roma e Costantinopoli*, ed. Francesca Niutta, trans. Francesco Aleari (Bologna, 2001), 14.

¹⁰³ Andreas Julianus, "Oratio funebris pro Manuele Chrysolora," in Christian Boerner, *De doctis hominibus Graecis, litterarum Graecarum in Italia instauratoribus* (Leipzig, 1750), 33.

¹⁰⁴ Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Discourse*, 38–39. As we saw with Demetrios Chrysoloras, Manuel II was in the habit of sending his writings to his correspondents for notes, and he circulated the funeral oration to several associates, including Pletho.

¹⁰⁵ Pletho is probably the most singular late Byzantine intellectual and the literature on him is vast; see PLP 3630; ODB III, 1685; Hunger I, 24f., 40, 87, 140–47, 510–11. I list here only the most recent general studies on his life, his thought and his legacy, which remain fiercely disputed, especially his status as a neo-pagan. See François Masai,

history and philosophy, Pletho made Mistra intellectually electrifying in the first half of the fifteenth century, attracting brilliant students among the last generation of Byzantine intellectuals—Bessarion, Mark Eugenikos and probably his brother John, as well as the historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles.¹⁰⁶ Pletho appeared in Mistra sometime around 1414, at which point he held a judicial position in the imperial bureaucracy.¹⁰⁷ In addition to being a teacher and an imperial judge, Pletho also owned landed estates by imperial grant, including the village of Byrsis and Phanarion along with their revenues.¹⁰⁸ But it was his advocacy of radical ideals that has made him either famous or infamous among his contemporaries and later scholars. Soon after the first record of his presence in the Morea, Pletho addressed the first of his well-known political works to the new despot, Manuel II's son Theodore. This discourse offered frank advice to the young prince on the institutional, social, and political reforms necessary for the preservation of

Pléthon et Le Platonisme de Mistra (Paris, 1956); C. M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford, 1986); Niketas Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge, 2011), who examines his work from a Straussian, philosophical perspective and views Pletho as a neo-pagan; Vojtěch Hladký, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy* (Farnham, UK, 2014), who disagrees fundamentally with Siniossoglou and argues that Pletho was an innovative, but ultimately orthodox, philosopher.

¹⁰⁶ On his pupils and pedagogy, see Woodhouse, *Plethon*, 32–47;

¹⁰⁷ The conventional date of Pletho's arrival in the Peloponnese is offered by Zakythinos II, 324–25, and Woodhouse, *Plethon*, 29, which ultimately originates from Sabbadini, Mercati, and Cammelli, based on the reading of Pletho's προθεωρία for Manuel II's long funeral oration to his brother, Despot Theodore I, supposedly read aloud at Theodore's funeral in 1409. However, Patrinelis and Sofianos have amended this chronology on the basis of their edition of the epistolary discourse from Manuel Chrysoloras to Manuel II, which contains internal clues that suggest the completion of the funeral oration, and hence Pletho's προθεωρία must be dated no earlier than 1415; see Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Discourse*, 44–48. Pletho also served as a judge; he may also be among the four judges cryptically referenced in *Mazaris's Journey to Hades*, 18.30–31 (τὸν δὲ Μόγῳν μεστόν); see the note on 103, which references the explication of this abstruse passage in G. I. Theocharides, “Τέσσαρες Βυζαντινοὶ καθολικοὶ κριταὶ λαμβάνοντες ἐν Βυζαντινῷ γνωστῷ κειμένῳ,” *Makedonika* 4 (1960): 495–500; see also Woodhouse, *Plethon*, 87; Estangüi Gómez, *Byzance face aux Ottomans*, 382, who cites an archival document from Vatopedi dating from 10 December 1414 listing Pletho (George Gemistos in the document) as one of the two judges general.

¹⁰⁸ See Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 3423 from October 1428, which confirms the privileges granted in an argyrobull issued by Despot Theodore II; the grant of incomes for Phanarion did not exempt Pletho from having to pay the φλωριατικόν, a tax levied to pay for the defense of the Peloponnese.

the *genos* and *basileia*, including radical changes to the despotate's social organization, economic, and monetary policy.¹⁰⁹ Strongly influenced by Platonic political models, these admonitions nevertheless went unheeded, though Pletho repeated many of them in two similar addresses to Manuel II a few years later.¹¹⁰ As his memoranda made clear, Pletho's loyalty remained to the Morea more than the empire; so, when Demetrios Palaiologos became despot in the late 1440s, Pletho wrote an address to his new lord celebrating the despot's reconciliation with his brother Thomas.¹¹¹ But beyond his own provocative writings, Pletho taught a number of late Byzantine scholars who would go on to play important roles in the intellectual, religious and cultural life of the fifteenth century.

None of his pupils ascended to greater heights than Bessarion, who first distinguished himself as a prelate and philosopher, and later became a Catholic cardinal and avid collector of Greek and Latin manuscripts.¹¹² John Chortasmenos, then Metropolitan of Selymbria, taught

¹⁰⁹ Pletho, *On the Peloponnese to Theodore*.

¹¹⁰ Pletho, *On the Peloponnese to Manuel II*; Pletho, *Isthmus*.

¹¹¹ The despot confirmed fiscal privileges for Pletho's children with an argyrobull in 1450, and in 1451: see Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller, ed., *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, 6 vols. (Vienna, 1860–90), 3:225–27; LPP IV, 192–95. For the oration, see Pletho, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*.

¹¹² See PLP 2707; ODB I, 285; Bessarion's basic biography has been well covered by a number of scholars: Raymond J. Loenertz, "Pour la biographie du cardinal Bessarion," *OCP* 10 (1944): 116–49; H.D. Saffrey, "Recherches sur quelques autographes du cardinal Bessarion et leur caractère autobiographique," in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, 7 vols. (Vatican City, 1964), 3:263–97; Joseph Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence: and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1964), 45–54; the definitive study remains the magisterial biography of Ludwig Mohler (=Mohler I–III). His precise year of birth has been the subject of some debate; for the various views, see John Monfasani, "Platina, Capranica, and Perotti: Bessarion's Latin Eulogists and his Date of Birth," in *Bartolomeo Sacchi Il Platina (Piadena 1421–Roma 1481): Atti del Convegno internazionale (Trento, 22–23 ottobre 1990)*, ed. Mariarosa Cortesi and Enrico V. Maltese (Naples, 1992), 97–136; Monfasani settles on 1408 based on the witnesses of Ambrogio Traversari, Niccolò Perotti and others. This date is further corroborated by the meticulous scholarship of Thierry Ganchou, "Les *ultimae voluntates* de Manuel et Iôannès Chrysolôras et le séjour de Francesco Filelfo à Constantinople," *Bizantinistica: Rivista di studi bizantini e slavi* 7 (2005): 256 n. 204, where he accepts Monfasani's correction and adds another witness to the dock.

the young man rhetoric and philosophy, and first recommended the tutelage of Pletho.¹¹³ Under the stern guidance of this philosopher, Bessarion studied mathematics, astronomy and philosophy, especially the Platonic tradition, laying the foundation for the profound erudition for which he was later celebrated in Italy.¹¹⁴ As a very young man, no doubt drawing on the rhetorical education he received from Chortasmenos, he wrote a number of rhetorical compositions, monodies on the deaths of Manuel II and Theodora Komnene, as well as an imperial oration to Alexios IV Grand Komnenos, ruler of Trebizond, delivered in 1426 during the negotiations for the marriage of Maria of Trebizond to John VIII.¹¹⁵ Though Bessarion converted to Catholicism after the Council of Ferrara-Florence, he remained a passionate advocate for Byzantine affairs and addressed an admonitory discourse to Despot Constantine Palaiologos in 1444, full of practical recommendations for strengthening the Peloponnese.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ At Chrysokokkes' school in Constantinople, Bessarion was a fellow pupil with the humanist Francesco Filelfo; see Ganchou, "Les *ultimae voluntates*," 253–58. According to Bessarion's funeral oration, Chortasmenos—then Ignatios of Selymbria—in particular was an important early influence on Bessarion's intellectual development and the man from whom the cardinal learned his formative philosophical and ethical principles: *Oratio in funere Bessarionis*, in Mohler III, 406.26–34.

¹¹⁴ *Oratio in funere Bessarionis*, in Mohler III, 406.34–407.3; Setton, "The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance," 72; Woodhouse, *Plethon*, 32–33. It was under Pletho as well that Bessarion began to assiduously transcribe and collect manuscripts; see Elpidio Mioni, "Bessarione bibliofilo e filologo," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 5 (1968): 64–65.

¹¹⁵ For a full list of his rhetorical compositions, see PLP 2707. His oration to Alexios IV was likely delivered as a part of an embassy to Trebizond around 1426 to negotiate the marriage of Alexios IV's daughter to John VIII; see E. J. Stormon, "Bessarion before the Council of Florence. A Survey of His Early Writings (1423-1437)," in *Byzantine Papers. Proceedings of the First Australian Byzantine Studies Conference*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, and Ann Moffatt (Canberra, 1981), 133–34.

¹¹⁶ See Bessarion, *Discourse to Constantine Palaiologos*. The cardinal assembled his own scholarly entourage in Italy, including both émigrés and Italian humanists: see Mohler I, 325–35; Concetta Bianca, "Roma e l'accademia bessarionea," in *Bessarione e l'Umanesimo*, ed. Gianfranco Fiaccadori (Naples, 1994), 119–27; John Monfasani, "Two Fifteenth-Century 'Platonic Academies': Bessarion's and Ficino's," in *On Renaissance Academies*, ed. Marianne Pade (Rome, 2011), 61–65. Bessarion's circle in Rome became first, under Pope Nicholas V, a center for translating Greek works into Latin and later the *locus* for the passionate debates over Aristotelianism and Platonism which began among Byzantine émigrés but soon attracted partisans from the ranks of Italian humanists and was one of the chief intellectual controversies of the middle of the fifteenth century, with profound consequences for Greek studies and the history of philosophy.

Even after the fall of Constantinople, Bessarion remained unstinting in his efforts to rally princes of Europe to the cause of another crusade to liberate the city. Just before Pius II convened the Council of Mantua to call for a renewed crusade against the Ottomans, Bessarion wrote a long series of “talking points” for a certain Franciscan who was dispatched to preach the crusade around the eastern Mediterranean.¹¹⁷

Another orator whose career paralleled Bessarion’s, from his rise as a scholar and a prelate to his later attainment of a cardinal’s hat, was Isidore of Kiev.¹¹⁸ Isidore’s first rhetorical composition for the emperor was a brief panegyric to Manuel II, describing the delirious joy of the Constantinopolitan citizens upon the emperor’s return from his journey to the west in the summer of 1403, written when Isidore was probably still a teenager.¹¹⁹ Isidore later delivered

¹¹⁷ This letter is addressed to the Franciscan friar Jakob Pikentinos (LPP IV, 255–58), dated 20 May 1459; thus it must be read as a complement to Pius II’s letter of instruction to the same friar (LPP IV, 251–53), dated 14th Kalends of June (=19 May) in which the pope instructs the friar to travel to Cyprus, Illyria and Sicily, to inspire through his preaching enthusiasm for the coming endeavor. As it turns out, Pius II’s planned crusade foundered at the quay, never gaining enough support to depart for Constantinople. On Pius II and the Council of Mantua, see Setton II, 204–19; Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453-1505* (Oxford, 2012). This crusade, so anxiously desired by Bessarion, foundered before it launched, as only the Venetians arrived at Ancona in the summer of 1464 and Pius II died shortly thereafter.

¹¹⁸ See PLP 8300; ODB II, 1015–16; on his career and theological writings, see Beck, *KtL* 765–67; for the bibliography on his letters, edited in a number of different publications, see Hunger I, 237. Isidore’s origins and early years (including his year of birth) are the subject of some dispute; the recent study Marios Philippides and Walter K. Hanak, *Cardinal Isidore, c. 1390–1462: A Late Byzantine Scholar, Warlord, and Prelate* (Abingdon, 2018), is dense but does an admirable job wending through this thicket, though it is not without issues. Philippides and Hanak propose that Isidore may have been related to the imperial family (possibly an illegitimate half-brother of Manuel II?); but they seem unaware of his imperial oration (see below) which would push back his date of birth. Other foundational work on Isidore’s biography and career (with documents) is found in Giovanni Mercati, *Scritti d’Isidoro il Cardinale Rutenio e codici a lui appartenuti che si conservano nella Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana* (Rome, 1926). For an evocative portrait of Isidore, see Adolf W. Ziegler, “Isidore de Kiev, apôtre de l’Union florentine,” *Irenikon* 13 (1936): 393–410. See also Zakythinos II, 329–31; Georg Hofmann, “Quellen zu Isidor von Kiew als Kardinal und Patriarch,” *OCP* 18 (1952): 143–57; Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence*, 65–78.

¹¹⁹ The oration was published recently in Polemis, “Two Praises of the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos,” with accompanying textual and codicological analysis. The text was first attributed, tentatively to be sure, to Isidore of Kiev by Mercati, *Scritti d’Isidoro*, 24. Polemis retains reservations about Mercati’s attribution, based on the negative portrait of John VII’s regency in Constantinople presented by the encomiast (pp. 705–06), which is at odds with Isidore’s portrayal of John VII later in life; however, he notes a few significant *loci communes* shared between the encomium and other works of Isidore at p. 711 n.47, n.53, to which should be added the image of the “second sun rising from the west” which appears in both orations: Polemis, “Two Praises of the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos,” 708.55–56; and Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 163.30–31. Furthermore, a quotation from Plato, *Phaedrus* 264d (itself

Manuel II's funeral oration for his deceased brother, Theodore (d. 1407) at the despot's funeral around 1416.¹²⁰ Thereafter his stature only grew, as in 1429 he defended the rights of the Metropolitan of Monembasia before the patriarch and delivered his imperial oration to John VIII, the longest preserved from our period.¹²¹ These two performances in Constantinople—before the patriarch and before the emperor—must have established his credentials as an exceptional orator, for it was Isidore who delivered a panegyric oration to the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund on an embassy to the Council of Basel in 1434.¹²² After the Council of

a quotation of an epigram on Midas), that men would not cease to glorify the emperor's most divine name, "as long as water flows and tall trees bloom" (ἄχρις ἂν ὕδωρ τε νάη, καὶ δένδρεα θάλλη μακρά, 710.124–25), appears, as Polemis notes, repeatedly in Isidore's compositions: in one of Isidore's letters (Adolf W. Ziegler, "Vier bisher nicht veröffentlichte Briefe Isidors von Kijev," *BZ* 44 (1951): 77); in his oration to Emperor Sigismund in 1434, in Isidore, "Begrüßungsansprache," 176; and in Isidore's oration to John VIII (Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 175.16). This means that the same passage from Plato appears in both imperial orations conclusively identified with Isidore (to John VIII and Sigismund) as well as one of his letters, and nowhere else in late Byzantine imperial orations. Thus, I consider this oration the work of a young Isidore—if it were composed in 1403, the scholar would have been around 18.

¹²⁰ The identity of the hieromonk Isidore with Isidore of Kiev has been disputed: in favor, see Zakythinos, "Μανουὴλ Β' Παλαιολόγος," 50–64; against, see Vitalien Laurent, "Isidore de Kiev et la métropole de Monembasie," *REB* 17 (1957): 150–57. However, the manuscript evidence favors Zakythinos's identification. Juliana Chysostomides argues that Isidore was entrusted with the task since he had cooperated closely with Manuel in the preparation of the oration and copied both an early draft (Escorial Cod. gr. 14) and the final version (Par. suppl. gr. 309) of the text: Chrysostomides, *Manuel II: Funeral Oration*, 29. Isidore has also been proposed as a copyist of one of the chief witnesses of Manuel's political works in Vienna, ÖNB Cod. phil. gr. 42; see Kakkoura, "An Annotated Critical Edition," 198. The date of the delivery of Manuel's funeral oration has traditionally been 1409; Patrinelis and Sofianos, however, have persuasively revised this date significantly, arguing from the internal evidence of Manuel Chrysoloras's epistolary discourse, as well as the emperor's correspondence, that the oration was not finished before 1415, and would not have been delivered by Isidore if the occasion had arisen while the emperor himself were in the Peloponnese; this argument has important consequences for other dates, such as Pletho's earliest presence in the Morea. For the revised chronology and older bibliography, see Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Discourse*, 45–47.

¹²¹ Beck, *KtL* 766; Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence*, 66, who argues Isidore was chosen because he had previously written two vigorous defenses of Monembasia's ecclesiastical rights, edited in Spyridon Lampros, "Δύο ἀναφοραί Μητροπολίτου Μονεμβασίας πρὸς τὸν Πατριάρχην," *NE* 12 (1915): 257–318. See also Zakythinos II, 330–31; Laurent, "Isidore de Kiev," rejects Mercati's argument that Isidore of Kiev was the Metropolitan of Monembasia at the time, arguing that he was an emissary instead. Lampros edits the oration as an anonymous work (LPP III, 132–99), but the attribution of Mercati, *Scritti d'Isidoro*, 6, has been decisive. For the date of the work, revised to 1429, see Schmitt, "Kaiserrede und Zeitgeschichte," 241–42.

¹²² For the text and remarks, see Isidore, "Begrüßungsansprache"; see also Ekaterini Mitsiou, "Eine Untersuchung ausgewählter byzantinischer rhetorischer Texte auf westliche Herrscher vorwiegend anhand einer Begrüßungsansprache an den deutschen Kaiser Sigismund (1434)," in *Church Union and Crusading in the Fourteenth and*

Ferrara-Florence, Isidore's diplomatic endeavors served the papacy rather than the emperor, and the subsequent decade of his life was consumed in missions for the Holy See, through eastern Europe, Greece and Russia.¹²³ Isidore celebrated the uniate mass in Hagia Sophia in December 1452, and had the misfortune to be present in Constantinople during the Ottoman sack, where he was wounded and captured by the Turks. His experience gave his voice great authority, for after his ransom, he wrote impassioned letters describing the city's depredation to Bessarion, Pope Nicholas V, and the doge of Venice.¹²⁴

Bessarion and Isidore's glittering careers, during which they traveled from court to court in service of first emperor then pope, constantly exhorting princes with their oratory, reveal another distinctive characteristic of imperial orators of the fifteenth century. Unlike the rhetoricians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the last orators of Byzantium traveled far beyond familiar cultural and political frontiers. Whether impelled by imperial embassies or financial exigencies, these scholars became intimately familiar with the other political cultures, languages and religious orthodoxies of Europe.

The burgeoning humanist desire for Greek pedagogy, first kindled by Chrysoloras, drew a new generation of Byzantine scholars to Italy. By the middle of the fifteenth century, there were numerous Byzantines teaching Greek in Italian cities and universities as well as a number of

Fifteenth Centuries, ed. Christian Gastgeber et al. (Cluj-Napoca, 2009), 79–92; eadem, “Vier byzantinische rhetorische Texte auf westliche Herrscher,” in *Emperor Sigismund and the Orthodox World*, ed. eadem et al. (Vienna, 2010), 32–39.

¹²³ Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence*, 73–74.

¹²⁴ For his letter to Cardinal Bessarion, see Georg Hofmann, “Ein Brief des Kardinals Isidor von Kiew an Kardinal Bessarion,” *OCP* 14 (1948): 405–14; to Pope Nicholas V, see Luigi Silvano, “Per l'epistolario di Isidoro di Kiev: la lettera a Papa Niccolò V del 6 luglio 1453,” *Medioevo Greco* 13 (2013): 223–40; a second letter to Pope Nicholas V, Agostino Pertusi, ed., *La Caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. 1, *Le testimonianze dei contemporanei*, (Milan, 1976), 92–100; to Doge Francesco Foscari of Venice, A.G. Welykyj, “Duae epistolae cardinalis Isidori ineditae,” in *Analecta Ordinis Sancti Basilii Magni*, ser. II, vol. 1, fasc. 2–3 (Rome, 1950), 285–89.

Italians who had studied in Constantinople.¹²⁵ One such Byzantine scholar, among the last panegyricists of a Byzantine emperor, was the philosopher John Argyropoulos.¹²⁶ Argyropoulos's career, like many of his contemporaries, shows the inherent inconstancy of a life of letters in the fifteenth century, constantly chasing employers, patrons and students. Like most of his peers, Argyropoulos, educated in Constantinople, enjoyed the early patronage of John VIII and established a school in the capital at his direction.¹²⁷ He traveled to Padua in 1441, where he found employment as a private Greek tutor to the Florentine humanist Palla Strozzi while attending lectures at the university there.¹²⁸ After finishing degrees in both medicine and letters,

¹²⁵ These include of course Manuel Chrysoloras and Theodore Gaza; among the Italians in Constantinople, Ubertino Posculo, Francesco Filelfo and Guarino Guarini.

¹²⁶ See PLP 1267; ODB I, 164–65. Still valuable is the introduction in Spyridon Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια* (Athens, 1910), δ'-ρθ'; more recent but less comprehensive is Giuseppe Cammelli, *I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'umanesimo*, vol. 2, *Giovanni Argiropulo* (Florence, 1941); see also Deno J. Geanakoplos, "The Career of the Byzantine Humanist Professor John Argyropoulos in Florence and Rome (1410-87): The Turn of Metaphysics," in *Constantinople and the West: Essays on the Late Byzantine (Palaeologan) and Italian Renaissances and the Byzantine and Roman Churches* (Madison, WI, 1989), 91–113, though it over-emphasizes Argyropoulos's role in the revival of speculative philosophy; on his manuscripts, see RGK I, 158; II, 212; III, 263.

¹²⁷ A scurrilous invective against a certain Katablattas has been attributed to Argyropoulos, yielding some otherwise elusive biographical information, such as his birth in the capital in the last decade of the fourteenth century, and his early education in Thessalonike. See the persuasive arguments, based on biographical similarities and stylistic affinities, marshalled in Pierre Canivet and Nicolas Oikonomidès, "La Comédie de Katablattas. Invective byzantine du XVe s.," *Diphycha* 3 (1982–83): 15–20; Geanakoplos, "The Career of the Byzantine Humanist Professor John Argyropoulos," 92. Geanakoplos speculates that his teacher in Constantinople may have been Chortasmenos; if, however, Chortasmenos and Argyropoulos had a relationship, it has left no epistolary trace in the autograph manuscript of Chortasmenos's letter collection edited in Hunger, *Chortasmenos*. His date of birth has recently been modified from 1393/4 to 1395 by Thierry Ganchou, "Iōannēs Argyropoulos, Géorgios Trapézountios et le patron crétois Géorgios Maurikas," *Thesaurismata* 38 (2008): 105–11, esp. 110 n. 16; Ganchou further illuminates a previously unknown sojourn as a teacher in Crete in 1423, perhaps indicating early efforts to find employment before his reputation in the capital was established. The school is mentioned in his letter to George Scholarios, in Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, 74.1-5, in which he claims he educated many Italians who came to learn especially about Aristotle; see also Mergiali, *L'enseignement et les lettrés pendant l'époque des Paléologues*, 232–33. Lampros identified Argyropoulos's addressee as George of Trebizond, but John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of His Rhetoric and Logic* (Leiden, 1976), 375–78, has conclusively demonstrated it was George Scholarios instead. Doukas recounts Argyropoulos as a member of the delegation at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (31.4); Lampros admits it is surprising not to find him mentioned in Syropoulos or numbered among the learned members of the delegation, but suggests that it could be due to his youth, or his low rank of deacon, Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, ια'-ιβ'. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 376, however, argues that Doukas's note mistakes Argyropoulos for Amiroutzes, and thus that Argyropoulos did not attend the council.

¹²⁸ On his time at Padua, see Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, ιβ'-ιζ'; Cammelli, *Giovanni Argiropulo*, 21–27; Geanakoplos, "The Career of the Byzantine Humanist Professor John Argyropoulos," 94–95. According to Vespasiano da Bisticci,

he returned again to Constantinople, where he had been appointed by Constantine XI to take a teaching position in the short-lived school established by this last emperor, teaching medicine.¹²⁹

It is during these final years in Constantinople that he delivered several imperial orations to Constantine XI: a panegyric; a monody and consolatory address, both regarding the death of Constantine's brother John VIII.¹³⁰

The fall of Constantinople presented Argyropoulos with a dilemma: his patron, the emperor, was dead; his students dispersed. Argyropoulos, though, had developed a reputation in Italy for philosophical erudition, much in demand among those humanists who longed to wrestle with Aristotle and Plato in their original Greek. Thus, with the support of Cosimo de' Medici and Donato Acciaiuoli, Argyropoulos traveled to Italy and took up a position in Florence, teaching

Argyropoulos was retained specifically for his tutelage in the works of Aristotle: Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Renaissance Princes, Popes and Prelates: the Vespasiano Memoirs, Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century*, trans. William George and Emily Waters (New York, 1963), 243.

¹²⁹ For his medical pedagogy, see the scholion in Brigitte Mondrain, "Jean Argyropoulos professeur à Constantinople et ses auditeurs médecins, d'Andronic Eparque à Demetrios Angelos," in *ΠΟΛΥΤΕΛΕΥΡΟΣ ΝΟΥΣ: Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Cordula Scholz and Georgios Makris (Munich, 2000), 227 n. 16; Mergiali, *L'enseignement et les lettrés pendant l'époque des Paléologues (1261-1453)*, 233. According to Michael Apostoles, he also taught dialectic, presumably Aristotelian; see his προσφώνημα to Argyropoulos, in Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, 229.19–230.4.

¹³⁰ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos* was his first imperial panegyric; Hunger calls this a στεφανητικός or coronation speech, but this is likely a misinterpretation of Argyropoulos's claim to offer Constantine a "crown" of praise; see the remarks in Antonia Giannouli, "Coronation Speeches in the Palaiologan Period," in *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. Alexander Beihammer, Stavroula Constantinou, and Maria Parani (Leiden, 2013), 217–20. Firstly, imperial orations were no longer delivered on occasions such as coronations. Secondly, Constantine XI famously did not have a coronation in Constantinople; he was crowned in Mistra, which led to his condemnation by some as an illegitimate claimant (e.g., Doukas 28.7, 33.1, 34.2). It is more likely that Argyropoulos delivered the oration to the emperor on his arrival in Constantinople in the spring of 1449; see Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, κα'. The second imperial oration was first published by Lampros as a παραμυθητικός, or consolatory address, to Constantine XI on his ascension after the death of his brother, John VIII (edited in Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, 8–28); however, when this oration was republished in LPP IV, 67–82—appearing after Lampros's death—it was erroneously ascribed to Michael Apostoles by Ioannis Bougartzidis, the editor of the final volume of Lampros's great work. For the full explication of the error, see Ch. G. Patrineles, "Νόθα, ἀνύπαρκτα καὶ συγγεόμενα πρὸς ἄλληλα ἔργα τοῦ Μιχαὴλ Ἀποστόλη," *Ἐπετηρίς ἐταιρείας βυζαντινῶν σπουδῶν* 30 (1961): 204–05; noted in Hunger I, 151 n. 33.

ancient philosophy.¹³¹ In these years, Argyropoulos also delivered an oration before Pope Nicholas V in Rome pledging his fidelity to Roman theological doctrines, probably representing his ceremonial conversion to Catholicism.¹³² During a brief sojourn in Rome in the 1470s, he also composed a treatise on princely and political virtue.¹³³ Not all Byzantine emigrés enjoyed Argyropoulos’s success, however. His Italian university education and solid command of Latin, his contacts among humanists and knowledge of ancient philosophy provided him great advantages in securing stable employment in Italy. Many others spent their lives searching in vain for an elusive teaching position somewhere, anywhere, in Europe.

One such figure was Michael Apostoles, a voice of perennial despondency over his failure to achieve scholarly renown and financial security.¹³⁴ A student and protégé of Argyropoulos, Apostoles may also have traveled briefly to Mistra to study with Pletho in the final years of that

¹³¹ Geanakoplos, “The Career of the Byzantine Humanist Professor John Argyropoulos,” 101–04; see also the testimony in Bisticci, *Renaissance Princes, Popes and Prelates*, 229.

¹³² Argyropoulos’s oration to Pope Nicholas V, delivered c. 1450/1, in Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, 129–41; his confession of faith begins at 135.27. Argyropoulos does claim, however, that even before his oration to the pope he had not hesitated to refute those who disparaged Catholic doctrine, even before the emperor: “Εἰ γὰρ καὶ πρὸ τῆς παρούσης ὁμολογίας οὐδ’ ὅπως οὖν ὑπεστελλόμεν μετὰ παρηρησίας ἀντιλέγων τε καὶ ἐναντιούμενος τοῖς ταῦτα διασῦρειν καὶ μωμεύειν ἐθέλουσιν ἔν τε τοῖς βασιλείοις αὐτοῖς ἔν τε πατριαρχείοις ἔν τ’ ἀγοραῖς ἔν τε μοναστηρίοις καὶ πανταχῇ τῆς μεγάλης πόλεως ἐκείνης” (140.10–14).

¹³³ Argyropoulos’s sojourn in Rome is attested by letters 5–11, sent from the city to various Italian princes, edited in Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, 191–97; see also Cammelli, *Giovanni Argiropulo*, 131–47; Geanakoplos, “The Career of the Byzantine Humanist Professor John Argyropoulos,” 109–11. For the last of Argyropoulos’s political writings, the treatise *De institutione eorum qui in dignitate constituti sunt* which draws on the traditions of both Byzantine imperial panegyric and humanist *Fürstenspiegel*, see Anna Cariello, “Un trattato politico tra Bisanzio e l’Italia. Il *De institutione eorum qui in dignitate constituti sunt* di Giovanni Argiropulo,” *Bollettino dell’Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* 114 (2012): 57–88.

¹³⁴ See PLP 1201; ODB I, 140–41. See also the study, albeit quite dated, Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique, ou, Description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés par des Grecs aux XVe et XVIe siècles*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1885–1906), 1:lviii–lxx; Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, 73–110; Rudolf S. Stefec, “Aus der literarischen Werkstatt des Michael Apostoles,” *JÖB* 60 (2010): 129–48; Alexander Riehle, “Fremdsprachendidaktik zwischen Ost und West. Michaelos Apostoles und der Griechischunterricht im Quattrocento,” in *Byzanz in Europa. Europas östliches Erbe*, ed. Michael Altripp (Turnhout, 2011), 25–49; *Die Briefe des Michael Apostoles*, ed. Rudolf Stefec (Hamburg, 2013), esp. 5–20. On Apostoles’s employment by Bessarion, see, for instance, Bessarion’s instructions to him in Ep. 30 (Mohler III, 479.13–24), where he admonishes Apostoles to buy any manuscripts he comes across.

philosopher's life.¹³⁵ Otherwise he remained connected to the court of Constantine XI, though he came of age too late to enjoy any extended patronage.¹³⁶ His only imperial address is a full-throated defense of his orthodoxy before Constantine XI against unnamed calumniators in Crete. He adorned his speech with the standard panegyric elements, like praise of the emperor's virtues, which became all the more important since he hoped to convince Constantine XI of his religious purity.¹³⁷ After the fall of Constantinople, Apostoles was briefly imprisoned by the Ottomans, before traveling to Crete, where he settled down to the life of a teacher. His domestic contentment did not satisfy him, however, for he spent his life constantly seeking employment elsewhere.¹³⁸ Apostoles ultimately failed in his efforts to find a position and a patron in Italy, despite his unstinting efforts.¹³⁹ One of Bessarion's letters consoled the dispirited scholar after he failed to sufficiently impress the pope to merit a position.¹⁴⁰ Some years later Apostoles wrote a final imperial oration to the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, which an intermediary was to

¹³⁵ The possibility is discussed in Stefec, "Aus der literarischen Werkstatt des Michael Apostoles," 136–37.

¹³⁶ Apostoles retained great affection for Argyropoulos, and wrote a panegyric to his learning: Lampros, *Αργυροπούλεια*, 227–31.

¹³⁷ Apostoles, *Oration to Constantine XI*.

¹³⁸ *Die Briefe des Michael Apostoles*, 13–15. Alongside his teaching in Crete and his vain attempts to find a more remunerative position in Italy, Apostoles made his living as a prolific scribe and agent for his chief patron, Bessarion, for whom he sought and purchased rare manuscripts for his employer's growing collection. There are 115 extant manuscripts, in whole or part, attributed to his quill; see Marie Vogel and Victor Gardthausen, *Die griechischen Schreiber des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1909), 305–10; Ch. Patrineles, "Ἕλληνες κωδικογράφοι τῶν χρόνων τῆς ἀναγεννήσεως," *Ἐπετηρίς τοῦ μεσαιωνικοῦ ἀρχείου* 8–9 (1958–59): 63–70; RGK I, 278; II, 379; III, 454. For his service to Bessarion in the acquisition of manuscripts, see Bessarion's correspondence with him, especially Epp. 30 and 31, Mohler III, 478–80.

¹³⁹ Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice*, 73, provides a poignant description: "For in his perpetual lament for the lost Byzantium, in his constant penury (which reduced him even to begging for financial assistance), and in his futile attempts to obtain a professorial post in the West, Apostolis [*sic*] is representative of the large number of lesser-known and less fortunate learned Greek refugees during the difficult years immediately following Constantinople's fall in 1453."

¹⁴⁰ Ep. 33, in Mohler III, 481–83.

deliver (and presumably translate).¹⁴¹ Consonant with the rest of his life, the oration was a desperate plea for patronage, boasting of his knowledge of obscure ancient authors like Stesichoros (who would have been entirely unknown to the emperor) and promising to inscribe Frederick as the hero of a modern epic written in Homeric style and dialect.

Argyropoulos and Apostoles represent the divergent fates of those who left Constantinople to seek their fortunes elsewhere. But others, like John Dokeianos, remained behind in Ottoman Greece. Dokeianos rose to prominence in service of successive despots in the Morea, for whom he wrote a series of speeches.¹⁴² In fact, Dokeianos left more speeches to members of the imperial family than any other fifteenth-century orator. These include panegyrics to Theodore Palaiologos (c. 1436); three panegyrics to Constantine Palaiologos: two written during his time as despot, between 1441–43; another after his ascension to the throne in 1449, as well as two panegyric letters; two encomia written in the voice of Helena to her father Demetrios Palaiologos, and a hortatory address to the same princess on the educational ideals for a Byzantine princess.¹⁴³ Dokeianos, then, represents a purely Morean, non-Constantinopolitan tradition of imperial patronage. His addressees are not the emperors (with the exception of his one oration to Emperor Constantine), but imperial princes—Constantine, Theodore,

¹⁴¹ The intermediary is John Staurikios (PLP 26709), otherwise unattested; his surname suggests he was a courtier of Greek descent in the service of Frederick III. For the oration, see Apostoles, “Die Ansprache.”

¹⁴² Though a scribe, scholar, rhetorician and teacher, he remains a shadowy figure, unattested in sources other than his own writings and his numerous manuscripts. The secondary literature on Dokeianos (PLP 5577) is still sparse. See Spyridon Lampros, “Αἱ βιβλιοθηκαὶ Ἰωάννου Μαρμαρᾶ καὶ Ἰωάννου Δοκεῖανου καὶ ἀνώνυμος ἀναγραφὴ βιβλίων,” *NE* 1(1904): 295–312; LPP I, μν’–νβ’; Zakythinos II, 315–18, 337, 340–42; for the list of his works, the manuscript tradition and their chronology, see Topping, “Greek Manuscript 1 (the Works of Ioannes Dokeianos) of the University of Pennsylvania Library.” These contributions have been superseded by the recent dissertation that includes new editions of his works: Calia, “Meglio il turbante del sultano.” His writings are all published in LPP I, 221–55; and Calia, “Meglio il turbante del sultano,” 197–327.

¹⁴³ See the recent editions in Calia, “Meglio il turbante del sultano”; among the other works re-edited by Calia are the second recension of Dokeianos’s encomium to the Despot Constantine, a letter to the teacher and philosopher John Moschos, as well as some fragments of other letters.

Demetrios—the last of whose daughter he served as a tutor in the early 1450s. Dokeianos stands out from his peers, and shows his similarity to Pletho, in remaining at the court in Mistra for the tempestuous tenures of successive despots, where he received preferments and, under Demetrios, a teaching position within the family.¹⁴⁴ But this fidelity also showed his migration from a partisan of Constantine, an advocate of accommodation with the Latins, to a supporter of Demetrios and his anti-unionist, pro-Ottoman party. No doubt this commitment influenced his decision to stay in Greece after the end of the Byzantine state. Deprived of his imperial patrons after the final collapse of a Byzantine court in Mistra, Dokeianos, as so many scholars before him, moved to Constantinople, where he served as a teacher and scribe in the Ottoman city until 1491.¹⁴⁵

Another fervent anti-unionist was John Eugenikos, a sharp-tongued theologian, church bureaucrat and, after the submission at Florence, organizer for opponents to the union.¹⁴⁶ A member of a prominent Constantinopolitan family and younger brother of Florence's leading anti-unionist prelate Mark Eugenikos, John had served in the ecclesiastical bureaucracy as *notarios* for the Patriarchate—like Chortasmenos a generation earlier—and later advanced to first *chartophylax* then *nomophylax*.¹⁴⁷ In the years before the Council of Ferrara-Florence, Eugenikos

¹⁴⁴ His letters to Constantine Palaiologos are full of the testimonies of the benefactions the scholar received from the despot; see, for instance, Dokeianos, *Letters to Constantine Palaiologos*, 246.8–17.

¹⁴⁵ Calia, “Meglio il turbante del sultano,” 162–63.

¹⁴⁶ See PLP 6189; ODB II, 741–42. There is still no extended study dedicated to Eugenikos and his works; valuable, if short, biographical and bibliographical summaries (though many of his works were still unpublished at the time) can be found in Sophron Pétridès, “Les oeuvres de Jean Eugenikos,” *Échos d'Orient* 13 (1910): 111–14, 276–81; Constantine N. Tsirplanis, “John Eugenikos and the Council of Florence,” *Byzantion* 48 (1978): 264–74; as well as the brief sketch in the introduction to *John Eugenikos' “Antirrhetic of the Decree of the Council of Ferrara-Florence”: An Annotated Critical Edition*, ed. Eleni Rossidou-Koutsou (Nicosia, 2006), xxx–xxxvii; see also Zakythinos II, 334–36. On his literary endeavors, see Hunger I, 141, 144, 176, 183; Beck, *KtL*, 756–58.

¹⁴⁷ Rossidou-Koutsou, *John Eugenikos' “Antirrhetic of the Decree,”* xxxii; on these offices, see Darrouzès, *Recherches sur les ΟΦΦΙΚΙΑ de l'église byzantine: notarios* (379–85); *chartophylax* (334–53, 508–25); *nomophylax* (314).

wrote panegyric verses on John VIII, which praised the emperor as “well-crowned emperor, imitator of God, who exists as if over all men.”¹⁴⁸ This enthusiasm for John VIII would fade at the council in Italy. After the failure of the anti-unionists to carry the day in Florence, John dedicated the bulk of his literary efforts over the next decade or so to anti-unionist writings, including hortatory letters to the political elite of the empire as well as his long refutation of the Decree of Union, the *Antirrhethikos*.¹⁴⁹ He also wrote an oration to Constantine XI in 1449, after his succession to the throne, in which Eugenikos laid out the reasons for refusing to commemorate Constantine in the liturgy and exhorted the new emperor to abandon the Union.¹⁵⁰ Eugenikos spent his remaining years traveling back and forth between the Peloponnese and Constantinople. He eventually witnessed the fall of Constantinople and endured Ottoman captivity, before spending some time at the court of the emperors of Trebizond.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ BAV Reg. gr. Pio II 37, fol. 1r: “ἐὺστεφής αὐτοκράτωρ / θ(εο)ῦ μιμητὴς ὡς ὑπὲρ πάντας πέλων.” These verses remain unpublished; they are preserved in two fifteenth-century manuscripts, BAV Reg. gr. Pio II 37, fols. 1–2; and Vat. gr. 134, fols. 124r–v. The latter is evidently a copy of the former, since it does not preserve the poetic lineation of Reg. gr. Pio II 37; the scribe of Vat. gr. 134 also omitted a line in his transcription (f.124r) which he later added at the bottom of the page: “ο(ὐραν)ῆ δόξαν τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ καταγγέλων.”

¹⁴⁹ See, for instance, LPP I, 137–46 (c. 1451 to Loukas Notaras); 176–82 (c. 1450 to Despot Demetrios Palaiologos). The dates are those of Gill, *Council of Florence*, 393–94. For an analysis of the letters and their evidence for Eugenikos’s post-Council politicking, see Tsirpanlis, “John Eugenikos and the Council of Florence,” 264–74; the most recent edition of the *Logos Antirrhethikos* is Rossidou-Koutsou, *John Eugenikos’ “Antirrhethic of the Decree,”* which she dates to 1444–49; a scholar has recently suggested modifying the date to 1452–53 (Aleksandr V. Zanemonec, “The Date and Addressee of John Eugenikos’ Logos Antirrhethicos,” *Byzantinoslavica* 70 [2012]: 273–82), but his argument fails to acknowledge the *terminus ante quem* (noted by Rossidou-Koutsou, p. xlv) provided by the text’s reference to the antipope Felix V (p. 20.6–7) who resigned in 1449.

¹⁵⁰ LPP I, 123–34. This work in particular illustrates the indistinct boundary between oration and letter which I discussed above. Both Hunger and Angelov classify this as an oration and it may well have been, since it is preserved in Eugenikos’s autograph manuscript (BNF Cod. gr. 2075, fols. 288–94) alongside other epideictic oratory. Moreover, it intentionally mobilizes the discourse of imperial orations, when it claims in the *prooimion* “to speak with licence” (εἰπεῖν παρησίας), a topos associated with imperial praise and critique in late antique orators like Themistios and Synesios of Cyrene. Rossidou-Koutsou, *John Eugenikos’ “Antirrhethic of the Decree,”* xxxvi) on the other hand, considers it a letter, as does Gill (*The Council of Florence*, 373 n. 5) and Tsirpanlis (“John Eugenikos and the Council of Florence,” 268).

¹⁵¹ Eugenikos mentions his imprisonment in his letter to Antonio Malaspina (LPP I, 208.15); Rossidou-Koutsou, *John Eugenikos’ “Antirrhethic of the Decree,”* xxxvii–xxxviii, contra Pétridès, “Les oeuvres de Jean Eugenikos,” 111.

Alongside Dokeianos and Eugenikos, another prominent orator remained stoutly opposed to the union, whom I call the Alexandrian Anonymous. About this figure we know almost nothing, not even his name. We know of only three panegyrics he wrote: two to John VIII, and one to Demetrios Palaiologos.¹⁵² The two orations to John VIII have generally been treated as anonymous works, but I argue that they were written by the same author as the much later oration to Demetrios Palaiologos.¹⁵³ These orations, preserved in a single manuscript from the Patriarchal Library in Alexandria and edited by Lampros, show that the Alexandrian Anonymous remained a resolute opponent of union with the Latin church, and after the union migrated to support for Demetrios Palaiologos. Without a biography to securely anchor these orations, they are difficult to date securely. The first of the two orations to John VIII references his 1423 trip to the west to seek aid in the last days of Manuel II's reign.¹⁵⁴ It seems clear though, that while a significant part of the oration covered the deeds of Manuel, it actually addressed John VIII and so was composed after 1425, probably before 1430. The second oration is a little clearer, as the Anonymous referenced a brief stand-off between the Venetians and the Genoese that occurred in 1431–32, providing with a *terminus post quem*. This oration also repeated its predecessor's admonitions against capitulation to the Latins, attempting to legitimize John VIII's

¹⁵² The first two orations are Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, and Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*; all three orations are preserved in a single manuscript from the Patriarchal Library in Alexandria. The patriarchal library was moved from Cairo to Alexandria in 1928, at which point a number of the manuscripts were apparently renumbered: in Lampros it is Cod. gr. 35; in the most recent catalog, it is Cod. gr. 220: Theodoros D. Moschonas, *Κατάλογοι τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης* (Alexandria, 1945), 208–211. Lampros erroneously attributed the oration to Demetrios Palaiologos to a certain “Joseph” based on a monogram in the manuscript, an identification that has migrated to the PLP 9079. Zakythinios II, 340 follows Bogiatzidis in linking the second anonymous oration with Joseph, though neither connects these two with the first oration to John VIII. I will lay out the complex case for their common authorship and advance an argument for the identity of the author in a subsequent publication.

¹⁵³ Some recent scholars have treated them as anonymous; most recently, see Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 48 n. 69; elsewhere, the first oration is mistakenly attributed to Isidore of Kiev: Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 123; Philippides and Hanak, *Cardinal Isidore*, 30 n. 45.

¹⁵⁴ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 219.23–20.2.

efforts in pursuit of the union of the churches without reporting it as a *fait accompli*. The mention of John's dispatch of embassies to Italy, referring at the earliest to the delegation of November 1433, suggests a date of the middle of the 1430s.¹⁵⁵ The final oration to Demetrios Palaiologos must be dated no earlier than 1444, since it references Demetrios's possession of Lemnos, the allocation of which followed his brief siege of Constantinople in 1442 and his imprisonment in 1444.¹⁵⁶

Imperial Orators as Propagandists?

The social and political functions of panegyric that I have laid out here, as well as the varied relationships and postures of the orators themselves toward the empire counsels caution in regarding this dynamic under the rubric of propaganda, as studies of the imperial oratory of previous eras have done.¹⁵⁷ Though the literature on propaganda is rich, the definition implicitly or explicitly suggested by these studies suggests the choreographed messages and communication strategies of political authorities or institutions who speak to an audience in an attempt to shape

¹⁵⁵ See Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 3439; the delegation was led by the *protobestiarios* Demetrios Palaiologos Metochites, along with the future Isidore of Kiev, then abbot of St. Demetrios in Constantinople, and John Dishypatos.

¹⁵⁶ On Demetrios's acquisition of Lemnos, see Djurić, *Il crepuscolo di Bisanzio*, 190–91. This event cannot have happened earlier than 1444, for in this year Demetrios was briefly imprisoned in Constantinople (Chalkokondyles II, 6.32). Djurić moves the *terminus post quem* to October 1445 on the basis of Demetrios's absence from John VIII's *prostagma* apportioning some of the revenues from Lemnos to an Athonite monastery (Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 3509); but Marios Philippides, *Constantine XI Dragaš Palaeologus (1404–1453): The Last Emperor of Byzantium* (Abingdon, 2019), 176, notes that Lemnos was the Elba for Palaiologan aristocrats, so Demetrios probably made his way there after his hasty departure from Constantinople under a cloud in 1444. For further discussion of this episode, see Chapter Three.

¹⁵⁷ See Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 29–77, where he uses it, more legitimately, of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; Estangüi Gómez, *Byzance face aux Ottomans*, 447–54, where he uses it, less persuasively, of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 116; none of these authors defines propaganda.

its behavior.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, it suggests that the mouthpieces for such messages are essentially, or actually, state actors. A good example of this dynamic in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries obtains in the rhetorical *προοίμια*, the short introductions to imperial acts such as chrysobulls. These were official documents, distributed throughout the empire to individuals or institutions and framed by amplifications on elements of imperial ideology, often a single virtue. From this period, between 1204 and 1330, Dimitar Angelov counts ninety-two imperial preambles; yet between 1390 and 1453 we have only seven, of which only three were addressed to Byzantines. After Manuel II, neither John VIII or Constantine XI used imperial preambles on their chrysobulls addressed to Byzantine individuals or institutions.¹⁵⁹

I argue that neither of the two essential characteristics of propaganda, state coordination and state dissemination, apply without qualification to the orations of the fifteenth century. The message and delivery of imperial oratory in the fifteenth century was not dictated by the emperors, but by a kind of reciprocal negotiation between orator and emperor. The emperor distributed rewards to orators, but also depended on them for affirmation of his political and metaphysical position. In return, the orator sought benefices of some kind, but also acquired a kind of social and political capital derived from his ability to build and strengthen the political authority of the emperor. During the role of Manuel II, orators and emperor served each other sufficiently well. But in the last decades of the empire, orators increasingly supported imperial rivals, a dynamic explored in Chapter Three. Finally, imperial orators in the fifteenth century

¹⁵⁸ For a concise summary of some approaches to propaganda, see Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 4th ed. (Newbury Park, CA, 2012), 2–6. The implicit definition of Angelov and Estangüi Gómez is similar to that of Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945–1955* (Westport, CT, 2002), xxvi: “strategically devised messages that are disseminated to masses of people by an institution for the purpose of generating action benefiting its source.”

¹⁵⁹ On preambles in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 29–38; for a list of preambles in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Estangüi Gómez, *Byzance face aux Ottomans*, 448, 552–53.

represented a range of late Byzantine actors, from parochial teachers like Dokeianos, idiosyncratic provincial bureaucrats like Pletho, rootless imperial critics like Eugenikos, to deferential courtiers like Chortasmenos. But, as I argued above, few of them were imperial officials in the way the same orators were in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Thus, labeling this political speech as propaganda obscures the degree to which it performed tacit negotiations between orator, emperor, and elite audience.

Conclusion

The reappearance of imperial oratory under Manuel II, especially in the last decade of his reign, celebrated a new phase of imperial stability in the tempestuous years of incremental recovery after the Ottoman defeat at Ankara in 1402. Manuel asserted his authority in the church, in state finance, and in provincial affairs, and the orations of men like Chrysoloras, Chortasmenos, and Makres praised the virtuous and indispensable role played by Manuel in the empire's recovery. Such praise gave orators an opportunity to demonstrate their membership in an exclusive intellectual elite and to compete for Manuel's favor. All evidence suggests that the orators connected to Constantinople succeeded in securing benefices from the emperor. But oratory also gave these figures a privileged voice, for the practice also fostered, even coerced, the consent of the audience, probably local elites, to these celebrations of the emperor and his policies. Thus, I argue that this imperial oratory not only celebrated the imperial revival, but it contributed to it as well.

Many of these orators competed for recognition and social capital in Constantinople at the imperial court, as their predecessors had done under the Komnenian and early Palaiologan emperors. But others found remuneration and distinction elsewhere: Pletho, John Dokeianos,

Isidore and John Eugenikos in the Morea; Demetrios Chrysoloras in Thessalonike; later Isidore, Bessarion, and John Argyropoulos in Italy. Despite the importance of Constantinople and the court as a center of patronage and proximity to the emperor, the pull of the capital was weaker at the end of the empire, both culturally and politically. This diminution is evident in the subjects of imperial oratory as well. After the reign of Manuel II, the imperial princes outside Constantinople began to attract panegyrics in the fashion of emperors.

Another effect of the attenuation of Constantinople's gravity was that many of these orators had much broader cultural horizons than their predecessors. Manuel Chrysoloras spent most of his career in Italy; Bessarion, Isidore made their careers outside the empire after the Council of Ferrara-Florence; and John Argyropoulos studied at an Italian university. For all their exposure to Italians, however, it is notable that none of these figures appear to have compromised their imperial allegiance the way some aristocratic families did, acquiring status as citizens of Italian city-states often in order to gain commercial advantages.¹⁶⁰ Instead, these highly educated men remained loyal imperial subjects, faithful to the emperor and the idea of the Byzantine state. Their experiences abroad did not, as I have tried to emphasize, make them uniformly sympathetic to western political or theological positions. Although Chrysoloras, Isidore, Bessarion and Argyropoulos did become Catholic, others who traveled abroad for the emperor—like Makarios Makres and John Eugenikos—remained staunchly Orthodox. But such wide experiences heightened the sense that Byzantines and other Europeans represented politics,

¹⁶⁰ On this dynamic in Jonathan Harris, "Constantinople as City State, c. 1360–1453," in *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150*, ed. Jonathan Harris, Catherine Holmes, and Eugenia Russell (Oxford, 2012), 119–40, esp. 128.

religions, and cultures that were arrayed in tension against one another, a sense that emerged in many of their works.¹⁶¹

A final striking feature of this group of rhetoricians, which bears upon the nature of the discourse which they constructed and in which they participated, is their deep interconnectedness. Through either pedagogy or the shared experience of the Council of Ferrara-Florence, everyone knew everyone else, either at first hand or certainly at second. Manuel Chrysoloras knew Demetrios Chrysoloras and Manuel II. The emperor knew these two as well as Chortasmenos, Pletho, and Isidore. Pletho himself taught Bessarion and traveled to Italy with the other members of the conciliar delegation, like Amiroutzes and Eugenikos; he also served under three successive despots (Theodore, Constantine, Demetrios) in the Morea, who likely all received, if not benefitted from, his distinctive advice. Bessarion too knew the members of the Byzantine delegation to Italy, both his eventual conciliar foes like John Eugenikos and his confederates like Isidore, as well as Michael Apostoles and John Argyropoulos. Dokeianos alone is hard to connect to another of these imperial orators, perhaps only because we know so little about his life, though his association with the despots must mean he knew Pletho at least. The thick web of connections between these men—as students, fellow strivers at court, peers in office, opponents and allies in Italy—as well as the performative and competitive nature of political rhetoric, with texts read aloud and passed around for critique, meant that the ideas of each text, formulations and agendas of each author were almost certainly known to the others. This reflection suggests that we must be sensitive not only to the manifest ways that texts address the emperor, but also to the tacit ways they respond to one another, constructing and later

¹⁶¹ Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Discourse*, 119.11–25; Bessarion, *Discourse to Constantine Palaiologos*, 444.3–30; Isidore, “Begrüßungsansprache,” 161.248–43.

challenging ideological consensus. The formation and nature of this ideological consensus will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Consensus and Power in Late Byzantine Imperial Ideology

Introduction

Late Byzantine imperial oratory presents the viewer with a set of paradoxes. For as much as the world had changed dramatically, the contents of the orations seemed fairly consistent. Byzantine education and incentives for intellectuals superficially homogenized the terms in which orators discussed imperial power, institutions and imperatives. The emperor remained the sole ruler, appointed by God and ruling in imitation of Him, an embodiment of the canonical classical and Christian virtues. These elements and others constituted a stable, if somewhat airy and abstract, core of imperial ideology in the fifteenth century, a kind of ideological consensus. I contend that orators, especially under Manuel II (d. 1425), used the production of this consensus—formed around imperial virtues, sacral authority, and the normativity of monarchy—to do essential political work, fashioning stability in the disordered political conditions of the fifteenth century. By representing to the elite audience unanimity around the emperor and his mandate, they combatted the forces of decentralization that were pulling at the bodily sinews of the empire.

This reiteration of communal values was one of the chief roles that imperial oratory served in Byzantium, as I argued in Chapter One. And in the fifteenth century, oratorical repetition of the core elements of imperial ideology brought together certain participants—the performer, the emperor, and the audience—in a ritual celebration of the emperor's central position in the political and metaphysical order. Each participant played an important role: the performer reprised the elements of consensus; the emperor accepted the panegyric as praise, and perhaps also as counsel; and the audience approved of both and was seen to join in the

acclamation.¹ And the sort of rejuvenation that praise produced was especially important at times when the communal values and indeed the community as a whole were under threat, as was the case in the fifteenth century, when economic predation, Ottoman conquest, and administrative devolution imperilled the unity and existence of the Byzantine state.²

Orators fashioned this consensus by drawing on a rich tradition of ancient models and precepts, a common language—the high register of late Byzantine rhetoric—and a shared emphasis on imperial virtues, sacral authority, and the metaphysical imperatives of monarchy.³ The repetition of these elements represented the empire, the imperial office, and the emperor himself in their ideal forms, and reassured the audience that these three—empire, office, and emperor—remained indispensable to their world.⁴ Imperial orations throughout the fifteenth century manipulated the conventional elements of panegyric to make their claims that the emperors’ virtue assured prosperity to his subjects and the state, and that lawful kingship restrained violence and strife.⁵

¹ On the admonitory function of panegyric, see Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 161–80. On the value of the pragmatic approach to imperial oratory, see Toth, “Rhetorical Theatron in Late Byzantium.”

² On social, political, and economic conditions in the fifteenth century, see the thorough studies of Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latin*; Estangüi Gómez, *Byzance face aux Ottomans*.

³ On the content of such expressions in the twelfth century, see Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 413–88; on the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 78–115.

⁴ For example, Demetrios Chrysoloras, 245.13–14: “Καὶ σοὶ οὖν, αὐτοῦ μιμητῇ γενομένῳ καὶ Ῥωμαίων, ὡς εἰκός, βασιλεύοντι ἥκιστα πρέπον ἄλλως ἄλλο.” Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 122–27: “ὥσπερ οὖν αὐτός ἐστι παντοίων ἀγαθῶν χορηγὸς τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένει, οὕτω καὶ βασιλεὺς ὁ ἐπίγειος οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐ παρήσει τὸ μὴ οὐ ποιεῖν τῶν δεόντων εἰς τὸ ὑπὲρκοον, ἀλλ’ ἐπικλύσει μὲν ἀγαθοῖς ἅπασι τὰς πόλεις, εὐδαιμονίας δὲ πρόξενος γενήσεται τοῖς ἀρχομένοις, ὅση δυνατή.”

⁵ See Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 220: “Ἄλλ’ οὗτοι [i.e., Cyrus and Darius] μὲν τυραννικῶς, οὐδὲ εὐσεβῶς τῆς βασιλείας ἐκράτησαν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πρὸ καιροῦ τῆς ἡγεμονίας καὶ βασιλείας ἐξώσθησαν. Ὁ δ’ ἐκ προγόνων καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ εὐσεβῶς ταύτην διεζώσατο, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἦδε βασιλεία κατὰ τὸ ἱερὸν λόγιον λαῷ ἐτέρῳ οὐχ ὑπολειφθήσεται.” Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 118–23: “ἡ Τύχη καὶ ὁ συμπίπτων χρόνος παρέσχεν ἑκάστοις ἐπικρατῆσαι, τῶν μὲν ἄλλων οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν εὐρεῖν ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος, ὅπερ ἡ στάσεως ἐμφυλίου ἢ τυραννίδος ἀπὸλλακται, τὸ δ’ ἡμέτερον ἀτεχνῶς βασιλεία ἔννομος ἐπιστατεῖ, ἧς ὁ Θεὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς ὥσπερ εἰκόνα στήσας ἀρχέτυπον ἐθέλει καὶ τὰ τῆδε τετάχθαι κατὰ μίμησιν ὑπερκόσμιον.”

In this chapter, I first trace the long tradition of speech-making and rhetorical models on which fifteenth-century imperial oratory drew, from Hellenistic moral treatises to the fourteenth-century Byzantine handbooks. This survey shows how fifteenth-century orators broke new ground in blending previously distinct forms of literary expression like historiography and encomium. Next, I examine the core elements of imperial panegyric in fifteenth-century orations, illustrating how orators used emphasis on imperial virtue, sacral authority, and providential monarchy to reaffirm communal support for the institution of the imperial office. Understanding the orators' role in fashioning this ideological consensus in the fifteenth century reveals a mutual alliance between praise and power, an alliance that shows these figures as a new form of political actor: not "imperial propagandists" as their thirteenth-century predecessors had been, but political mediators or power brokers. This perspective refigures the oratory under Manuel II as more than a literary phenomenon—it was a collaborative response to political conditions, an attempt by the orators and the emperor to buttress a weakened monarchy.

Rhetorical Modes and Models in Late Byzantium

The imperial oratory produced in the fifteenth century represented the complex interplay of convention and innovation. Drawing on a literary tradition of nearly two millenia of speech-making before monarchs, sophisticated late antique models, and a robust organic tradition of Byzantine rhetoric, imperial orators showed their agility in crafting addresses that could flatter, commend, educate, or censure. The creativity evident in the combination of these elements belies simplistic arguments that such speeches represented only unalloyed flattery, or perfunctory

repetitions of tired clichés.⁶ Instead, these orators appear as consummate recyclers, repurposing and recombining the old to suit the new.

Oratory before a monarch—or rhetoric simulating such a performance—had deep roots in the Greek literary tradition, as did epideictic or demonstrative rhetoric. The orations of Isocrates encompassed both rhetorical traditions, though speeches like *To Demonicus* and *To Nicocles* were more didactic than panegyric. These became paragons of a moralizing discourse on kingship and the hegemony of monarchy over other forms of political organization in the Hellenistic period. Moreover, they contributed to the proliferation of rhetorical and theoretical reflections on political affairs that assumed kingship as the sole legitimate mode of political life.⁷ Dio Chrysostom, a second-century CE orator and philosopher who delivered four important orations on kingship, probably to the emperor Trajan (r. 98–117 CE), intensified this connection between oratory and Roman emperors—and more closely connected the discourse on kingship with the rhetoric of praise. Chrysostom’s orations fused Stoic philosophy with Hellenistic political thought and drew on the Greek literary tradition—especially Homer, whose oft-cited adage from the *Iliad*, “Let there be one king,” appears in Oration 3—in crafting vibrant and influential discourses on the nature of kingship and its philosophical and moral imperatives.⁸ In Chrysostom we find several elements that would later become codified as classic formulations of Byzantine political thought: the emperor’s appointment by God (Zeus to Chrysostom) and the imperative

⁶ Dennis, “Imperial Panegyric”; Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 115.

⁷ See Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background* (Washington, DC, 1966) 1:205ff; David Hahm, “Kings and Constitutions: Hellenistic Theories,” in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Christopher Rowe, Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge, 2000), 457–76.

⁸ Dio Chrysostom, Or. 3.46; see C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Cambridge, MA, 1978); on Dio in Byzantine political thought, see Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, 2:537–42; for reception Dio from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, see Aldo Brancacci, *Rhetorike philosophousa: Dione Crisostomo nella cultura antica e bizantina* (Rome, 1985), 201–313.

for the emperor to imitate the government of this highest deity in his kingship on earth.⁹ In late antiquity the social practice of rhetorical addresses to the emperors continued, and orators of the fourth and fifth centuries such as Themistios, Libanios and Synesios delivered epideictic orations of enduring influence in Byzantine rhetoric before their emperors.¹⁰ Themistios embodied the ideological flexibility that marked the successful imperial orator. He first praised, then condemned the policies of successive imperial regimes—all while asserting his unique privilege to speak before the emperor with an unbridled tongue—the philosopher’s virtue of *παρρησία*—a freedom, or even an obligation to speak candidly to the powerful.¹¹ Synesios, bishop of Cyrene, also claimed the imperatives of *παρρησία* in his discourse on kingship to the emperor Arcadius, using this license to lecture Arcadius sternly on his imperial obligations. The emperor had contributed to the decline of Roman prestige by retreating into the palace, Synesios charged, like a “polyp of the sea.”¹² So while panegyric increasingly dominated epideictic rhetoric, the late

⁹ Dio Chrysostom, Or. 1.12–13, 38–46. Dio enjoyed his own rebirth among Renaissance humanists in the fifteenth century with a translation of his *Trojan Oration* (Or. 11) by the Florentine humanist Francesco Filelfo, who brought at least one manuscript of Dio back from Constantinople with him. Filelfo may also have been the catalyst for the first Latin translation of Dio’s four *Kingship Orations* by Tifernas in the 1450s. See Simon Swain, “Reception and Interpretation,” in *Dio Chrysostom: Politics, Letters and Philosophy*, ed. idem (Oxford, 2000), 13–16.

¹⁰ On the rhetoric of praise in this period, see Laurent Pernot, *La rhétorique de l’éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1993), esp. vol. 2, *Les valeurs*.

¹¹ For a recent interpretation of the philosophical and rhetorical endeavors of Themistios that argues for seeing him as a conscious and shrewd political actor, not simply a philosopher as his claim to *parrhesia* asserted, see Peter Heather and David Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy and Empire in the Fourth Century: Select Orations of Themistius* (Liverpool, 2001), 1–42; see also Edward Watts, “Praise That You Must Believe: Prohaeresius, Julian, and the Difference Between History and Panegyric,” in *Rhetoric and Historiography in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lieve Van Hoof and Maria Conterno (forthcoming), in which Watts analyzes the challenges faced by intellectuals like Themistios, Libanios, and Prohaeresius upon the ascension of Julian, notorious for his contempt for the vacillations of panegyrists. I thank Prof. Watts for his generosity in sharing this still-unpublished material with me.

¹² Synesios, *On Kingship*, where he emphasizes, of course, the standard themes of the Christian imperial ideal—the emperor’s imitation of God and divine virtue, and his role in communicating those virtues to men (4), his likeness to the sun (13, 20), or a shepherd (3)—as well as offering abstract reflections on tyranny (3), before turning to practical advice for the conduct of military affairs (9–14), laced with bracing critique (10). On the speech in the tradition of late antique oratory, see George A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), 37–38.

antique rhetorical tradition tendered examples of both parainetic and critical modes of imperial address as well. The modes exemplified by these orators and their speeches would serve as models of epideictic rhetoric throughout Byzantine history.

Alongside the proliferation of imperial oratory in the late Roman empire, rhetorical pedagogy at the same time coalesced around a core of canonical texts and guides to composition. Preliminary rhetorical exercises for students, called προγύμνασματα, (literally, “preliminary exercises”) included encomium as one of the fundamental elements of rhetorical praxis.¹³ One collection of these, spuriously attributed to the second-century teacher of rhetoric Hermogenes, outlined the suitable topics for encomium—people, qualities, animals, or even inanimate objects like mountains—as well as the topics for amplification: race, city, birth and rearing, physical and moral virtues, pursuits (i.e., occupation), deeds and, if applicable, manner of death.¹⁴ Pseudo-Hermogenes’s recommendations for composition of encomium were clarified, streamlined and, ultimately, superseded by the fourth-century scholar Aphthonios, a student of the famed rhetorician Libanios. His innovation, which secured him a permanent place in the Byzantine rhetorical curriculum, was the inclusion of examples for each exercise to complement the more abstract admonitions attributed to Hermogenes. Under encomium, he condensed his

¹³ Encomium appears briefly in two earlier Greek works on rhetoric as well: Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1.9.33 [=1367b]) discusses encomium in the broader context of virtues and rhetoric of praise and blame; encomium, he says, is “praise of deeds,” and that the subject’s other virtuous characteristics like noble birth and education are adduced for plausibility (εἰς πίστιν), rather than among the deeds themselves (τὸ δ’ ἐγκώμιον τῶν ἔργων ἐστίν, τὰ δὲ κύκλῳ εἰς πίστιν, οἷον εὐγένεια καὶ παιδεία); cf. Aristotle *Eudemian Ethics* 2.1.12, where he distinguishes between ἔπαινος or praise for character; and ἐγκώμιον for achievements. In Pseudo-Aristotle’s *Rhetoric to Alexander* (3.1), the “encomiastic form” is described as the elaboration of noble choices, achievements and words of the subject, as well as the artful addition of those attributes the subject may in fact lack: Συλλήβδην μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἐγκωμιαστικὸν εἶδος προαιρέσεων καὶ πράξεων καὶ λόγων ἐνδόξων αὐξήσις καὶ μὴ προσόντων συνοικείωσις. The principle of such exercises is attested in the Augustan period in Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* (2.4), and the first treatise on them likely emerges from this period as well in Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, in L. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1854), 109–110, where he distinguishes encomium as praise of the living (εἰς τοὺς ζῶντας) and recommends a typology that divides praise into the goods of the soul and character, the body and externals.

¹⁴ See his *Progymnasmata*, in *Hermogenis opera*, ed. Hugo Rabe (Leipzig, 1913), 7.22–53.

predecessor's meandering list of possible topics into an unambiguous list of the appropriate parts of the speech. As a result of his concision, and his union of theory and example, his treatise on *progymnasmata* continued to be used, not only for instruction, but as a basis for a Byzantine commentary tradition on this form of rhetorical instruction.¹⁵

Progymnasmata, especially those of Aphthonios, remained enormously popular for rhetorical instruction; from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we have over eighty manuscripts preserving parts of Aphthonios's *progymnasmata* alone.¹⁶ But for more advanced composition of rhetorical encomia, the two treatises on epideictic rhetoric attributed to the third century rhetorician Menander were by far the most influential.¹⁷ Epideictic, as one of Aristotle's three branches of rhetoric, originally constituted speeches of both praise and blame, but it was the occasions of praise, and the adaptability of encomium for festivals, weddings, birthdays, military victories and coronations—that imbued panegyric with expanded utility under the

¹⁵ On the chief commentators, John of Sardis, John Geometres and John Doxapatres, see George L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessaloniki, 1973), 22–26; Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors*, 275–77.

¹⁶ Aphthonios was not the last author of *progymnasmata*; the form continued to be popular genre of rhetorical writing, though perhaps more as an opportunity to showcase rhetorical skill in the guise of “preliminary exercises,” than as a pursuit of the purely didactic aims of Pseudo-Hermogenes and Aphthonios. For instance, the twelfth-century rhetorician Nikephoros Basilakes wrote a long series of *progymnasmata*, though the results are hardly “preliminary”; his encomium, surely a jocular take on an otherwise self-serious form of rhetorical composition that was flourishing as imperial oratory in the twelfth century, is praise of “the dog”: see *Rhetorical Exercises of Nikephoros Basilakes*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Beneker and Craig A. Gibson (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 130–41. Basilakes himself wrote one earnest imperial encomium to John II Komnenos, in *Nicephori Basilacae orationes et epistolae*, ed. A. Garzya (Leipzig, 1984), 49–74. On *progymnasmata* in general, see O. Schissel, “Rhetorische Progymnasmatik der Byzantiner,” *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 11 (1934–35): 1–10; Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors*, 54–73; Ruth Webb, “The *Progymnasmata* as Practice,” in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, ed. Yun Lee Too (Leiden, 2001), 289–316; Robert J. Penella, “The *Progymnasmata* in Imperial Greek Education,” *Classical World* 105 (2011): 77–90. On the didactic compositions of Palaiologan rhetoricians, see Costas N. Constantinides, “Teachers and Students of Rhetoric in the Late Byzantine Period,” in *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. Elizabeth M. Jeffreys (Aldershot, UK, 2003), 48–50.

¹⁷ He is sometimes known as Pseudo-Menander, due to the spurious attribution of these treatises to him. They are published with a valuable introduction, facing translation, and extensive commentary in *Menander Rhetor*, ed. D. A. Russell and Nigel G. Wilson (Oxford, 1981). The tenth-century lexicon *Suda* only remembers Menander as an author of commentaries on Hermogenes and the *progymnasmata* of Minoukianos: see Ada Adler, ed., *Suidae Lexicon*, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1928–38), s.v., Μέγανδρος (=p 590).

Roman empire.¹⁸ In Menander's two treatises on epideictic rhetoric, he discussed only speeches of praise: the first of these treatises focused on gods, heroes, and cities; the second on praise of people and occasions. The latter became widely studied and imitated, especially its first chapter on the βασιλικὸς λόγος, the imperial oration.¹⁹

Several indices illustrate Menander's persistent authority in the last centuries of Byzantine rhetoric. Among later theoreticians, the polymath Joseph Rhakendytes, who wrote the last synthetic treatise on rhetoric in the early fourteenth century, adopted Menander's passage on the βασιλικὸς λόγος verbatim in his section on encomiastic composition.²⁰ Moreover, among the abundant extant manuscripts of Menander—twenty-one of which date from the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—every single copy includes the passage on the imperial oration.²¹ The manuscript record attests to Menander's enduring popularity, but also indirectly

¹⁸ For Aristotle's typology, see *Rhetoric* 1.3 (=1358b); on the social function of epideictic rhetoric in the Roman empire, see Lellia Cracco Ruggini, "Sofisti Greci nell'impero Romano," *Athenaeum* 49 (1971): 402–05; Hunger, *Aspekte der griechischen Rhetorik*; Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors*, 23–27. Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge*, 2:659–724. Blame did not totally disappear; Aphthonios, like other theorists before him, included the speech of *psogos* or invective in the canon of rhetorical exercises alongside encomium. Libanios employed invective in several of his political speeches: see, for instance, orations 4, 27, 28, 37, 38, 40; But *psogos* enjoyed neither the popularity nor the social value of encomium, and thus survived more in pedagogy than in praxis. See Hunger I, 105–06, 120–22, 128, 132; for an example of a late *psogos*, see Or. 8 in *Nicetae Choniatae orationes et epistulae*, ed. Jan van Dieten (Berlin, 1972), 68–85.

¹⁹ *Menander*, 368–77.30, pp. 76–95. Menander's was not the only recommendation for construction of imperial orations; see also Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 3.7.15–16, who suggests that one can follow either a biographical or a thematic treatment according to the subject's virtues.

²⁰ See Joseph Rhakendytes, *Σύνοψις τῆς Πητορικῆς*, in Christian Walz, *Rhetores Graeci*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1834), 478–569; the section he borrows from Menander is *ibid.*, 547.3–58.15; for further discussion of Rhakendytes's use of Menander, see Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors*, 324; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 21–22; Toth, "Rhetorical Theatron in Late Byzantium," 434. Rhakendytes's *Σύνοψις τῆς Πητορικῆς* is the only published portion of a much larger summation of a variety of forms of learning, including mathematics, music and theology; on this work and an evaluation of its role in Byzantine "encyclopaedism," see Erika Gielen, "Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam: Joseph Rhakendytès' Synopsis of Byzantine Learning," in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge, 2013), 259–76.

²¹ On Menander's manuscript tradition in general, see *Menander*, xl–xliv, though they disregard fifteenth-century witnesses as generally derivative. This decision is critiqued and corrected in Felipe G. Hernández Muñoz, "The Logos Basilikós Text of Menander Rhetor," *Revue d'histoire des textes* 8 (2013): 371–85, where the author collates nearly all the surviving *recentiores* witnesses—20 from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, 32 in all—and argues for a modification to the *stemma codicum* proposed by Russell and Wilson. Comparing the list of manuscripts which

reflects the late Byzantine reduction of Menander's manifold typology, which distinguishes various types of encomia including imperial orations, addresses, departures, crown and ambassadorial speeches, among others.²² Many of our manuscripts are incomplete, preserving only a portion of Menander's full second treatise—the section on the βασιλικὸς λόγος—suggesting that the imperial oration was increasingly seen as the keystone of the treatise, and indeed of epideictic rhetoric in general. Under Menander, epideictic rhetoric exemplified admirable diversity, with appropriate speeches for nearly every sort of occasion: from the political, like an ambassador's departure; to the social, like a wedding; or even the intimate, like the speech recommended for delivery before amorous intercourse(!). In late Byzantine rhetorical manuscripts and social practice, however, the genre had constricted around the imperial oration. Ceremonial orations, indispensable in the early Palaiologan court, largely disappeared by the end of the fourteenth century.²³ The most commonly delivered orations by the fifteenth century were the imperial oration (βασιλικὸς λόγος, πανηγυρικός or ἐγκωμιαστικός), the address (προσφώνημα, προσφωνητικός, προσφωνηματικός or προσφωνημάτιον), the funeral oration (ἐπιτάφιος λόγος), and the monody (μονωδία), an affective rhetorical lament.²⁴

preserve any portion of Menander's treatise with the list of manuscripts collated by Hernández Muñoz confirms that all late witnesses preserved the βασιλικὸς λόγος section of the treatise.

²² *Menander*, 368.1, p. 115. In the passages that follow, I use the translation of Russell and Wilson. The other types of orations, largely occasional, described by Menander are: Speech of Arrival, 377.31–88.15, p. 95–115; Talk, 388.16–94.31, p. 115–27; Propemptic Speech (i.e., speech of departure), 395.1–99.10, p. 127–35; Epithalium (i.e., wedding speech), 399.11–405.13, 135–47; Bedroom Speech, 405.15–12.2, 147–59; Birthday Speech, 412.4–13.4, 159–61; Consolatory Speech, 413.6–14.30, 161–65; Address, 414.32–18.4, 165–71; Funeral Speech, 418.6–22.4, 171–79; Crown Speech, 422.6–23.5, 179–81; Ambassador's Speech, 423.7–24.2, 181; Speech of Invitation, 424.4–30.8, 183–93; Leavetaking, 430.10–34.9, 195–201; Monody, 434.11–37.4, 201–207; Sminthiac Oration, 437.6–46.14, 207–25. The Address, the Funeral Speech and the Monody were all widely practiced in the late Palaiologan period.

²³ Toth, "Rhetorical Theatron in Late Byzantium," 434–36. On the occasional imperial orations of the early Palaiologan court, see Angelov, 44–49.

²⁴ On the numerous funeral orations and monodies in this period, see Hunger I, 132–45.

The rough framework proposed by Menander proved enduring throughout the fifteenth century, where most of the surviving imperial orations display the clear imprint of Menander's matrix: a prooimion²⁵ followed by praise of the subject's πατρίς²⁶ and γένος, leading to an account of his accomplishments and deeds. Menander's persistent authority does not mean, however, that orators did not feel free to depart from his familiar framework. Byzantine encomiasts treated Menander more as a rhetorical buffet than a *menu prix-fixe*, choosing from

²⁵ *Menander*, 368.9–14. a prologue that should gesture at the enormity of the task, “investing the subject with grandeur.” The orator might compare the task of praising the emperor to embracing the boundless sea with his eye—that is, impossible—or he might proclaim his uncertainty about where to begin the task. Such themes were popular for Byzantine encomiasts, who commonly deprecated their worthiness for the task at hand. See, for instance, Polemis, “Two Praises of the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos,” 707.1–17, where the author claims not even Homer’s “ten tongues” (*Il.* 2.489) would suffice to praise the emperor suitably; Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 200.1–201.17, where the task is beyond not just the author, but all those who pride themselves on their skill in rhetoric; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 292.1–293.3, where enumerating the deeds and achievements of the emperor is likened to gazing upon all the stars, counting up the sand on the seashore or girding the earth and sea with a rope; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 132.1–136.13, the longest prooimion to the longest imperial oration exhausts both the subject and the reader in describing the tensions between his obligation to praise so mighty a monarch but his inability to do the matter justice; Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 221.1–223.2, quotes a fragment of Pindar (fr. 108a) and calls upon God to preserve him in this most impossible of tasks (cf. Dokeianos, *Letter to Constantine Palaiologos*, 242.33–43.2); Anonymous, *Address to Despot Demetrios Palaiologos*, 211.1–212.1, where the author references his previous encomium of John VIII, as having fallen short of the honor and virtue of that man. Of course, such opening gambits were consciously performative and self-negating, permitting the orator to lament his own rhetorical mediocrity while simultaneously parading before his audience the most complex periods, esoteric vocabulary and quotations from classical authors like Pindar, Hesiod, Homer and Plato. As Ihor Ševčenko has noted, in imperial charters the prooimion was the section in which the imperial ideal would be set out and the ornate language was intended to mimic the elevated themes addressed (Ševčenko, “Levels of Style in Byzantine Literature,” 308); on the function of *prooimia* as vehicles for imperial ideology, see Hunger, *Prooimion*. In a Christian context, this performative modesty also enacted the Christian paradox from Matthew 23:12: “For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

²⁶ Following the prooimion, Menander advised moving to praise and amplification on the subject of the emperor’s *patris* or homeland, and he advises a brief recitation of the city’s history, should it be distinguished. *Menander*, 369.25–26: τοῦτο μόνου βασιλέως τὸ ἐγκώμιον, ἀλλὰ κοινὸν πρὸς πάντας τοὺς οἰκοῦντας τὴν πόλιν, though Menander concedes the orator may pass over to the *ethnos* if the city lacks sufficient distinction to merit praise. The theme in general receives less attention in late imperial orations, perhaps because the προσφώνητικός mode of panegyric tended to omit such discourses entirely. For Menander’s precept that the προσφώνημα pass from prooimion to deeds, see *Menander*, 415.5–8; examples of late Byzantine imperial orations which omit praise of the *patris* or city include Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*; Chortasmenos, *Address from Manuel Asanopoulos*; Polemis, “Two Praises of the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos”; Demetrios Chrysoloras; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*; Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*.

amongst those themes he recommended rather than inflexibly adopting his organization and structure.²⁷

Fifteenth-century orators did not only take an idiosyncratic approach to Menander's precepts, they also alloyed panegyric with other forms of literary expression like admonition, censure, and historiography, yielding discourses that displayed new levels of generic fluidity. A striking example of this phenomenon appears in the imperial oration of John Argyropoulos, delivered to Constantine XI in 1449. Though it is entitled "βασιλικός" in two of the four surviving fifteenth-century manuscripts, Argyropoulos adopted a more sophisticated formal structure than the standard imperial oration. Instead of straightforward praise, he combined aspects of several rhetorical modes to create a unique piece of encomiastic and parainetic rhetoric.²⁸ After a prooimion, which quoted Hesiod and heralded the return of the Greeks to the age of gold, notably foregoing the usual exaggerated humility recommended by Menander, Argyropoulos embarked on an extended discourse on kingship itself.²⁹ This first section of the oration, praising monarchy as the most perfect form of political organization, drew not on Menander but on the tradition of discourses dedicated to justifying monarchy and to enumerating the imperatives of kingship: orations by Dio Chrysostom, Synesios of Cyrene, as well as later Byzantine exemplars like the philosophical essays of Theodore Metochites and *On*

²⁷ As was the case in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as well: Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I*, 418; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 51–52.

²⁸ This title appears in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Cod. gr. M 041 sup. (Martini-Bassi 510), and Madrid, Biblioteca nacional de España, Cod. gr. 04636; the other two manuscripts name only the author and addressee in the title. The editor Lampros added "ἡ περὶ βασιλείας" to the title in his critical edition, acknowledging its composite character.

²⁹ As we have seen, the absence of the common humility *topos* was not unique to Argyropoulos; the imperial orations of John Chortasmenos and Demetrios Chrysoloras, for instance, also eschewed this convention.

Kingship by Thomas Magistros.³⁰ Only after this defense of monarchy did he turn to panegyric proper, deploying a classical rhetorical topos frequently invoked in orations on kingship: the “imperial statue.”³¹ In this section, Argyropoulos took up the standard litany of imperial virtues and imperatives. Finally, in a closing section the oration shifted again to the parainetic mode, warning the emperor to beware those who would cast off the union of churches subscribed by his predecessor and brother John VIII, since their pretense of piety would drive off any forthcoming aid from western polities.³² In fusing multiple modes of imperial address, Argyropoulos created a unique imperial oration that ranged over the various postures an orator could adopt toward his monarch: philosophically didactic, panegyric, and parainetic.

This creative recombination evident in Argyropoulos’s address appeared in other imperial orations in the fifteenth century, and indeed rhetorical composition more broadly. John Chortasmenos’s ἐπιτάφιος, or funeral oration, for father and son Andreas and Manuel Asanes combined prose and poetry, rhetorical lament and dialogue; Demetrios Chrysoloras blended

³⁰ See Dio Chrysostom, Or. 1, 2, 3, 4. Orations 1 and 3, thought to have been delivered to the Roman emperor Trajan (r. 98–117 CE) in particular take up the themes of the ideal king and constitution; Synesios; Metochites, *Miscellanea*, 625–42; *Toma Magistro. La regalità*, ed. Paola V. Cacciatores (Naples, 1997).

³¹ The βασιλικὸς ἀνδριάς, or “imperial statue,” was a familiar concept to Byzantine orators; the thirteenth-century scholar Nikephoros Blemmydes addressed his oration on kingship to Theodore II Laskaris under this title, though he leaves the metaphor implicit in the text itself. But Blemmydes must have been influenced by the canonical orators of the Roman empire. The strategy of describing the ideal king, whom the orator winkingly suggests is the *laudandus* himself, is old indeed. Dio Chrysostom used his praise of the ideal king to avoid charges of the very flattery against which he rails at length (Or. 3.25–26). Themistios too employed the artifice of describing the true or ideal king (Or. 1.3b–d), clearly influenced by the model of Dio Chrysostom. It was Synesios, 9C, however, who linked the ideal king with the “imperial statue,” though he used the word ἄγαλμα rather than ἀνδριάς. The concept continued to resonate as shorthand for the ideal king, appearing in the encomium on Andronikos II with which Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos began his *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.181, 937 (=PG 145, cols. 568A, 596B), where the emperor is an ἀνδριάς βασιλείας, or “image of kingship”; Manuel Gabalas in his encomium on Andronikos II in E. Kaltsogianni, “Die Lobrede des Matthaios von Ephesos auf Andronikos II Palaiologos,” *JÖB* 59 (2009): 117–122, at 3.15; Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 220.132; Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Address*, 65.3; Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 211.1, 220.13 (θειότατον ἄγαλμα); it also appears as a description of emperor John II Komnenos in series of emperors, attributed to Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, preserved in the fourteenth-century manuscript BAV Vat. gr. 166, fol. 27r.

³² Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 46.4–12.

epistolography and encomium in his *Hundred Letters* to Manuel II, reworked from a previous imperial oration; and many of the encomia for emperors blur the lines between rhetoric and historiography in the recitation of the subjects' deeds, a process Florin Leonte has called the "narrativization" of rhetoric.³³ Many of these same orators also composed rhetorical laments on the death of emperors, spouses, and family members—compositions which wove panegyric threads into the elegiac fabric.³⁴

With deft appropriation, adaptation and combination of familiar rhetorical models and topoi, orators crafted compositions that were highly responsive to social and political conditions, increasing the possibilities for political engagement. These forms of creative recombination gave speakers the opportunity to address political issues in a variety of modes through orations that could praise or admonish, beseech or rebuke. Indeed, some later orations truncated the panegyric portions, or forsook them altogether. Michael Apostoles breezed through a perfunctory tour of imperial virtues in his oration to Constantine XI, which defended Apostoles's orthodoxy against slanderers. And while many orators used the occasion and licence of panegyric to lobby for causes important to them, thinking that praise would make their counsel more palatable, others found encomium an unnecessary pretense and cut straight to advice. John Eugenikos delivered an oration that was both caustic and candid in denouncing Constantine XI's continued support for the church union, before adopting a milder tone of admonition at the end. The widespread use of creative recombination in the structure and emphasis of imperial orations under the last Palaiologan emperors seen here illustrates the drawbacks of viewing orations as

³³ See Leonte, "Rhetoric in Purple," 116–18; Schmitt, "Kaiserrede und Zeitgeschichte," where he argues that Isidore's long encomium blurs the boundaries with historiography.

³⁴ See Hunger I, 140–42.

unimaginative regurgitations of late antique precepts or examples. Not only did the authors and orators have a number of models from which to draw, but they made adaptive and idiosyncratic use of the models they had.

Elements of Ideological Consensus: Comparisons, Epithets, and Virtues

The foundation for the ideological consensus forged by imperial panegyrics was built upon the common language, exemplars, and ideas shared by imperial orators in the fifteenth century. In this regard, they were in most ways little different from imperial orators of previous centuries. In the following sections, I will explore the elements of this consensus and how these familiar tropes donned fifteenth-century garb in the imperial orations.

Indispensable to the orator in the fifteenth century, as it had been in the second, was the language of allusion and analogy. Figures of speech like metaphor and simile yoked the emperor or empire to a range of examples for judicious and beneficent command, service, victory or utility.³⁵ The emperor could be compared to a musician in harmonizing discordant elements in society,³⁶ a doctor who amputates the limb to save the life,³⁷ an Olympic victor bearing home prizes and erecting trophies of his triumphs,³⁸ a wild bull or a tree dropping nuts of virtue.³⁹ Of course even a single metaphor permitted numerous interpretations. The emperor was often

³⁵ More rarely negative examples were invoked, though these are rare in fifteenth-century imperial address; see Synesios's oration on kingship (10), where he compared the emperor to a tremulous sea creature.

³⁶ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 180.15–18.

³⁷ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 228.12–13.

³⁸ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 207.19.

³⁹ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 238.18–20; 225.6–11.

praised as the pilot at sea, but the figure's meaning was fluid: he could be a tragic figure only permitted to show his mettle in the teeth of gale,⁴⁰ a pragmatic captain who discharged his cargo to save his crew,⁴¹ a steady hand on the tiller,⁴² or the paragon of solicitude toward his crew.⁴³ Elsewhere, the emperor's reign was like the sun, announcing the verdant approach of spring after a grim winter,⁴⁴ returning to Constantinople like a second sun rising from the west,⁴⁵ or casting rays of his kingship over the whole world.⁴⁶

Other attributions were less metaphoric and more descriptive. The foremost attribute of the emperor was "divinity," mentioned in nearly every imperial address. The language derives from theories of Hellenistic kingship, though in the Christian context it had been ameliorated

⁴⁰ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 218.43.

⁴¹ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 228.14–17.

⁴² Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 159.15–18.

⁴³ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 33.14–15, where he employs metonymy, describing kingship as the "pilot."

⁴⁴ Dokeianos, *Address to Theodore Palaiologos*, 236.1; this seasonal metaphor here, the emperor's approach heralding the approach of spring, evokes the seasonal language used in an *Adventus* poem describing Frederick II's entry into Jerusalem, quoted and discussed in Kantorowicz, "Kaiser Friedrich II. und das Königsbild des Hellenismus," 178–81; Kantorowicz argues that in this case, the comparison serves to figure Frederick II as Christ, which was not uncommon in Byzantine poetry addressed to emperors—see pp. 181–83 where he cites Prodromos and Blemmydes; for a fifteenth-century example of this type of *Christomimesis*, which does not use the sun, see Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 300.12–1.3, where John VIII is stricken with illness, retires to a monastery for forty days, and eventually returns to the imperial palace on Palm Sunday in a procession with the clergy. Comparison with the sun was a favorite theme of monarchical metaphor adopted from Hellenistic political thought; see the solar metaphors in the fragments of the Pseudo-Pythagoreans transmitted in Stobaeus, edited most recently in Louis Delatte, *Les traités de la royauté d'Ecphanté, Diotogène et Sthénidas* (Liège, 1942), and the discussion in Erwin R. Goodenough, "The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship," *Yale Classical Studies* 1 (1928): 55–105; Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, 1:245–77; on the sun in Roman political theology and symbolism, see the classic study in Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti. Lever Du Roi," *DOP* 17 (1963): 119–35; the same author adduces as a later fascinating example a passage from Shakespeare's *Richard II* in Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 24–41.

⁴⁵ Polemis, "Two Praises of the Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos," 708.55–56; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 163.30–31.

⁴⁶ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 204.16–17, where he differs in his sun-like qualities, shining over the whole world, from Darius and Cyrus, who could only hold their limited empires.

from a strict equivocation to an implicit comparison: the “divine” emperor was god-like, rather than God himself.⁴⁷ While the Christianization of imperial ideology had appropriated the comparisons between monarchs and God, it had needed to temper the direct divinization of the monarch which had characterized later Hellenistic and Roman monarch cults, and so displaced the emperor by only one short step, making him the image of God and his vice-regent in earthly affairs.⁴⁸ The epithet “most divine one” (θείότατε) commonly appeared in the vocative address to the monarch that either opened imperial orations, or served as a description elsewhere.⁴⁹ The nature of the similarity implied in the epithet “divine” resided in the concept of mimesis: both the emperor’s imitation of God, and the empire’s imitation of heaven. For John Argyropoulos, “the πολιτεία imitates the divine order of the universe,” and “the emperor is like God, and his foresight is an imitation of divine foresight.”⁵⁰ It was this imitation of divine arrangements that authorized the appellation θεῖος.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, the deification of monarchy evident in the Pseudo-Pythagoreans edited by Delatte; in Ekphantos, kingship is incorruptible and unwieldy for man, on account of its abundant divinity; like the sun, kingship is divine and impossible to behold except for those worthy (Delatte, *Les traités de la royauté*, 4.7.64); see similar language in Dendrinios, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 19, where it is the emperor’s learning in refuting Latin heresies that the illegitimate [i.e., Latins] dare not gaze upon. For Ekphantos, the office itself is divine and only suitable for the king, divine by nature and crafted by the hand of God himself.

⁴⁸ The classic formulation of this concept was Eusebius’s *Tricennial Orations* to the Emperor Constantine on the occasion of this thirtieth anniversary as emperor; see H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius’ Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley, 1978). On the intellectual and ideological roots of the Eusebian formulation, see Norman H. Baynes, “Eusebius and the Christian Empire,” in *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 168–72; Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, 2:611–58.

⁴⁹ Dokeianos, *Address to Constantine Palaiologos*, 232.1, 234.26; Apostoles, “Die Ansprache,” 376.1, 379.87–88; Polemis, “Two Praises of Emperor Manuel II,” 707.27, 709.77–78; Apostoles, *Oration to Constantine XI*, 83.1; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 292.1–2, 294.11–12 (of Manuel II), 308.3; Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 211.1; Dendrinios, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 446.165; Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 224.8; Dokeianos, *Address to Theodore Palaiologos*, 236.4–5; Pletho, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 210.5 (of Constantine XI); Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 222.16; Argyropoulos, *Oration of Consolation to Constantine XI*, in Lampros, *Άργυροπούλεια*, 8.1, 25.16.

⁵⁰ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 31.18–19: “Καὶ μὴν πολιτεία τῆς τοῦ παντὸς, οἶμαι, διακοσμήσεως μίμημα; 35.16–18: ἥ τε διὰ πάντων ἡκουσα τοῦ βασιλέως προμήθεια, δι’ ἧς τὰ τῶν ὑπηκόων εὖ ἄγαν ἔχει καὶ σώζεται πράγματα, αὐτῆς ἀντικρὺς μίμημα τῆς θείας προνοίας.” John Chortasmenos contrasted the “tyranny” in other lands with the “lawful kingship” (*ennomos basileia*) of the Byzantines, claiming that “God wanted to set Himself as an archetype, like an

One especially resonant imperial description was the emperor as father: the “common father to all men,” or the “gentle father of the *genos*”.⁵¹ More significantly, the father could stand in a chain of metaphysical mimesis: father-monarch-God.⁵² In a Christian context, this equivocation permitted an implicit play on signification of both king-as-father and father-as-God. This multiple signification inherent in “father”—in the familial, monarchical and Christian senses—fashioned a conceptual link that was suggestive, like calling the emperor “divine”, but remained on the safe side of orthodoxy. These elements of imperial oratory were commonplaces, however, and varied neither from emperor to emperor, nor even dramatically from earlier Byzantine oratory.

Beyond the comparative language of metaphor and simile, another central element of imperial praise and the evocation of the imperial ideal was the enumeration of virtues. Investigation and praise of virtues had occupied a central place in ancient political thought from its inception; after all, Plato’s *Republic* begins as a conversation about the nature of justice, and this text canonized the four cardinal virtues: courage, prudence, temperance and justice.⁵³ Aristotle regarded the production of virtue in citizens as the chief goal of politics, and to the four

image, in noetic matters, and that affairs here be disposed according to heavenly mimesis.” Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 220.119–23. Interestingly, it seems as though the mimesis of Christ was a conceptual channel through which the symbolic and ideological language reserved for emperors could be appropriated in the description of holy men, who also imitated Christ, thereby resounding in intellectual and literary cultures far removed from the imperial court. See, for instance, the early fifteenth-century *Life of Maximos the Hutterburner* by Theophanes (in Alice-Mary Talbot and Richard Greenfield, ed. and trans., *Holy Men of Mount Athos* [Washington, DC, 2016], 485) where the saint’s ascent in virtue is described in solar language reminiscent of the emperor, “like Peter the Athonite and the great Athanasios, who rose like eternally shining suns over the Holy Mountain and all the West. Thus Maximos, gradually ascending to their heights of virtue, I mean of practice and contemplation, arose in our midst in the wilderness, and illuminated creation and guided all our souls like a most brilliant sun.”

⁵¹ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 224.22: “κοινὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς πατὴρ παντὶ”; Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 225.13-14: “πατέρα δ’ ὡς ἥπιον”; see also 231.5, both quoting Homer (*Od.* 2.47).

⁵² Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 35.10–11.

⁵³ Plato, *Republic* 427b.

canonical virtues identified by Plato, he added five more: magnificence, magnanimity, liberality, gentleness, prudence.⁵⁴ The scheme of cardinal virtues was influential and widely employed from antiquity throughout the Middle Ages in Neoplatonic, Stoic and Christian thought.⁵⁵ Invocation of a virtue, then, not only spoke to a present moral obligation, but it immediately mobilized a range of associations from antiquity onward.

Within the rhetorical tradition, the virtues were always closely linked with praise, which was seen as an articulation and demonstration of the subject's inherent virtues.⁵⁶ This resolute emphasis on virtues continued to dominate the imperial oratorical tradition, as Menander's treatise followed his predecessors in recommending structuring amplification on the emperor's achievements and deeds as testimony to his cardinal virtues.⁵⁷ Imperial orations from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries retained this essential characteristic and fifteenth-century imperial orations are little different in this regard. The most commonly praised virtues remained courage, justice, prudence and temperance.⁵⁸ These were often presented as a set, enumerated as part of a

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.9; *Rhetoric* 1.9. Other authorities and philosophical traditions also emphasized the centrality of virtue to political life. Among Stoics, Zeno's *Republic* (as reported in Diogenes Laertius, *Vita philosophorum* 7.32–3) considered virtue the only qualification for membership in the body politic.

⁵⁵ See for instance, Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.15, in which he describes the four parts of *honestas* (wisdom, faith and fellowship, magnanimity, restraint) which correspond closely to the cardinal virtues; also *ibid.* 2.18, where he lists the characteristics on which virtue depends: perception of the truth, restraint of passions, and just and equitable relations; Marcus Aurelius also takes up the virtues in *Meditations* 5.12, where the four virtues are the true “goods” in life, in contrast to those things commonly judged valuable (τοῖς πολλοῖς δοκοῦντα ἀγαθὰ); on the virtues in Neoplatonic thought, see Dominic J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2003), 40–49; on the virtues in the early Christian and early medieval Latin tradition, see István Pieter Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: A Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century* (Leiden, 2011), 1–67.

⁵⁶ See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9. Within the tradition of *progymnasmata*, see Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, 110; Pseudo-Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata*, 7.20 (“τὸ δὲ ἐγκώμιον φιλήν ἀρετῆς ἔχει μαρτυρίαν”); *Aphthonii progymnasmata*, ed. Hugo Rabe (Leipzig, 1926), 21; Nicolaus of Myra, *Progymnasmata*, in *Nicolai progymnasmata*, ed. J. Felten (Leipzig, 1913), 49.

⁵⁷ *Menander*, 373.5–8.

⁵⁸ ἀνδρεία: Dendrinus, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 448.248; Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 217.30, 218.32; Demetrios Chrysoloras, 237.9, 245.3; Isidore, “Begrüßungsansprache,” 121; Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 211.21; Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 227.8; Dokeianos, *Address to Theodore Palaiologos*, 238.3; Bessarion, *Discourse to Constantine Palaiologos*, 442.14–15; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 39.8, 12, 13, 19;

catalog and subject to little further consideration. But some orators reflected more deeply on them, and how each contributed to the emperor's performance of the office of kingship. Obviously, the depth of these discourses was generally proportional to the work overall; it is no surprise that Michael Apostoles's short oration before Constantine XI—which moved quickly from the panegyric to apologetic mode—had space for only the briefest mention of imperial virtues, while Isidore of Kiev's oration to John VIII, spanning nearly 70 pages in the modern edition, spent nearly a third of the work in an exhaustive discussion of emperor's manifestation of the four cardinal virtues.⁵⁹ Isidore unpacked each virtue, explaining how the emperor's conduct revealed his virtue. In his discussion of courage (ἀνδρεία), for instance, Isidore described the essence of courage, provided a historical example of the emperor's virtue—in this case, John VIII's bold naval assault on Carlo I Tocco, the despot of Epiros who had invaded the

Apostoles, *Oration to Constantine XI*, 85.5; Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 212.14. δικαιοσύνη: Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 222.200–01; Dendrinis, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 444.99; Polemis, “Two Praises of Emperor Manuel II,” 709.93; Demetrios Chrysoloras, 226.17, 238.16, 245.3; Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 201.22; 210.29; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 299.19–20; 304.12, 31; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 184–89, the longest single amplification on the virtue, which addresses social, administrative, legal and economic justice; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 40.9; Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 212.14, 20; Apostoles, *Oration to Constantine XI*, 84.7; 85.6; Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 132.30. φρόνησις: Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 133; Demetrios Chrysoloras, 233.6; 237.8; 238.10; Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 210.31; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 306.24–307.3; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 179.10–84.2 (extended discussion on the virtue); Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Discourse*, 62.30; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 40.19; 41.3; 41.11; 45.15. See also the poem of Amiroutzes to Mehmed II which also invokes the cardinal virtues: in Bart Janssens and Peter Van Deun, “George Amiroutzes and His Poetical Oeuvre,” in *Philomathestatos: Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Bart Janssens, Bram Roosen, and Peter Van Deun (Leuven, 2004), 314–18. Prudence was often conflated with or replaced by wisdom (σοφία); see the six virtues in Manuel II, *Precepts*, ch. 73. Further adductions of σοφία: Dendrinis, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 444.99; Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 220.135; Demetrios Chrysoloras, 233.1, 28; 234.17–18; 238.22; Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 201.20; 202.25; 204.10; 205.22; 208.5; 209.23; 217.17–19; 220.17; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 292.2, 7; 306.23–307.20; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 179–83; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 41.3, 11; Apostoles, *Oration to Constantine XI*, 83.2, 5; 84.3–4; Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 225.15. σωφροσύνη: Dendrinis, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 444.99; Polemis, “Two Praises of Emperor Manuel II,” 709.93; Demetrios Chrysoloras, 237.9; 245.3; Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 211.21; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 189–93; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 39.3; Apostoles, *Oration to Constantine XI*, 85.5; Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 212.14.

⁵⁹ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 179–97.

Peloponnese in 1427—and finally pronounced the emperor equal to the ἀνδρεία of Cyrus, Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great.⁶⁰

Other virtues were added to these as well, combining both ancient and Christian values. All three emperors were praised for their μεγαλοψυχία, “lordliness” or “greatness of soul”, one of Aristotle’s chief moral virtues.⁶¹ Prudence as well, closely related to wisdom but representing a more practical and less elevated form of knowledge, was another virtue rooted in the classical tradition which was attributed to late emperors.⁶² Other Biblical and Christian virtues appeared alongside these: the emperors were praised for their ἐπιείκεια, “reasonableness” or “forbearance”;⁶³ for being “gentle” or “mild” (ἥπιος, πρᾶος, ἥμερος).⁶⁴

The emperor’s imitative representation of God, implied in his attribution as “divine” and explicated in the concept of mimesis, forged a strong connection with specific virtues *per se*. By far the most frequently praised virtue outside of the four cardinal virtues was εὐσέβεια, “piety.” After Christian imperial thought codified the emperor’s role in protecting orthodoxy, the virtue became a stock of imperial orations.⁶⁵ Fifteenth-century orators also praised piety abundantly,

⁶⁰ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 193–98.

⁶¹ Dendrinis, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 444.98; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 304.6; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 40.7.

⁶² Chortasmenos, *Address from Manuel Asanopoulos*, 199.18, where prudence is related to social justice and equality of honor; Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 217.31, 220.133; Demetrios Chrysoloras, 238.10; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 306.24–307.20.

⁶³ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 238.10; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 304.6; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 186.19, 29; 187.28; Pletho, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 209.27.

⁶⁴ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 229.3; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 299.22; 306.18; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 178.11; 186.29; 199.22; Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 225.14; 231.5; Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 41.18–20; 42.3.

⁶⁵ For the influential sixth-century deacon Agapetos, the emperor was the “image of piety”: Agapetos, *Der Fürstenspiegel für Kaiser Iustinianos*, ed. Rudolf Riedinger (Athens, 1995), 5.1; the eleventh-century bishop Theophylact of Ochrid insisted that the young prince Constantine Doukas make piety, which obtained not in revering priests, but in acting and speak as though God is omniscient, the foundation of kingship, “just as the lower parts of a house or a

either as a kind of general reverence toward God or a more specific virtue associated with dogmatically faithful orthodoxy.⁶⁶ Demetrios Chrysoloras marveled at Manuel II's piety—meaning only his untrammelled devotion to God—observing that the man who loves God may conquer all, for he is transformed into a “wild, Ethiopian bull, such as the Troglodytes marvel at”; for John Dokeianos, it was among the chief virtues passed from father to son.⁶⁷

Φιλανθρωπία or “love of humanity” was, like piety, a virtue with a Christian resonance. Demetrios Chrysoloras attributed Tamerlane's victory at Ankara to God's φιλανθρωπία.⁶⁸ Bessarion, in his encomium to Alexios IV Megas Komnenos, praised the monarch's zeal for divinity and piety, other virtues which assimilated man to God, and asked who would not recognize the great mildness and φιλανθρωπία Alexios shows to fellow men.⁶⁹ This “love of humanity” could also appear in the context of the just monarch as one of the virtues—along with magnanimity—through which justice was preserved.⁷⁰ John Dokeianos listed φιλανθρωπία alongside “protection,” as the two virtues demonstrated by the emperor's defense of social

ship should be more solid.” Gautier, *Théophylacte d'Achrida*, 201.6–7: “καθάπερ οίκίας καὶ νεῶς δεῖ τὰ κάτω ἀσφαλέστερα εἶναι”; in contrast, the thirteenth-century monk Nikephoros Blemmydes, in his *Imperial Statue* for the young Theodore Laskaris, takes as one of his themes impiety (Blemmydes, *Imperial Statue*, 61, 62, 178). Blemmydes writes: “And if someone should reflect on the fall of celebrated Empires, he will find that it was brought about by lechery rampant in them.” (23, trans. Hunger and Ševčenko).

⁶⁶ As a general reverence toward God: Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 218.33, where it is listed as a virtue possessed by the emperor in distinction to the barbarians (i.e. ancient Persians, and by ethnographic allegory, Turks); Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 212.20; Bessarion, *Address to Alexios IV*, 121.37; both senses could exist in the same speech: Dendrinios, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 448.249 (general); 449.259 (dogmatic).

⁶⁷ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 238.18–19; Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 225.10; idem, *Address to Theodore Palaiologos*, 237.23.

⁶⁸ Paul Gautier, “Action de grâces,” 347.27f.

⁶⁹ Bessarion, *Address to Alexios IV*, 126.212.

⁷⁰ For *philanthropia*, along with magnanimity, as a buttress of a monarch's justice, see Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 40.7.

harmony and cleansing the realm from the pollution of wickedness.⁷¹ John Argyropoulos, in an oration to Constantine consoling him on the death of John VIII, struck a markedly Stoic tone, advising that grief, far from evincing φιλανθρωπία, in fact demonstrated the opposite, for one man's grief was then communicated to others. Therefore, it would be true φιλανθρωπία to *not* grieve his brother's death.⁷²

Another abbreviated way to describe the virtuous character of the emperor was to invoke the “imperial statue,” a kind of richly associative shorthand that conjured past emperors, orators and paragons of moral kingship. A classical rhetorical topos frequently invoked in imperial orations, both the language and the tradition of the “imperial statue” were intended to shield the orator from accusations of flattery.⁷³ The orator praised not the monarch before him, but the “ideal king,” implying a whole range of virtues but permitting amplification on a few specific ones. This displacement of praise conveniently allowed the orator to laud the ideal with a fulsome tongue, while simultaneously suggesting—more or less explicitly—that the actual king was an icon of the ideal one. Like the humility topos advocated by Menander, it was an illusion that derived its power from transparent dissembling; nevertheless, it remained a popular byword for a catalogue of the most important virtues without needing to number them all.⁷⁴ For Chortasmenos, the virtues of φρόνησις and σοφία—prudence and wisdom—were among the

⁷¹ Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 230.

⁷² Argyropoulos, *Oration of Consolation*, 12.

⁷³ See n. 31 above on the “imperial statue.”

⁷⁴ Dio Chrysostom claimed precisely this motivation in one of the first uses of this rhetorical feint: Dio Chrysostom, Or. 3.25–26.

most illustrious for the imperial statue. Argyropoulos counted piety, service and devotion to God as the hallmarks of the statue and the foundation of kingship.⁷⁵

This repertoire of common comparatives, epithets, and especially virtues, were fundamental to the way imperial orators used political rhetoric to describe emperors and the empire. This emphasis on virtue and the moral qualities of rulers disclosed the strong belief, shared by almost all Byzantine thinkers, that the moral qualities of the ruler (or rulers) rather than the constitutional arrangements of the state ensured political and social prosperity.⁷⁶ It was the emperor who appointed just magistrates; the emperor who dispensed beneficence to his subjects; the emperor whose enterprise saved the *genos* from destruction.⁷⁷ These were not, of course, accurate descriptions of the actual exercise of political authority in Byzantium. Rather, they shored up the source of that political power, re-affirming communally the normative political order in which all authority and benefits radiated from the monarch downward. These expressions insisted that the emperor remained indispensable to his subject, even in the fractured political atmosphere of the fifteenth century, where imperial territory was diminished and discontinuous, and where actual political power was increasingly ephemeral.

⁷⁵ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 220.132; Argyropoulos, 38.1–4. See also Manuel Chrysoloras, *Epistolary Address*, 65.3; Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 211.1, 220.13 (θειότατον ἄγαλμα).

⁷⁶ Ancient and medieval texts stressed in particular self-control as a precondition for political authority: Isocrates, *To Demonicus*, 21; Diotogenes, *On Kingship*, 39, in Delatte, *Les traités de la royauté*; Plutarch, *To the Uneducated Ruler*, 780b, *Precepts of Statecraft*, 806f; Dio Chrysostom, Or. 3.85; Agapetos, *Der Fürstenspiegel*, 18; *Menae patricii cum Thoma referendario: De scientia politica dialogus*, ed. Carlo M. Mazzucchi (Milan, 1982), 5.138; Gautier, *Théophylacte d'Achrida*, 194, 206; Blemmydes, *Imperial Statue*, 205; *Toma Magistro. La regalità*, 3; Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 222.199.

⁷⁷ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 220.114; Demetrios Chrysoloras, 234.

The central pillar of the emperor's claim to legitimacy was sacral nature of political authority, the idea that God had conveyed kingship to the emperor in an act that elevated him. As a result, the βασιλεὺς himself was an imitation of God. It hardly needs repetition that this was the core tenet of Byzantine imperial ideology (and indeed of kingship throughout most of the premodern world) and had been since the first Christian imperial propagandists like Eusebius proclaimed that Constantine was chosen by God.⁷⁸ Orators from every century constantly re-invigorated the emperor's divine connection by the liberal use of the epithet θεῖος in their imperial praise.

In the fifteenth century, as before, the emperor's sacred authority derived from his designation by God, evident from his elevation to the imperial office. Orators described this designation in generalizing and vague terms, admitting God's ultimate authority, while not denying the role of others (like the patriarchs) in the elevation. Demetrios Chrysoloras, for instance, claimed that God judged Manuel as "best to be servant and illustrious minister for the *genos* of the Romans."⁷⁹ Dokeianos described Manuel's appointment as accorded by "divine judgement and will."⁸⁰ But it was a vague formulation that could be read as promoting a dualist view of the emperor's elevation, where one element was divine (βουλῇ) while the other (φήφω) was not. The Alexandrian Anonymous, on the other hand—and despite his orthodoxy on the issue of ecclesiastical union—espoused an absolutist view of the origin of sacral authority. Manuel "took up the affairs of the empire (τὰ πράγματα) not through human decree or patriarchal

⁷⁸ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 1.24, in Friedhelm Winkelmann, ed., *Eusebius Werke, Vol. 1.1: Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin* (Berlin, 1975); idem, *Laudes Constantini*, 2.1, in Ivar A. Heikel, ed., *Eusebius Werke, Vol. 1: Tricennatsrede an Konstantin* (Leipzig, 1902).

⁷⁹ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 226.8–9: "Ρωμαίων γενεῖ φανερόν ὑπηρετήην αὐτὸν ἄριστον ἡξίωσε καὶ διάκονον."

⁸⁰ Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 225.15: "φήφω καὶ βουλῇ θεία"

consecration, but by something divine, an injunction from above; like the great David he received in turn (διαδέχεται) the chrism and the acclamation.”⁸¹ Isidore of Kiev asserted that not even the emperor himself could preempt God’s designation. When Manuel II prepared to crown John VIII emperor, first God anointed the prince, then his father transferred to him the imperial authority.⁸²

But the sacrality was not only conferred and confirmed through the emperor’s appointment and elevation to the imperial throne. It was constantly displayed through his imitation of God-Christ as king. In the conclusion to his laudatory comparison of Manuel II with previous emperors, Demetrios Chrysoloras markedly paired the emperor’s role as μιμητὴς Θεοῦ, imitator of God, with his role as emperor of the Romans, as obverse and reverse of the same coin.⁸³ As God gave order to the universe and provided all good things to humans, so the earthly king flooded cities with benefits and became the agent of their prosperity.⁸⁴ For Manuel himself, in his moral philosophical compendium to his own son, the emperor imitated God chiefly in his role as lawgiver, νομοθέτης, modeling both his words and deeds on the image of the eternal

⁸¹ Anonymous, *Encomium to Manuel II and John VIII*, 208.9–12: “Παραλαβὼν τοίνυν οὗτος τὰ πράγματα οὐκ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φήφῳ καὶ πατριαρχικῇ χειροτονίᾳ, ἀλλὰ θεῖα τινὶ καὶ ἄνωθεν ἐπισκίφει, κατὰ τὸν μέγαν Δαυὶδ καὶ αὐτὸς τὸν χρισμὸν καὶ τὴν ἀνάρρησιν διαδέχεται”

⁸² Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 172.27–30: “Καὶ χρεὶ μὲν πρῶτον θεός, ἔπειτα πατὴρ καὶ βασιλεὺς τὸν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μύρου καὶ τῆς χρίσεως ἄξιον, καὶ τὴν αὐτοκράτορα παραδίδωσιν ἀρχὴν αὐτῷ καὶ βασιλείον τῶν ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν.”

⁸³ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 245.13–14: “Καὶ σοὶ οὖν, αὐτοῦ μιμητῇ γενομένῳ καὶ Ῥωμαίων, ὡς εἰκός, βασιλεύοντι ἥκιστα πρέπον ἄλλως ἄλλο.” See also John Eugenikos’s verses on John VIII in BAV Reg. gr. Pio II 37, fol. 1r: “ἐδστεφῆς αὐτοκράτωρ / θ(εο)ῦ μιμητὴς ὡς ὑπὲρ πάντας πέλων.”

⁸⁴ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 122–26. Of course, emperors were not the only ones who claimed to imitate Christ—monks did as well. That meant that there was a conceptual overlap which could lead to hagiography using symbolic language of kingship to describe the lives and endeavors of monks. See Theophanes, *Vita Maximi*, 11, 20.4, 21.1; *Vita Philothei*, 3.7, in *Holy Men of Mount Athos*.

autokrator in Heaven.⁸⁵ Ultimately both of these connotations—the emperor’s appointment by God and expected imitation of God—were implicit in the ubiquitous epithet θεῖος.

Monarchy and Regime Theory

The indivisible counterpart to the sacral nature of political authority was the emphasis on monarchy as the sole legitimate form of governance. While almost no one disputed it, different imperial orators had different strategies for substantiating this view. Most often they left alternatives under- or untheorized, even unaddressed. Even so, monarchy remained at the heart of Byzantine identity, and its defense or bare assertion constituted an act of political self-definition.

The classic typology for constitutional comparisons derived from Plato and Aristotle.⁸⁶ And while our orators certainly knew these texts, it is reflective of monarchy’s conceptual hegemony in Byzantine thought that comparisons were scarce. Only on rare occasions was

⁸⁵ Manuel II, *Precepts*, ch. 51.

⁸⁶ The division first appears in Greek literature in the famous “Persian Debate” in Herodotos, *Histories*, 3.80–82; but the *locus classicus* remains Aristotle, *Politics*, 3.7; see also Isocrates, *Nicoles, or the Cyprians*, where he compares monarchy with other forms of government and finds it the best for the people, not just the ruler; Dio Chrysostom, Or. 3.42–50, where his discussion seems informed by the Aristotelian schema of three proper constitutions and three corrupted counterparts; the tripartite framework receives unlikely elaboration, albeit superficial, in a group of *prolegomena* to rhetorical treatises; see, for example, the anonymous *prolegomenon* in *Prolegomenon Sylloge*, ed. Hugo Rabe (Leipzig, 1931), 274.1–75.13; one scholar has argued that these were likely student exercises: Dimitar G. Angelov, “Plato, Aristotle, and ‘Byzantine Political Philosophy,’” in *The Greek Strand in Islamic Political Thought. Proceedings of the Conference Held at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, 16–27 June 2003*, ed. Emma Gannagé (Beirut, 2004), 503; see also Gautier, *Théophylacte d’Achrida*, 194. On further treatments in the late Middle Ages, see James Blythe, *Ideal Government and the Mixed Constitution in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ, 1992), which traces the employment of the Aristotelian schema from the translation of *Politics* in the late-thirteenth century to the political thinkers of the sixteenth century.

monarchy praised in contrast to other forms of governance, such as aristocracy and democracy.⁸⁷ Generally, monarchy brooked no comparison, but simply existed as an *a priori* assumption of all political discourse. This lack of argumentation has led to essentially negative conclusions on the existence of Byzantine political thought among an older generation of scholars, for whom the lack of regime theory signified a lack of political thinking.

On occasion, these Byzantine orators did call on the Platonic-Aristotelian typology. Pletho, for instance, referred to it in his memorandum to Theodore II on affairs in the Peloponnese. But his is a unique case, for not only was Pletho a philosopher at heart, but his discourse was a rare example of a συμβουλευτικός λόγος, an advisory address that—eschewing panegyric—counseled radical change from the status quo. In short, it was a rare Byzantine discourse that took up the question of proper social and political organization. Even so, he did not so much contemplate ὀλιγαρχία and δημοκρατία, as mention them before casting them aside. “Among those intent upon the best affairs (τὰ βέλτιστα), monarchy is judged the best of all, furnished with the best counselors, good laws and so many guardians.”⁸⁸ This was a traditional view, one that associated monarchy with lawful and well-advised rule. Pletho, despite his other radical positions, remained conservative at least in his regime theory.

A generation later, Argyropoulos devoted part of his panegyric to Constantine XI to an argument for monarchy. For him, kingship was the “most divine and highest” of the many ways that cities and peoples arrange their lives.⁸⁹ The orator did not explicitly contrast βασιλεία to

⁸⁷ See the famous essays of Theodore Metochites on the subject of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy: Metochites, *Miscellanea*, 604–42.

⁸⁸ Pletho, *Address to Despot Theodore*, 119.2–4.

⁸⁹ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 31.10–12: “Οὐκ ὀλίγων οὖν ὄντων οἷς ἄνθρωποι κατὰ τε πόλεις καὶ ἔθνη τὸν σφῶν αὐτῶν ὁπωσδηποῦν διατάττονται βίον, βασιλείας οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν οὐδέν, οἶμαι, θειότερόν τε καὶ ὑψηλότερον.”

democracy or aristocracy. But Argyropoulos's comparisons were clear when he explained that "the multitude" (τὸ πλῆθος) were liable to faction unless induced to unity, and that having no more "best men than one" was an imitation of God.⁹⁰ But Argyropoulos, like Pletho and other Byzantine thinkers, was not really interested in exploring the affordances and limitations of these systems, and confined himself to the familiar social justifications (i.e., people are prone to strife without a single ruler) and metaphysical reasons (i.e., monarchy imitates the governance of God in heaven) for asserting that monarchy was highest and most divine form of political organization.⁹¹

One late imperial orator, however, did put monarchy in comparison with other forms of rule. An unusual typology emerged in the orations of the Alexandrian Anonymous. Two of his speeches—his second panegyric to John VIII from the mid-1430s and his encomium on Demetrios Palaiologos from c. 1444—contrasted monarchy not with aristocracy and democracy in an Aristotelian triad, but with polyarchy and anarchy, a theologized scheme of political power bearing strong resemblance to that used by Eusebius in his *Praise of Constantine*. Eusebius contrasted monarchy to the alternatives, polyarchy and anarchy: for as there is one God, so must there be one king. This necessarily mimetic relationship disqualified all other constitutions. Alternative political arrangements would imply alternative metaphysical arrangements, Eusebius insisted. "For rather do anarchy and civil war result from the alternative, a polyarchy based on equality. For which reason there is one God, not two or three or even more. For strictly speaking,

⁹⁰ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 31.12–16: "Τό τε γάρ πλῆθος ἅπαν οὐκ ἀστασίαστον, εἰ μὴ πρὸς ἓν ὅλως ἀνάγεσθαι δύναιτο, τό τε μὴ πλείους ἑνὸς τοὺς ἀρίστους ἐν πολιτείαις εἶναι μίμημα θεῖον τῷ ὄντι καὶ οὐκ ἄπο τῆς ἐν τῷ παντὶ ἁρμονίας καὶ τάξεως."

⁹¹ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 31.10–16.

belief in many gods is godless.”⁹² This sweeping equivalence and dismissal of anarchy and polyarchy, befitting a theologian more than a political thinker, appeared in the Anonymous’s second oration to John VIII. The panegyrist also divided political constitutions into three forms—ἀρχή, πολυαρχία, and ἀναρχία. As the Anonymous argued circuituously, “if it is monarchy [i.e., ἀρχή], it is not polyarchy; if it is not polyarchy, clearly it is not anarchy, and if it is not anarchy, it is led again back to the first definition. Wherever there is anarchy, it happens in every way to introduce polyarchy. And with polyarchy introduced, monarchy is removed and driven out.”⁹³ This tautology demonstrated that there were really only two categories: proper and improper rule. Polyarchy and anarchy were not defined by their respective political organization, the rule of many or none as the terms denoted. Rather, they were paired as bywords for deviations from the orthodoxy:

Among the Hellenes these two [i.e., polyarchy and anarchy] hold a position of esteem for those who acquired the lower one [of these forms?]; but among us, we do not explain political arrangement on account of immaterial substances, but just the opposite—explaining (ἐμφανίζουσι) the three hypostases through the triple nature of the sanctuary, and the monarchy and the nature of the divinity through his lordship (κυριότητα).⁹⁴

That is, the pillars of Christian architecture and theology—belief in a single God with a threefold nature—demonstrated the legitimacy of monarchy over the other two forms, favored by the “Hellenes,” or pagans. This abstruse formulation put kingship in theological terms, rejecting

⁹² Eusebius, *Laudes Constantini*, 3.6; see O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, 147–50, who emphasizes the Platonic and Pseudo-Pythagorean background to Eusebius’s discussion, philosophical traditions that he cleverly appropriated and Christianized.

⁹³ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 305.30–306.2: “Εἰ μὲν οὖν μοναρχία, οὐ πολυαρχία, εἰ δὲ οὐ πολυαρχία, οὐδ’ ἀναρχία δηλονότι, εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἀναρχία, πάλιν εἰς τὸν πρῶτον ὅρον ἀνάγεται. Ὅπου δὲ ἀναρχία, πολυαρχίαν πάντως συμβαίνει παρεισάγεσθαι. Πολυαρχίας τοίνυν παρεισαγομένης, ἡ μοναρχία αὐτόθι ἀναιρεῖται πάντη καὶ ἀπελήλათαι.”

⁹⁴ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 306.3–7: “Τούτων μὲν οὖν ἐν Ἑλλησι τὰ δύο χώραν ἔχει τοῖς τὴν κάτω λαχοῦσιν, ἐν ἡμῖν μὲν καὶ τῶν ἀύλων οὐσιῶν οὐχ οὕτως, ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον ἅπαν, διὰ μὲν τὸ τρισσὸν τοῦ ἀγιάσματος τὰς τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, διὰ δὲ τὴν κυριότητα τὴν μοναρχίαν καὶ φύσιν τῆς θεότητος ἐμφανίζουσι.”

pagan metaphysics, but also, subtly, Neoplatonic justifications for monarchy. His identification of the two forms of improper rule with “the Hellenes” invoked the traditional terminology in Greek literature for pagans. Thus, monarchy was the political organization of Chalcedonian Christians; polyarchy and anarchy were states that existed only among pagans. But the Anonymous also rejected any philosophical proofs for the superiority of monarchy. The rule of one is not proved by any reliance on “immaterial substances” (τῶν ἀύλων οὐσιῶν), a formulation reminiscent of Neoplatonic commentators like Proklos, but through theologically irrefutable principles like “God’s lordship.”

The Alexandrian Anonymous’s justification of kingship as a theological, rather than political, imperative made sense in the argumentative thrust of his oration. One purpose of the oration, written after John VIII had initiated efforts to unify the churches, was to remind the emperor of his doctrinal responsibilities. Among the emperor’s chief duties is leadership of the Christian—that is, Orthodox—community. “Let the children of the Greeks praise with a diseased tongue the remaining two [i.e., polyarchy and anarchy] . . . We have now as leader (ἑξάρχον) of our faith the one holding the reins of the empire of the Romans.”⁹⁵ Thus the Anonymous presented kingship in a typology where the only alternatives to monarchy were heretical and wicked. Deviation from the theological underpinnings of monarchy, as the Anonymous represented them, constituted an abnegation of monarchy itself and an embrace of polyarchy and anarchy, essentially indistinguishable from one another in their illegitimacy.

⁹⁵ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 306.7–13: “τὰς δὲ λοιπὰς δύο Ἑλλήνων παῖδες γλωσσαλγείτωσαν. Τούτων γὰρ οἱ μὲν ἀναρχίαν, οἱ δὲ πολυαρχίαν ἐδόξασαν εἶναι. Ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ πάλαι μὲν ἄνωθεν γεννηθέντες κατὰ τὴν θεολογίαν, ταῖς αὐλοῖς τάξεσιν ἐπόμενοι, μίαν θεότητα προσκυνοῦντες δοξάζομεν ἐν τρισὶν ὑποστάσεσιν. Ἐχόντες τοίνυν ἑξάρχον τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς πίστεως τὸν τὰς ἡνίας κατέχοντα τῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλείας”

Such reflections fell short of the analytical rigor of western contemporaries who sought to defend monarchical regimes, even if they shared the same *a priori* convictions.⁹⁶ But to rebuke Byzantine imperial orators for failing to thoroughly consider the advantages of other political systems or defend their own would be to misunderstand the political action in which they were engaged. Their mandate was not one of comparative politics, or even so much monarchical justification, but of communal reinforcement. They stood before their monarch to remind him and themselves that their political society was both unique and normative.

The Duties of Monarchy

Their unwavering commitment to sacral kingship notwithstanding, Byzantines were not absolutists in their political thought. Neither panegyrists nor emperors themselves espoused the more extreme defenses of sacral kingship that emerged in the seventeenth century, like Robert Filmer's patriarchalism. For the Byzantines, *basileia* was not only a form of authority, but a set of obligations and duties to be fulfilled. Indeed, it is notable how often the language of kingship was that of limitation rather than warrant, a characteristic that probably discloses how few institutional or normative limits existed on imperial power.

Often these were expressed vaguely as moral obligations or literary allusions. John Chortasmenos, in his oration to Manuel II upon his return from Thessalonike in 1416, embedded a long admonitory passage artfully disguised as the lessons John VIII was being taught by his father. Chortasmenos counted eight principles of kingship taught by father to son, all of

⁹⁶ See, for instance, the arguments in two near contemporaries: John Fortescue, *De laudibus legum Anglie*, ed. S. B. Chrimes (Cambridge, 1942); Claude de Seyssel, *The Monarchy of France*, trans. J. H. Hexter, ed. Donald R. Kelley (New Haven, 1981).

which consisted of limits on the capricious exercise of power. He began with the hoary Isocratean maxim that “one who rules others must control himself.” The list went on to “praise” Manuel for teaching his son to honor justice, esteem truth, repay good men with honor, be merciful to sinners. As the orator recapitulated at the end of the litany, these rules were essentially a windy exhortation to be generally virtuous, “to foster every virtue and banish every evil.”⁹⁷

Chortasmenos had spent some time with John VIII, but this list was wilier than a simple description of the young prince’s virtues. It was delicately phrased to inhabit a liminal area between flattery and admonition, to sound like both at the same time. The rhetorical artifice, however, was foxier than the advice itself; the admonitions remained banalities drawn from the annals of ancient and Christian moral philosophy and said little about the actual practice of kingship. Such blandishments obtained later as well, when Chortasmenos invoked more explicitly the downward—as opposed to strictly moral—obligations of kingship and the reciprocal concord between the lord and his subjects. The confluence of virtues in the rulers inspired obedience (τὸ ὑπήκοον) among the emperors’ subjects. Thus, the people recognized that the “true lord” was bound in service to the people and they in turn were bound to the lord with fetters of affection.⁹⁸

Similarly vague were such exhortations inscribed in literary allusion. John Argyropoulos, a denizen of ancient Greek literary citation, invoked Agamemnon’s dream at the beginning of Book II of the *Iliad*, in which Zeus sent a dream to upbraid the king for dozing indolently and neglecting his duties. “It’s not right for a man of counsel, to whom an army has been entrusted

⁹⁷ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 188–213, here 212–13: “πάσης μὲν ἀρετῆς ἀντέχεσθαι τε καὶ περιέχεσθαι, κακίαν δέ, ὅση δύναμις, ἀποφεύγειν.”

⁹⁸ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 248–50: “ὦ τῆς τοσαύτης τῶν ἀγαθῶν συνδρομῆς, ἥς οὐ τὸ ὑπήκοον ἀπολαύειν ἀνάγκη μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσον ἔθνεσι δεδουλωμένον ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν ἀληθῆ δεσπότην καὶ δεσμοῖς εὐνοίας αὐτῷ συνδέεται.”

and with such responsibility, to sleep the night through.”⁹⁹ Instead, Agamemnon was warned that his time should be spent considering what is best for his subjects and devising strategems. Moreover—and here Argyropoulos departed from Homer—that man would not be a king who delighted in sleep and gastronomic pleasures more than in caring for his subjects.¹⁰⁰ Other orators simply observed or praised the emperor for his labors (πόννοι) on behalf of the Romans. They, like Argyropoulos, generally left the precise considerations or labors unspecified.¹⁰¹

Another frequent and equally amorphous exhortation implored the emperor to provide “benefit” (εὐεργεσία) to his subjects. Chortasmenos quoted a passage from Themistios, that “he was wise who said, ‘Today I did not rule, for I performed no benefactions’.”¹⁰² Demetrios Chrysoloras portrayed Manuel II as not just standing ready to aid, but soliciting all who should need the emperor’s help to request benefaction. “‘If someone is in need, let him come to me, and who may be among those unjustly treated, let him approach me.’ . . . Everywhere the emperor proclaims that each man has a benefit from him (i.e., the emperor) alone, if he but wishes it.”¹⁰³ Later the orator extended this logic to its natural conclusion, that the lack of benefits did not just failure to aid his subjects but only harmed the emperor himself. Of the past emperors ruling in

⁹⁹ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 41.6–7): “Οὐ χρή παννύχιον εὔδειν βουλευφόρον ἄνδρα ᾧ λαοὶ τ’ ἐπιτετράφεται καὶ τόσσα μέμνηεν.” Cf. *Il.* 2.25–27.

¹⁰⁰ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 41.11–14.

¹⁰¹ Chortasmenos, *Address from Manuel Asanopoulos*, 199.22f; Polemis, “Two Praises of Emperor Manuel II,” 707; Dendrinos, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration,” 2; 16.

¹⁰² Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 210–11: “σοφὸς γὰρ ἦν ὁ εἰπὼν, ὅτι σήμερον οὐκ ἐβασιλεύσαμεν, διότι οὐδένᾳ εὐηργετήκαμεν.” The “wise man” here is Themistios, whose oration on brotherly love Chortasmenos quotes: Themistios I, *Or.* 6, 80a. Since Themistios refers to the source of the passage as a Roman emperor, it likely derives from Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum*, 8.1, where Titus is reputed to have said to have lamented at dinner that he had lost the day by not doing a favor for anyone.

¹⁰³ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 232.26–33.5: “Εἴ τις δεόμενος, ἵτω πρὸς με, καὶ τῶν ἀδικουμένων ὃς ἂν εἴη, προσίτω μοι . . . Καὶ πανταχόσε μὲν ὁ βασιλεὺς διαγγέλλεται, ὡς ὅφ’ ἑνὸς ἕκαστος ὠφελοῖτο μόνου, εἰ μόνον βούλοιτο.”

Constantinople, whom Chrysoloras numbered eighty-five, “some gave only troubles to their subjects and did not provide any benefit to the *genos*, so that fortune (τύχης) acted against them.”¹⁰⁴ The avenger for this violation of imperial norms was the spectral “fortune.”

Beyond the exhortation to beneficence, the only imperial orator to pierce the veil of generalities and to explore in any depth what obligations the emperor owed to his subjects was Isidore of Kiev in his long oration to John VIII. The last third of the oration he dedicated to extensive treatments of the emperor’s virtues, beginning with his prudence in governance (φρόνησις), before examining his justice, temperance and courage. The first of these virtues consisted of providing his subjects with “everything they need,” again left as a generality.¹⁰⁵ Only in his discussion of justice did Isidore explain what precisely the emperor must, and did, provide. Justice, Isidore declared, was what raised men up from beasts, constituted villages, cities, peoples, all political authority and kingship. For kings in particular, it was the best and most beneficial, so that even if he were lacking all the other virtues, by this alone would he be most revered and just. These were bold claims, unmatched by the generalities attributed to the other virtues. Isidore claimed that the foundation of justice was so essential that without it no act could be considered stable, honorable, or lasting. Recognizing this, the emperor should prohibit anyone from being injured “for the sake of money” (χρημάτων ἕνεκα), though what this entailed remained

¹⁰⁴ Demetrios Chrysoloras, 234.12–15: “Τῶν πάλαι γὰρ τοῦ γένους βασιλευσάντων εἰς Πόλιν, ὄντων πέντε καὶ ὀγδοήκοντα, οἱ μὲν κόποις ἐχρήσαντο μόνοις, τὸ γένος οὐδὲν ὠφελήσαντες, ἀντιπραττούσης τῆς τύχης, οἱ δὲ σὺν αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰς ἀξιώσεις τῷ γένει χαρίζονται, βουλομένου θεοῦ.” The precise origin of the number 85 is impossible to specify, but it is almost certainly an accounting that begins with Constantine I. Lists of emperors were common in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Greek manuscripts: see, e.g., BAV, Pal. gr. 111, f. 3; BAV, Pal. gr. 328, f. 120. These often diverged from one another in their details: some would list multiple emperors, such as Constantine VIII and Basil II, under a single entry; others would divide the reigns of a single emperor like Constantine VII into multiple entries. Therefore, it is impossible to accurately reconstruct the chronology Chrysoloras relied upon to reach 85 emperors.

¹⁰⁵ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 182.23–26.

unspecified. Moreover, the emperor distributed to each according to his worth, not permitting the laggards (τοὺς κηφήνας) to devour and consume the property of soldiers, nor did he let these men, fighting on behalf of the common weal, struggle with penury, hunger or wretchedness.¹⁰⁶ The emperor did not allow his archons to despoil or extort peasants, farmers, and the poor without suffering legal sanction. He achieved this through appointing the most incorruptible judges. Of course, such acclamations were a commonplace of political praise and admonition, but they were given flesh here beyond the skeleton usually evident in imperial orations. Isidore's emphasis here betrayed a concern for social justice and echoed the remarks of other orators.

The Alexandrian Anonymous, in his first panegyric to John VIII c. 1427, praised the recently deceased Manuel II in similar language. The emperor had espied those “laggards” (using the same word, κηφήνας) drawing imperial “provisions” (ὀφωνίους) and “eating the labor of good men.” Manuel II demoted these leeches to the second rank, where they presumably lost the privileges of such state sustenance.¹⁰⁷ The Anonymous did not specifically identify the “good men” as soldiers, but these two orations and their condemnation of κηφήνας, “laggards,” reiterated the complaints of Pletho. This aged philosopher had pressed dramatic social reforms in the Morea on the emperor in 1418. The soldiers in the Despotate ought to be exempted from taxes so that they might focus on preparing for warfare; helots should be restored and labor only on production of necessities. Monks, on the other hand, should get nothing from the state; they were a “swarm of laggards (σμήνος κηφήνων), considering themselves philosophers, and thinking

¹⁰⁶ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 184.26; 185.17–20.

¹⁰⁷ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 208.29–209.1.

it right to either do nothing or reap the fruits far in excess of what befits their services.”¹⁰⁸ While the Anonymous and Pletho identified different culprits, both the crime and the restitution remained the same: only the emperor could discipline the leeches draining the empire’s precious resources.

Not only social justice, but economic justice was on the dock for Isidore. The emperor maintained justice in the marketplaces as ἀγορόμος, ensuring that merchants made no profit outside of what is customary.¹⁰⁹ This imperative allocated to the emperor the duty once assumed by Constantinople’s eparch, indicating the contraction of both the city and the empire’s administrative machinery.¹¹⁰ These brief remarks confirm that Isidore viewed justice as the most fundamental element of the emperor’s obligation to his people, an obligation that included social and economic responsibilities alongside more formally juridical ones.

Succession of Emperors, Succession of Empires

When imperial orators reflected on imperial succession, they engaged two similar but distinct approaches to this question. The first was its immediate nature: what legitimated imperial succession from one emperor to his successor? The second, more rarely treated, was transhistorical and wrestled with the old idea of the *translatio imperii*: what becomes of empires in

¹⁰⁸ Pletho, *On the Peloponnese to Manuel II*, 259.16–19: “σμήνος κηφήνων, τῶν μὲν φασκόντων φιλοσοφεῖν, τῶν δ’ ἄλλως ἀργεῖν ἢ καὶ τῶν ταῖς λειτουργίαις προσηκόντων πολλῶ που πλείω καρποῦσθαι ἀξιούντων;”

¹⁰⁹ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 186.14–17.

¹¹⁰ On the office of the eparch, compared to Constantinople’s “chief of police,” see Rodolphe Guiland, “Etudes sur l’histoire administrative de l’Empire Byzantin—L’Eparque,” *Byzantinoslavica* 41 (1980) 17–32, 145–79. See also the tenth-century *Book of the Eparch*, which recorded this official’s duties in regulating Constantinopolitan guilds: E.H. Freshfield, trans., *Roman Law in the Later Roman Empire: Byzantine Guilds, Professional and Commercial: Ordinances of Leo VI, c. 895* (Cambridge 1938).

general, and to this particular God-favored empire specifically? If the former question about the fate of empires was an old one, the latter attained burning relevance as Byzantine intellectuals grappled with an imperial demise that appeared ever more imminent.

When struggling with the first question, an essential paradox faced any Byzantine dynast. Hellenistic, Roman, and Christian political thought taught that God appointed emperors; but this clashed with every emperor's desire to transfer imperial power to another male member of the ruling family, preferably his son. In other words, was a kingship transferred by divine appointment (proffered in recognition of virtue) or kinship? All emperors believed their kingship was granted, or at least sanctioned, by God, but they wanted to control its disposition thereafter. In fifteenth-century imperial panegyric, orators tried to thread this needle in a new way. They praised dynastic succession, as the requirements of the occasion would have demanded, but they also argued that virtue was dynastically transmitted as well. In this way, emperors both inherited and merited the throne.

Imperial orators in the fifteenth century praised succession as a pragmatic benefit to the empire and its citizens, insofar as it represented one of the chief ways to preserve political stability. Manuel himself recognized this as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition; he himself had survived two violent usurpations from within the Palaiologan family—those of Andronikos IV from 1376–79, and John VII in 1390. Nevertheless, Manuel well knew that a clear settlement among his five imperial sons was essential to continued stability and his orators echoed this sentiment. The longest treatment of succession as a fundamental concern of emperors appeared in Chortasmenos's oration of 1416. Here appeared the fusion of dynastic and virtuous claims to kingship that were characteristic of other imperial orators in the fifteenth century. In a historical interlude, Chortasmenos observed that many of those who ruled at different times had no children, which brought great misfortune upon the emperors and the Roman people as well. The

emperors ran the risk that the memory of their deeds would be destroyed and that there would never be a legitimate succession. But the Roman people themselves had it worse, for the sudden change of the political situation and the transferral of the kingship from one house to another was a predictable hazard for them.¹¹¹ In those successions which proceeded lawfully, all the things essential for the prosperity of the *politeia* were preserved by the young emperor. But in disorderly successions, chaos reigned, and “myriad ills are produced for life.”¹¹²

Chortasmenos considered only dynastic succession legitimate. But merely having children was only a necessary, not a sufficient, condition. Many emperors in the past, he warned, had had children but did not live to see them practice virtue or find sustenance in more lasting pleasures. Thus, “it is possible that [your children] not turning out well is the same as not [them] not being born in the first place.”¹¹³ In order for prosperity and order to be maintained, the father had to train the son in the precepts of good governance. “For it is clear, as Plato said, that he is good by being born from the good man who loves true learning, and who shapes his soul daily under his great father and emperor by the marvelous teachings and admonitions.” Only through the admixture of virtue and noble birth was the precious alloy of righteous kingship obtained.

Other orators echoed this view, even if they did not lay out their arguments with the same thoroughness. The Alexandrian Anonymous, in his first oration to John VIII, invoked the same formula of “blood and virtue” or “dynastic and divine appointment” when he compared John VIII to two iconic kings from antiquity, Cyrus and Darius. In two passages which bookended his

¹¹¹ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 168–75.

¹¹² Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 180–81: “ἐξ οὗ δὴ μὲν τίκτεται τῷ βίῳ κακά.” He goes on to point out that having children is a necessary but not sufficient condition for legitimate succession, since occasionally emperors had children who were wastrels and did not pursue virtue.

¹¹³ Chortasmenos, *Address to Manuel II*, 186: “ἴσον γὰρ δύναται τὸ μὴ ἀγαθὸν ἀποβῆναι τῷ μηδὲ γενέσθαι τηναρχὴν.”

oration, the Anonymous drew a sharp distinction between Manuel II and John VIII, on the one hand, and those ancient kings, on the other. In the first passage, the Anonymous paired Manuel with Darius and Cyrus to highlight how each had acquired his imperial power.¹¹⁴ Those ancient monarchs of the Medes and Persians acquired their authority illicitly: “one through craftiness and trickery, the other through the device of a groom.”¹¹⁵ Manuel, in contrast, had been girdled with the belt of kingship by God (ἐκ τοῦ μείζονος), his forefathers, and his assenting subjects: a provenance of kingship that draws on three sources of authority: divine selection, familial descent, and popular acclamation.

The comparisons were intended to illustrate not only the mechanisms of succession from one emperor to another, but from one empire to another. The Anonymous repeated the examples of the two ancient kings at the end of the panegyric. Cyrus and Darius ruled tyrannically, not piously, and as a result they were driven from kingship before their time. “But John VIII has girded himself with kingship *from his ancestors and from God*, and on that account this empire here, in accordance with the holy prophecy (ἱερὸν λόγιον), will not be given over to another people.”¹¹⁶ Not only did “blood and virtue” justify his assumption of imperial authority, they preserved that authority in perpetuity. The holy prophecy referenced here was Daniel 2:44, in which Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a colossal statue with the story of successive kingdoms. This interpretation formed the basis for late antique and medieval

¹¹⁴ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 203.19ff.

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 204.5–7: “ὁ μὲν δόλῳ καὶ πανουργίᾳ, θάτερος δὲ μηχανῇ θ’ ἱπποκόμου Κῦρός τε καὶ Λαρεῖος τὴν τῶν Περσῶν ἀρχὴν κατὰ διαφόρους ἐπεκτήσαντο. ὁ δ’ ἐκ τοῦ μείζονος καὶ ἀπὸ προγόνων καὶ ἐκόντων τῶν ὑπηκόων ταύτην ἀτεχνῶς διεζώσατο.”

¹¹⁶ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 220.29–31: “Ὁ δ’ ἐκ προγόνων καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ εὐσεβῶς ταύτην διεζώσατο, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἦδε βασιλεία κατὰ τὸ ἱερὸν λόγιον λαῷ ἐτέρῳ οὐχ ὑπολειφθήσεται.”

eschatological interpretations regarding the longevity of the Roman Empire, since Daniel explained the emergence of a final kingdom:

And in the days of those kings God will raise up the kingdom of heaven, which will not be destroyed for all eternity, and this kingdom of his will not be passed to another people. It will winnow and crush all the other kingdoms and it will stand erect into eternity.¹¹⁷

The Anonymous's invocation then transmuted the arguments for legitimate succession of emperors into a justification for the legitimate succession of empire.

A few years later, Isidore of Kiev laid out his own persuasive case for noble descent. Isidore embedded an encomium of Manuel within the larger panegyric to John VIII, a rhetorical structure that magnified the importance of kinship succession in kingship. First Isidore emphasized the connection between the noble emperor and his maternal city. "This empress has come to your imperial line (γένος), adorning it nobly no less than she has been adorned by it."¹¹⁸ He then laid out the origins of this imperial lineage, located in the misty past of the Roman patrician family of the Flavians, before tracing it very quickly down to Manuel II. "An eminent emperor always proceeds from a father emperor, virtuous man from a virtuous man, just like the family line, so properly and justly each one, taking up the imperial authority, has succeeded in turn."¹¹⁹ Who, Isidore asked, could recount a series of emperors with such brilliant fortune

¹¹⁷ Daniel 2:44: "καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν βασιλέων ἐκείνων ἀναστήσει ὁ θεὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ βασιλείαν, ἣτις εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας οὐ διαφθαρήσεται, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ λαῷ ἐτέρῳ οὐχ ὑπολειφθήσεται· λεπυνεῖ καὶ λικμήσει πάσας τὰς βασιλείας, καὶ αὐτὴ ἀναστήσεται εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας"; note the Anonymous quotes the lines ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ λαῷ ἐτέρῳ οὐχ ὑπολειφθήσεται almost verbatim; on Byzantine interpretations, see Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. Dorothy deF. Abrahamse (Berkeley, 1985), 161–85.

¹¹⁸ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 154.24–25: "ἦδε ἡ βασιλὶς τὸ σὸν ἀνήκε βασιλείον γένος, οὐχ ἦττον κοσμήσασα τοῦτο ἢ πρὸς αὐτοῦ κοσμηθεῖσα." Isidore's use of ἀνήκω here without a preposition is idiosyncratic, but attested elsewhere in his oration; cf. 139.1, 198.14.

¹¹⁹ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 157.5–7: "Βασιλεὺς διάσημος πατὴρ βασιλέως ἀεὶ, ἀγαθὸς ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ, ὥσπερ τοῦ γένους, εὐλόγως οὕτω καὶ δικαίως τὴν βασιλείαν ἕκαστος παραλαμβάνων διεδέχετο."

elsewhere among the kingdoms of the Greeks, Romans, Medes, Persians and Assyrians? What ancient family from antiquity could match the Palaiologan splendor?¹²⁰ Isidore's extended, bombastic praise of the Palaiologan family not only justified his extended digression into the deeds of Manuel II (pp. 157–66), but also provided the foundation for this innovative defense of the typical late Palaiologan dynasticism.

Isidore concluded his narration of the deeds of Manuel II with his appointment of his sons—Theodore as Despot of the Morea and John as co-emperor—to which all the people had willingly assented. The advantage, as Isidore explained, was the *ἰσογονία* between Manuel and John, the “common descent,” which “for the one [Manuel] permits him to rule securely, for the other [John] to strive to never doubt anything, but to be ruled and obey his progenitor through all time.”¹²¹ The implication was that Manuel benefitted from this *ἰσογονία* since his kingship was thereby secured from an otherwise ambitious rival, his son. But Isidore also suggested there are broader political advantages to such an arrangement. Such subordination to the emperor filtered down to the imperial subjects, so that “no one is able to gainsay or vie with the emperors, but all willingly assimilate to them, serving them with virtue by nature, or to put it another way, by some customs and natural laws.”¹²² The virtuous succession from father to son not only secured the imperial throne against elite usurpers, but against common insurrection.

¹²⁰ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 157.12–22.

¹²¹ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 166.10–12: “Ἡ γὰρ ἐκατέρων αἰὶ ἰσογονία θατέρῳ μὲν παρέχει βασιλεύειν ἀσφαλῶς, τῷ δὲ λοιπῷ ἐρίζειν μὴδ’ ἀμφιβάλλειν μηδέν, ἄρχεσθαι καὶ ὑπεῖκιν διὰ παντὸς πεφυκότι τοῦ χρόνου.”

¹²² Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 166.13–17: “Γίνεται δὲ ἀμφοῖν ὁ μακρὸς καθαπερεὶ φύσις χρόνος· ἢ καὶ μὴδ’ ἀντιλέγειν ἢ φιλονεικεῖν ἔξεστί τινα τῶν πάντων, ἀλλ’ εἵκειν αὐτοῖς πάντας ἕκοντί, τῇ φύσει δουλεύοντας μετ’ ἀρετῆς, ταῦτόν δ’ εἰπεῖν νόμοις τισὶ καὶ θεσμοῖς φυσικοῖς, ὥσπερ ἄλλο τι χρέος ἀναγκαῖον καὶ ἀπαραίτητον. I have emended Lampros’s reading in line 14 μὴδ’ ἂν τι λέγειν ἢ φιλονεικεῖν ἔξεστί το μὴδ’ ἀντιλέγειν ἢ φιλονεικεῖν ἔξεστί. This is a rare case where Lampros has simply misread the manuscript; see BAV, Pal. gr. 226, fol. 96v.

Virtue was still present as well, lurking both in the proper obedience of the subjects, when they served “virtuously” (μετὰ ἀρετῆς), and in the relationship of fathers and sons. One reason the arrangement worked, Isidore argued, was that “the virtue of sons is in no way inferior to that of their fathers in terms of excellence, by the ancestral law of nature.”¹²³ The father-son relationship of co-rule, then, not only presented a persuasive model of natural command and obedience, a model which was transmitted to the subjects themselves. But it also embodied the hierarchy of virtue which placed the emperor and his son at the top. So well were their virtues suited to one another that it would not be fitting “for these men [of such virtue] to have other sons or the sons to have other fathers.”¹²⁴

Just as Chortasmenos’s oration on the principles of good kingship resonated as admonition as well as praise, the Alexandrian Anonymous and Isidore’s emphasis on the virtues of dynastic co-rule expressed the same double meaning. For while Isidore was praising John’s glorious descent from Manuel, his emulation of his father’s virtues, the orator was also emphasizing an imperial necessity. John VIII had married his third wife, Maria of Trebizond in September 1427, without a male heir. When Isidore delivered this oration in 1429, John VIII still had no son, a worrying prospect since the emperor himself had four brothers. In other words, without a son to be crowned co-emperor, there would be a surfeit of contestants for the throne—as it turned out, a prescient concern. Isidore’s extended treatment of dynastic virtue, then, must

¹²³ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 166.20–22

¹²⁴ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 166.30–31: “κὰν τοῦτω μήτ’ ἐκείνους υἱέων ἐτέρων, μήτ’ αὖ τοῦσδε τεκόντων ἄλλων προσήκειν τυγχάνειν.”

have been just the type of ambivalent expression that imperial oratory permitted, at once praise and warning.

Isidore's view of succession was conventional from the fifteenth-century Palaiologan perspective, although it represented a significant departure from the ideas of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. There, discordant voices advocating contradictory theories of succession vied alongside the traditional praise of dynastic kingship. In these orations, virtue, charisma and election were all proposed as legitimating kingship. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were also a period of instability in the imperial office as usurpations roiled the courts in both Nicaea and Constantinople, most notably in the establishment of the Palaiologan family on the imperial throne.¹²⁵ In contrast, the Palaiologan emperors in the last fifty years of the empire enjoyed dynastic stability, even if the decentralization of imperial authority was a perpetual threat. Even so, the relative political constancy of their dynasty did not obviate the desire to be praised for virtuous ascent to power. On the contrary, these emperors and their audiences, like their predecessors, wanted to hear that they had been promoted for their virtues, as well as their parentage. Not only the emperors, but the empire of the Romans had been transmitted by blood and virtue; in this way it remained protected by God. Orators like Chortasmenos and Isidore obliged, but such praise contained veiled warnings as well. As a son dynastic succession brought imperial authority as a windfall; as a father that same succession became a debt.

¹²⁵ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 116–33, esp. 120–21 where he counts seventeen attempted usurpations between 1211 and 1321.

Conclusion: Praise, Power and the Limits of Consensus

I have argued that orators used the recitation of certain premises about the emperor to cultivate a kind of ideological consensus among the empire's elite: the emperor's possession of classical and Christian virtues; his similarity to the sun or the helmsman; an unyielding defense of monarchy and sacral nature of political authority. Such were the nodes of ideological consensus, around which a binding language of political unity and strength was wound, and political stability of a kind was fashioned. This consensus, however, is not evidence of the fatuous or insipid nature of imperial praise. Rather it served an essential social-political function in the fragile political environment of the fifteenth century, reinforcing an increasingly ephemeral political and ideological stability in the waning empire.

Since these imperial orators used their praise to abet a centralized imperial authority, it is clear how the emperor himself and the imperial office benefitted. Orators used the open affirmation of these political values to bind the audience for such rhetoric to the emperor in a way that bolstered his authority and ultimately enabled the exercise of political power. As other mechanisms for affirming or exercising imperial political authority waned, such as collecting taxes, providing security to imperial territory, or building monumental structures; as the political situation grew more parlous and conditions increasingly belied the bold assertions of panegyrists, the service they provided to the emperor only grew more indispensable. This is a factor, I argue, in the general rise in imperial oratory in the fifteenth century, an explanation that contradicts that offered by those who take a dim view of such panegyric.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ See the observation of Dennis, "Imperial Panegyric," 135, though he later admits panegyric's role in demanding support for the emperor's policies (p. 140).

Nevertheless, there were important limits to the unifying nature of imperial oratory in these decades. The first was that the construction and maintenance of such consensus in imperial oratory both concealed and enabled important divergences on imperial policies. By foregrounding the core elements of ideological consensus, by using the common language of imperial praise, orators were able to take tendentious positions on issues of profound dispute in late Byzantine society, such as the emperor's role in the church, the relationship of the city of Constantinople to the rest of the empire, even the most legitimate candidate for imperial authority. This paradoxical aspect to imperial ideology, which has been little acknowledged, I will explore in the next chapter.

There was a second limit to these attempts to conjure political stability through ideological consensus, evident only in the final reckoning. The attempts ultimately failed. Or at least, they were unable to overcome the other structural and political trends which posed such existential threats throughout the fifteenth century. Impoverishment and political fragmentation, to say nothing of the inexorable, if inconsistent, Ottoman advance throughout the Balkans, heralded imperial demise. The words of the orators could not hold off the cannons of the enemy. In this case, the pen was not mightier than the sword.

Chapter Three

Politics and Discord in Imperial Oratory, 1430–1453

Introduction

During the reign of Manuel II (d. 1425), revived imperial oratory supported the emperor in two ways. First, it emphasized the core elements of Byzantine imperial ideology to conjure consensus around Byzantium's traditional political identity—Roman, Christian, and monarchical—in support of the emperor's program of political and ideological recovery. Orators fostered consensus around both the emperor's normative role in Byzantine society, as the mimesis of God and the embodiment of virtues, as well as around his policies, like the repression of the “laggards” draining the empire's economic and financial resources.

These dynamics persisted under Manuel's son John VIII (r. 1425–1448). Like his father, John was also celebrated as a monarch chosen by God, modeling for his subjects the virtues he embodied.¹ But while orators still built elite consensus around the normative principles of Byzantine imperial ideology with their speeches, they also increasingly used the forum and convention of panegyric to advocate tendentious positions on sub-normative, political issues. The superficial similarity in language and emphasis of imperial oratory, its flexible combination of admonition and praise, and its resolute emphasis on the core elements of imperial ideology—three aspects of political rhetoric examined in the first two chapters—created a politically responsive discourse that orators exploited to advocate rival theories under the guise of adhering to convention in praise of their subject. This chapter examines three points of dispute that emerged in the imperial oratory of the last two decades of the empire: the emperor's role in the

¹ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*: 172.25-30; 180.23-28.

church; Constantinople's relationship to remaining imperial territory; and even John VIII's legitimacy. These debates, over issues that hovered on the border between contemporary policy and the core of Byzantine imperial ideology, nonetheless played out within panegyric orations. Indeed, it was the conventions of imperial praise, which these orations continued to employ, that obscured the divisiveness of these arguments. Thus, although these orators continued employ their art in service of imperial prosperity, their disputes eventually corroded much of the empire's political stability.

Arguments over the emperor's role in the church, which first emerged in the context of John VIII's polarizing plans for church union, dissipated the illusion of the emperor as a pious protector of his people. By using encomium to advocate opposition to or support for the union pitted the imperial imperative to defend the church against the exigencies of political survival. The second dispute, over the relationship between Constantinople and the empire, marginalized the provinces, chiefly the Morea. Emphasizing Constantinople's quintessential role in the preservation of the empire allowed orators to downplay other territorial losses; but it also increasingly fixed the state's imperial identity to possession of the imperial city, a city increasingly imperiled by Ottoman ambitions. The third conflict attacked the very legitimacy of the final two emperors, using the forms of panegyric to dispute John VIII and Constantine XI's rightful claim to exercise imperial authority. As I show for the first time, these disputes were enabled by the malleable rhetoric of empire employed in imperial oratory. By importing dissension into the venue that forged communal unanimity, these orators and ideas began to corrode the fragile political stability that sustained imperial authority. In the end, I argue, they ultimately contributed to the political dissolution of the empire.

Aside from Lampros, who first published most of these texts, few scholars have examined the later imperial orations in any depth. Of the imperial orations delivered after 1425, only

Isidore of Kiev's long encomium on John VIII has attracted much attention.² In addition, we now have a stimulating study by Anna Calia on John Dokeianos and Byzantine intellectual culture in fifteenth-century Ottoman Constantinople, including new editions of his panegyrics and letters.³ On views of Constantinople, the classic study is by Erwin Fenster, who has shown the variations in urban onomastics from late antiquity to the end of the empire.⁴ But his monograph, a model of assiduous German scholarship, is more a catalog of texts and authors than a synthetic analysis, and his engagement with the fifteenth century is limited to Joseph Bryennios, Manuel Chrysoloras, and Isidore of Kiev, whose urban panegyrics he ultimately judged "anachronistic . . . and exercises in self-deception."⁵ Nor does he examine Constantinople's relationship to different concepts of imperial geography, as Angelov has done in a wide-ranging and stimulating essay.⁶ But Angelov's article covers over a millennium, from Himerius (d. 386) to John Kanaboutzes (d. c. 1470); we have yet to uncover the connections between changing geographical language and ideas of empire in the dynamic last decades of Byzantium.

Not only have the post-1425 imperial orations have suffered from general neglect, modern scholars have not distinguished between the orations to the emperors John VIII and

² See Schmitt, "Kaiserrede und Zeitgeschichte"; Florin Leonte, "Visions of Empire: Gaze, Space, and Territory in Isidore's Encomium for John VIII Palaiologos," *DOP* 71 (2018): 249–72. Several of these orations are treated briefly as expressions of propaganda in Kiousopolou, *Emperor or Manager*, 114–27.

³ Calia, "Meglio il turbante del sultano."

⁴ Erwin Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (Munich, 1968).

⁵ Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae*, 234–67; see 319 for this judgement.

⁶ Dimitar Angelov, "'Asia and Europe Commonly Called East and West': Constantinople and Geographical Imagination in Byzantium," in *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space*, ed. Sahar Bazzaz, Yota Batsaki, and Dimitar Angelov (Washington, DC, 2013), 43–68.

Constantine XI and the orations to imperial despots—Theodore, Constantine, and Demetrios.⁷ These two factors have meant that scholarship has not noticed that something quite new is happening with the sub-imperial orations between 1435 and 1453. Yet distinguishing between the two types of orations is critical to understanding what orators were doing by pivoting to new subjects with conventional praise. By examining changes in ideas like the emperor's role in the church and the Constantinople's relationship to other imperial territory, we can see how orators used convention to mask subversion, and how these ideas contributed to the dissolution of the unanimity that once bound the empire together in a kind of imaginary community.

Understanding how imperial orators manipulated the ritual of imperial panegyric to engage in these disputes illustrates surprising aspects of the intersections of rhetoric, power, and the immutability of the imperial idea. First, the rhetoric of empire's veneer of stability was a double-edged sword. As it provided the language and ideas from which orators fashioned a fragile consensus around the emperor and his policies in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, so it could also become a vehicle for more divisive positions on imperial policies. The result was that oratory and new ideas of empire played an unacknowledged role in the terminal phase of the empire. Second, this chapter illustrates one of the links to new views of Byzantium among the western intellectuals, who latched on to the idea of Constantinople as an "urban empire," possession of which would constitute an insuperable imperial claim for several of these figures. As the second part of this dissertation will show, this narrow association of the empire with the city of Constantinople suited their attempts to use the city's imperial heritage to energize their

⁷ See Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, though these orations are admittedly well outside the scope of his book; even Calia's otherwise assiduous study fails to consider the distinction between oratory to the emperor and oratory to the despot, in which Dokeianos is a critical figure: see Calia, "Meglio il turbante del sultano," 183–84; see also Kiousopolou, *Emperor or Manager*, 115.

political ventures, especially crusading. Adopting this idea of Constantinople-as-empire allowed these figures to imagine imperial recovery through a limited conquest—or even by the bare assertion of entitlement—rather than by establishing Roman imperial authority across the eastern Mediterranean, a much more difficult task.

The Final Decades

When John VIII became the sole emperor after the death of his father in 1425, the empire resembled the beached detritus of a shipwreck, scattered at intervals along the shoreline. The historian Chalkokondyles observed that when he had been born, c. 1430, the Byzantines had been reduced “to a small realm, namely Byzantion and the coast below Byzantion as far as the city of Herakleia; the coast above by the Black Sea as far as the city of Mesembria; the entire Peloponnese except only for three or four cities of the Venetians; and Lemnos, Imbros, and other inhabited islands of the Aegean in that area.”⁸ Thessaloniki had been ceded to the Venetians, and the despots of the Morea, Theodore and Constantine, scrabbled to recover territory from the Tocco family and the Venetians in the Peloponnese. Constantinople was recovering from the siege of 1422, and it was not only warfare that had devastated the city. The Italian traveler Cristoforo Buondelmonti, who visited the city soon after reported the sad corrosion time had brought to formerly majestic buildings.⁹ Economic changes—especially the loss of agricultural estates across the empire—had driven the old aristocracy to commerce in a market increasingly

⁸ Chalkokondyles I, 1.8.

⁹ See Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 184–232 on Constantinople; for a contemporary report that mixes marvel and melancholy, see Cristoforo Buondelmonti, *Description des îles de l'archipel*, ed. and trans. Émile Legrand (Paris, 1897), 85, 86, 88.

dominated by western merchants in which the empire was crippled by centuries of economic concessions.¹⁰ Such was the state of Constantinople that two recent scholars, Tonia Kiousopoulou and Jonathan Harris, have argued that Constantinople's shared governance and the extensive economic entanglements of its leading citizens made it more like an Italian city-state than the empire of old.¹¹

If the empire suffered from economic predation and territorial exhaustion, at least a new treaty with the Ottomans in 1424 had temporarily forestalled additional aggression, though at significant cost.¹² The treaty cost the Byzantines most of the territory they had recovered after the Ottoman defeat at Ankara in 1402—where Bayezid was defeated and captured by Tamerlane—as well as an annual tribute of 300,000 aspers.¹³ Within several years John VIII had resolved to pursue plans for a church council in exchange for Western military aid against the Ottomans. The ensuing council and the Byzantine capitulation on the most important points of doctrine under discussion left lasting cleavages in Byzantine society, rifts addressed and exploited by Byzantine imperial orators.

Even before the church council, however, John faced domestic challenges, especially from the uncertainty of his successor. By 1430 he had been married three times without producing an

¹⁰ See Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires grecs et latins*; Laiou-Thomadakis, "The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System"; Klaus-Peter Matschke, "The Late Byzantine Urban Economy, Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries," in *EHB* II, 463–95; idem, "Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money: Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries"; Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 27–38; Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 202–07, who documents the presence of Ottoman merchants in the city as well.

¹¹ Kiousopoulou, *Empire or Manager*; Harris, "Constantinople as City State, c. 1360–1453."

¹² See Barker, *Manuel II*, 379–81, who details the territorial and financial costs incurred by this peace.

¹³ See Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 3414; Sphrantzes, 12.4, who notes that he accompanied Loukas Notaras as an emissary to negotiate the terms of the treaty.

heir, an issue Isidore of Kiev addressed obliquely in his long panegyric to the emperor.¹⁴ By 1435, the problem of the emperor's lack of a son was no longer a subject for oblique admonition in imperial orations. At this point John's most ambitious brothers, now certain he would have no heir, began to regard each other less as brothers and allies and more as imperial rivals to succeed or even supplant John. In this struggle for proximity to the emperor and the imperial city, these brothers—Theodore, Constantine, and Demetrios—swapped imperial territories, shifted alliances, and occasionally descended to open warfare among themselves.

In 1436 the emperor, conscious of the need for a reliable regent in Constantinople during the upcoming church council in Italy, attempted to displace Theodore—the next eldest brother—with Constantine. Theodore himself jockeyed to retain primacy as successor, though according to the historian Sphrantzes, an admitted partisan of Constantine, the emperor favored the younger Constantine, “as the emperor often assured me with an oath, as if in secret.”¹⁵ Yet it was Theodore whom John attempted to move to the capital from the Morea, dispatching Constantine to govern his brother's appanage in the Peloponnese. Theodore reacted to the emperor's reallocation of his Morean territories to his brother by raising an army and attacking his brothers Constantine and Thomas. Only John VIII's swift dispatch of an embassy managed

¹⁴ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 165–66; see the discussion in Chapter Two.

¹⁵ Sphrantzes, 22.7: “Μεθ’ οὗ δὴ κατέργου ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν Πόλιν καὶ ὁ δεσπότης κὺρ Θεόδωρος, ἵνα ἐκεῖνος εἰς τὴν πόλιν εὕρισκται καὶ διάδοχος, ὡς δεύτερος ἀδελφός, τῆς βασιλείας. Ὁ καὶ βασιλεὺς ἔστεργε μὲν ἀκουσίως, ἐπεὶ τὸν κὺρ Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν αὐθέντην μου—πολλάκις με ἐπληροφόρησε καὶ ἐνόρκως ὡς ἐν μυστηρίῳ ἡγάπα καὶ ἤθελεν, ὡς καὶ ὁ λόγος προίων δηλώσει.” The bad blood between Theodore and Constantine may have predated this event; Chalkokondyles I, 5.27, reported an earlier incident in 1427 when John VIII tried to establish Constantine in the Morea when Theodore flirted with adopting the monastic habit. Theodore had a late change of heart and refused to surrender the despotate to Constantine at this point. Cf. Sphrantzes 16.1–7, where he attributed the failure to capture Patras to Theodore's vacillation over becoming a monk, which prevented him from delivering the promised military aid.

to strike a compromise that recalled Constantine from the Morea, implicitly designating him as regent while the emperor traveled to Italy to attend the Council of Ferrara-Florence.¹⁶

Fraternal strife continued unabated, however. In 1442 the emperor assented to a plan hatched by Constantine which would exchange Constantine's territories in the Morea for Selymbria, 50 miles west of Constantinople, and territories up the Black Sea coast to Mesembria, nearly 200 miles away. In return, Demetrios Palaiologos would assume Constantine's appanage in the Morea. This plan aimed to ensure the emperor's favored successor, Constantine, was close at hand—and that Demetrios, entrenched as leader of the anti-unionist opposition to the emperor, would be as far away as possible. Demetrios refused the offer and, newly allied with the Ottomans, besieged the emperor in Constantinople in April 1442, a blockade which lasted until the late summer.¹⁷ The following year brought more jockeying among the brothers: Theodore and Demetrios both attempted to position themselves as both leaders of the anti-unionists and as the emperor's successor; Constantine returned to the appanages near Constantinople (Selymbria and Mesembria) briefly before relinquishing them and returning to the Morea.¹⁸ From the mid-1440s onward, all the brothers eyed each other warily as the external threats from the Ottomans and internal dissension over church union grew ever more existential. In these decades, orators

¹⁶ On the conflict among the brothers in 1436, see Sphrantzes, 22.10–11; Philippides, *Constantine XI*, 137–39, argues that the emperor preferred Constantine, whose pragmatic approach to church politics mirrored his own, as his regent during the council over Theodore. Philippides further suggests that the emperor may have threatened Theodore's territories in order to strategically coerce Theodore into remaining in the Peloponnese, thus clearing the way for Constantine's regency.

¹⁷ See Sphrantzes, 25.1–3; Chalkokondyles II, 6.32, who reports that Demetrios (PLP 21454) was angered that the emperor had deprived him of his lands; the end of the siege is reported as 6 August in brief chronicle, Peter Schreiner, ed., *Chronica Byzantina Breviora* (=Die byzantinische Kleinchroniken), vol. 1 (Vienna, 1975), no. 29.11, p. 216; on the siege, see Peter Schreiner, *Studien zu den Βραχέα Χρονικά* (Munich, 1967), 167–70; Philippides, *Constantine XI*, 169–77.

¹⁸ Sphrantzes, 25.6–26.1; Philippides, *Constantine XI*, 176.

offered imperial panegyrics to these brothers, both reflecting and reinforcing the tumult of these last years of the empire.

King or Priest—The Politics of Church Union in Imperial Oratory

No greater political and ideological tremor fractured late Byzantine society more in the last two decades of the empire than the issue of religion, particularly ecclesiastical union. An imperial gambit to exchange doctrinal capitulation for military aid against the Ottomans, the preliminaries and especially the aftermath of the Council of Ferrara-Florence, consummated by the contentious Decree of Union in July 1439—cast these divisions in jagged relief.¹⁹ The praise of the emperor became a proxy battlefield for these armies and imperial address an occasion to exhort doctrinal fidelity or to censure opponents.

Negotiations over ecclesiastical union began in earnest in 1432; therefore, even in the years before the Council of Ferrara-Florence imperial oratory became a venue for advising the emperor on the question of union.²⁰ These preparatory years were the stage for the first two orations written by the Alexandrian Anonymous, panegyrics addressed to John VIII before the church council. These orations are unique witnesses to the growing urgency of church union in late Byzantine imperial discourse and the way the seeds of discord were sowed in the ostensibly laudatory ground of panegyric.

¹⁹ See Gill, *The Council of Florence*, 349–88; Marie-Hélène Blanchet, “Les divisions de l’Église byzantine après le concile de Florence (1439) d’après un passage des *Antirrétiques* de Jean Eugénikos,” in *Byzance et ses périphéries. Hommage à Alain Ducellier*, ed. Bernard Doumerc and Christophe Picard (Toulouse, 2004), 17–39. The decree of union, *Laetentur caeli*, is published various places including Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959), 412–15.

²⁰ An aspect of the preliminaries to the Council of Ferrara-Florence left unexplored in the otherwise thorough study Kolditz, *Johannes VIII. Palaiologos*.

Both orations grounded their ecclesiological and theological admonitions in the example of Constantine I, whom the Anonymous venerated as a paragon of piety. The first encomium, written c. 1427 after John VIII's assumption of sole rule from his father, spent much of the speech admiring Manuel II and recounting John's brave leadership during the siege of 1423. Manuel, the Anonymous pointedly reminded John, had made piety and the definitions established at Nicaea the foundation of his kingship, "neither abandoning anything they thought right nor adding anything to what was sanctioned by the holy fathers."²¹ The security of his kingship and the stability of the empire had rested on fidelity to the Nicaean canons and the synod's creed. But even greater than Manuel was Constantine. "Who is the most brilliant and first among emperors? Constantine the Great and apostle-like, champion of piety and first summoner of the synod of holy fathers in Nicaea."²² As the convoker of the synod of Nicaea, Constantine I had been responsible for laying the foundation on which the empire and the Christian faith were founded. The valorization of Constantine's unbending devotion and his role in convoking the council at Nicaea suggests that the Anonymous was referring obliquely to the tendentious issue of the procession of the Holy Spirit and the Latin addition of the clause *filioque* to the creed, a central bone of contention in wrangling over church union.

The Anonymous did not only represent Constantine as a devout guardian of the church; he was also made the emperor a monarch divinely protected on account of this piety. When the Anonymous recounted the succession of empires throughout history, he marked Cyrus and

²¹ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 208.15–18: "ἀμέλει καὶ θεμέλιον ἀρραγὲς πρῶτον τῇ βασιλείᾳ ὑποστησάμενος τὴν εὐσέβειαν καὶ τοὺς τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅρους πρῶτης συνόδου τῆς κατὰ Νίκαιαν ἐφεξῆς γενομένους, μήτε μὴν καθυφείς ὅλως τι τῶν δεδογμένων ἐκείνοις, μήτε προστιθείς τῶν ἅπαζ κεκυρωμένων παρὰ τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων." For piety as the foundation of kingship, see Theophylact of Ochrid's discourse to the imperial prince Constantine in Gautier, *Theophylacte d'Achrida*, 201.8; Synesios, 10.1.

²² Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 220.27–21.1.

Darius as men who ruled their empires tyrannically, not piously; Constantine, on the other hand, grafted “through his piety” (διὰ τὴν εὐσέβειαν) the Christian branch to the Roman root, “illuminating the earth radiantly like a star with his beams of piety.”²³ John was invested by God with this same imperial authority; as under Constantine, it would not be transferred to another people.²⁴ The authority for the orator’s conviction was the “holy prophecy” (τὸ ἱερὸν λόγιον), a reference to the Hebrew Bible’s Book of Daniel (2:44). In this passage Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a massive statue of gold, silver, bronze, lead, and clay as a succession of empires. The series would end with the “kingdom of heaven,” a *basileia* which would endure into eternity. Late antique and medieval eschatological interpretations had mapped this prophecy onto predictions for the eternal, providential nature of the Roman Empire.²⁵ The elements of the Anonymous’s discussion—the explicit references to Constantine I, the “Four Monarchies,” the heavy-handed repetition of piety in the foundation and propagation of kingship—are otherwise unattested in fifteenth-century imperial oratory. They make the linkages between Constantine I, kingship and piety an arresting admonition to preserve Nicaean (i.e., Orthodox) dogma, a reference to the rising specter of a union.

²³ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 212.15–19: “ἔπειτα ἡ τῶν Ῥωμαίων, εἴθ’ οὕτως ἡ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐκεῖθεν ἐγκεντρισθεῖσα ἀρρήτως μάλιστα διὰ τὴν εὐσέβειαν ὑπὸ τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ πρώτου γ’ ἐν βασιλεῦσι Κωνσταντίνου, ὅς γε δίκην ἀστέρος ταῖς φρυκτωρίαις ἅπασαν φαεινῶς γῆν τε καταφαιδρόνων τῆς εὐσεβείας.” The participle ἐγκεντρισθεῖσα, “grafting”, is possibly an allusion to Romans 11:17, in which Paul admonishes his audience to recognize that the branch, or community, depends on the root, or God; the branch’s good fortune to be grafted to such a root should be an impulse to fear God, not become arrogant.

²⁴ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 220.29–31: “Ὁ δ’ ἐκ προγόνων καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ εὐσεβῶς ταύτην διεζώσατο, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἦδε βασιλεία κατὰ τὸ ἱερὸν λόγιον λαῶ ἑτέρῳ οὐχ ὑπολειφθήσεται.”

²⁵ Daniel 2:44: “καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν βασιλέων ἐκείνων ἀναστήσει ὁ θεὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ βασιλείαν, ἣτις εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας οὐ διαφθαρήσεται, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ λαῶ ἑτέρῳ οὐχ ὑπολειφθήσεται· λεπυνεῖ καὶ λικμήσει πάσας τὰς βασιλείας, καὶ αὐτὴ ἀναστήσεται εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.” Note the Anonymous quotes the lines ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ λαῶ ἑτέρῳ οὐχ ὑπολειφθήσεται almost verbatim; on Byzantine interpretations, see Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 161–85. See also the discussion in Chapter Two on this passage in the context of Byzantine ideas on the succession of empires.

The second panegyric, delivered around 1434/5, echoed the first oration's emphasis on Constantine, piety, and the immutable Christian dogma established at Nicaea. This first emperor had followed the example of the early Christian martyrs in the "definition of the faith and confession."²⁶ As a result, Constantine not only triumphed under the sign of the cross, but he convened the synod at Nicaea, which "set out with exceeding precision and recorded the definition, so that it would be a monument and irreproachable canon for those in the future wishing to follow it, and so that they need fear no error would be introduced."²⁷ Again, the orator used Constantine and Nicaea to implicitly admonish the emperor that the doctrine established at the first ecumenical council should never be modified.

In comparison, the Anonymous admired John for succeeding Constantine in both imperial authority *and* orthodoxy.²⁸ It was the emperor's cuirass of piety and faith, which adorned him with the diadem of imperial authority.²⁹ The orator continued underlining the religious obligations of the emperor by comparing him to a bishop. The apostle Paul had set out that such a man must be irreproachable in his conduct: chaste, sober, honorable, instructive, given neither to drunkenness nor bullying. So too the emperor rules over his people—like the bishop over his flock—as much as he is pre-eminent in virtue.³⁰ The implication was that both

²⁶ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 293.22–24: "Τοῖσι μὲν ἐπόμενος ὁ μέγας καὶ πρῶτος ἐν βασιλεῦσιν κατὰ γε τὸν ὅρον τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ὁμολογίας."

²⁷ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 293.28–32: "τοῦτο δέδοκται μάλα σοφῶς καὶ ἐπιστημόνως διερευνῶντι τὸ ἀληθὲς τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς ὀρθοῦ δόγματος· καὶ μὴν οὐ διήμαρτεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίαν ἐξηκριβώσατο καὶ τὸν ὅρον ἐθέσπισεν, ὥστ' εἶναι τοῖς ἐφεξῆς στίγλη τε καὶ κανὼν ἀπαράγραπτος ἔπεσθαι βουλομένοις, καὶ μηδεμίαν πλάνην ὡς ἐπεισαγομένην κατορθωδεῖν." I have modified the punctuation of this passage.

²⁸ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 294.1–2.

²⁹ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 293.3–6. It is difficult to know if by diadem here the author means the crown or the belt, since by the fourteenth century it seems the definition had changed; see Pseudo-Kodinos, 134.13–136.1, along with 135 n. 352, 137 n. 353, and further commentary on 346–47.

³⁰ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 299.8–20; the passage of Paul to which the author refers is the 1 Timothy 3:1–3 on the qualifications of the bishop, though one must note that the orator uses προστατὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας in place of

emperor and the bishop merit their authority only through virtuous behavior—chiefly religious virtue and adherence to orthodox doctrine.

Where his first oration to John advocated his position through suggestion and association—admiring Manuel’s orthodoxy and lauding Constantine’s piety—the second panegyric abandoned all subtlety in pleading the case for dogmatic purity. Turning from meaningful approbation of Nicaean dogma, the Anonymous vented his vituperation against the Latins and the Roman church.

The Church of Rome, cut off long before through want of understanding and arrogance of mind that persists even up to now while learning the truth differently (μεταμαθοῦσα), was not able to look upon the light of truth, nor did it remain within the definitions of the theologians and the holy ecumenical synods, but unbeknownst to us (λαθοῦσα) it drank from the cup of impiety. That is why that church has lost its mind (ἔκστασιν φρενός) and it is not able to understand the things that need to be done; it has been blinded in its mind.³¹

The emperor, in contrast, emerged as the figure striving to hold the church together, grieving the loss of the Roman church like “the amputation of his own limb.” John had not ceased to exhort the Latins to return to the fold, dispatching embassies and advising an ecumenical synod.³² This

Paul’s ἐπίσκοπος; this variant is unattested in the critical apparatus, so this is likely a conscious choice of the orator. In patristic discourse, προστατής could mean anything from “champion, patron” to “deacon”, “angel”, “saint” or a more general “leader”, G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), s.v., προστατής, p. 1182; given the intentional modification of Paul’s unambiguous phrase, we should read this a “bishop”. The comparison of the emperor to a bishop evokes a similar association in Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 1.44.2: “οἷά τις κοινὸς ἐπίσκοπος ἐκ θεοῦ καθεσταμένος συνόδους τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ λειτουργῶν συνεκρότει.”

³¹ Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 299.29–300.4: “Ἡ γὰρ κατὰ τὴν Ῥώμην οὐσα ἐκκλησία, πολλῶ πρότερον διασχιθεῖσα χρόνῳ, φρενὸς ἐνδεία καὶ νοὸς ὑψηλοφροσύνη μέχρι καὶ νῦν οὐ μεταμαθοῦσα τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐδυνήθη πρὸς τὸ φέγγος τῆς ἀληθείας ἀποβλέψαι, οὐδ’ ἐν ὅροις μέινασα τῶν θεολόγων καὶ οἰκουμενικῶν ἁγίων συνόδων, ἀλλὰ τὴν κύλικα τῆς ἀσεβείας ἔπιε λαθοῦσα. Διὸ καὶ [εἰς] ἔκστασιν φρενὸς ἦκει, οὐ δύναται τὰ δέοντα συνορᾶν· τετόφλωται γὰρ τὴν διάνοιαν.”

³² Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, 300.4–12: “Ὁ μέντοι σκηπτοδχος, ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὁρῶν, ἀλύων ἦν, μὴ δυνάμενος στέργειν τὴν ἀπόπτωσιν καὶ ἐκτομὴν τοῦ οἰκείου μέλους, πλείσταις παραινέσεσι καὶ διδασκαλίαις τί μὲν οὐ λέγων, τί δὲ οὐ πράττων, ὥστε ἐλκῶσαι πρὸς τὴν εὐσέβειαν, τοῦτο μὲν πρεσβείας ἐκπέμπων, ὑποτιθεὶς τὰ συνοίσοντα καὶ σύνοδον συγκροτῆσαι τῆς ἐκκλησίας περὶ, τοῦτο δὲ ἐπιστέλλων καὶ νουθετῶν ὡς πατὴρ τέκνον, μηδαμῶς ἑᾶσαι τὸ πρᾶγμα ἀνίατον, ἀλλὰ καθ’ ὅσον οἷόν τε τὸ χρονίως πληγὲν θεραπεῦσαι.”

account represents one of the rare discussions of the relationship between the Byzantine emperor and the Latin church. From the perspective of the Alexandrian Anonymous, the emperor retained responsibility for protecting the unity of the entire Christian church, as though he were Constantine in the fourth century.

As a pair of orations, these two by the Alexandrian Anonymous demonstrate the way imperial orators could match the intensity or directness of their appeals to the immediacy of the situation. Early in John's reign, before he had taken definitive steps to address the schism, the Alexandrian Anonymous was content to use a light touch in suggesting the form of piety and fidelity appropriate to the emperor. By the mid-1430s, however, such intimation was no longer sufficient, and he opted for more strident advocacy in his later oration.

The conclusion of the Council of Ferrara-Florence in favor of the unionists only sharpened the hostility between the two camps and the invective employed by each. In one of the last panegyrics delivered in Constantinople, John Argyropoulos lauded the emperor Constantine XI and the institution of kingship. But in the final moments of the oration, when he turned from praise to admonition, he warned the emperor of the danger posed by the opponents of the union. Did they unwittingly muster many enemies (i.e., the Catholics and the Ottomans) in place of one, or were they blithely ignorant of the "superiority" (περιουσία) of the western forces. Either way, Argyropoulos warned the emperor to ignore those opponents of the church union who looked for accommodation with the Ottomans. "I would add that even now they do not consider the Aesopic fable" he noted, "the one he wrote about the sheep and the wolves."³³ Such fables

³³ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 47.5–11: "Θαυμάζω δὴ τῶν τὰ τοιαῦτα λεγόντων πρῶτον μὲν εἰ πλείους ἀνθ' ἑνὸς τοὺς πολεμίους ἀγνοοῦντες ἡμῖν ἐντεῦθεν παρασκευάζουσιν, εἰθ' ὅτι λέληθεν αὐτοὺς ὅση τις ἐστὶν ἡ περιουσία τῆς τῶν Ἑσπερίων δυνάμεως. Προσθεῖν δ' ἂν ὅτι καὶ οὐδ' ἐς νῦν φέρουσι τὸ αἰσώπειον, ὅπερ ἐκεῖνος περὶ προβάτων καὶ λύκων ἐπλάσατο." Argyropoulos does not specify, beyond this remark, to which fable he refers, and sheep and wolves are common characters in Aesop. The thrust of the aside is that the anti-unionists would permit the agents of their own destruction into the sheepfold.

always ended with a pen full of slaughtered sheep. Argyropoulos's fellow teacher, Michael Apostoles also defended the new precepts of the faith in a panegyric to Constantine XI, on the pretense of defending his own orthodoxy against detractors who claimed he was a pagan; though whether this was a covert attack by anti-unionists or inspired by Apostoles's association with Pletho remains unclear.³⁴

Other orators engaged the polemics of church union through the politics of Ottoman alliance. As church union was embraced by political pragmatists who aspired to save the empire through alliance with the west, so the union's opponents looked to the preservation of the church through political submission to the Ottomans. The historian Doukas expressed this view with lapidary concision when he attributed to Loukas Notaras the apocryphal dictum, "Better the Turkish turban than the Latin tiara."³⁵ Thus the orators could garb their anti-union sympathies in expressions of affinity for the Ottomans. By the early 1451, two prominent late Byzantine orators—Pletho and Dokeianos—who had once appeared amenable to the union had drifted into the opposition which found its champion in Demetrios Palaiologos, Constantine XI's

³⁴ See Apostoles, *Oration to Constantine XI*, esp. 86.22–23: "Δί με πιστεύειν λέγοντες, Κρητῶν ἡγεμόνι, καὶ Ποσειδῶνι καὶ Ἡρακλεῖ," This text was edited by Lampros, but he failed to consult the two fifteenth-century manuscripts: Paris, BnF Cod. gr. 1760, fols. 252v–57v; Vatican, BAV, Pal. gr. 275, 188–89v, which is Apostoles's autograph. The latter is the most critical witness of his confession of faith since it preserves a contradictory reading to that printed by Lampros. This editor printed τὸ δ' αὖ πάλιν ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ Πατρὸς, *σὺμενον ἐξ Υἱοῦ* κατὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας (85.22–23), which would represent a rejection of the imperially sanctioned doctrine to which the emperor and the patriarch had acceded at Florence; so it would constitute a strange rebuke of the emperor in an oration meant to defend the orator's orthodoxy. Apostoles's autograph, however, yields the more sensible reading τὸ δ' αὖ πάλιν ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ Πατρὸς, *δι' υἱοῦ τε καὶ ἐξ υἱοῦ* κατὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, making it a perfectly consonant expression of his fidelity to the imperial position on the procession of the church union. This formulation—δι' υἱοῦ τε καὶ ἐξ υἱοῦ—is precisely that condemned by John Eugenikos and the "community of the Orthodox" in the *apologia* directed to Constantine XI: see LPP I, 152.7–8.

³⁵ See Doukas, 37.10: "Κρεῖττότερόν ἐστιν εἶδέναι ἐν μέσῃ τῇ πόλει φακίολιον βασιλεῦον Τούρκων ἢ καλύπτραν Λατινικήν." On the loose, but far snappier, translation quoted above, see Setton II, 105 n. 21. In reality, Notaras was not a zealous opponent of the union, but a pragmatic minister serving Constantine XI.

brother. These two panegyrists expressed approbation of alliance with the Ottomans, thus tacitly declaring their anti-union sentiments.

George Gemistos Pletho had attended the Council of Ferrara-Florence, whether out of dutiful obedience to the emperor or a more pragmatic politics.³⁶ But after the return from Italy, he became disinclined to support the unionist and anti-Ottoman party that had coalesced around the emperor in the 1430s and 40s. Around 1451 Pletho wrote an address to Demetrios Palaiologos, who at that time had settled into an uneasy partition of the Morea with his brother Thomas. Their relationship was strained in part by their divergent approaches to the politics of church union and the Ottoman menace. Demetrios opposed the union and, as his siege of Constantinople in 1442 had shown, retained no reservations about allying with the Ottomans to pursue his ends. Sometime in 1451 he and Thomas had descended, as the sons of Manuel II so often did, from recrimination to violence.³⁷ Pletho began his oration ruminating on how the unrestrained violence justified in wars against “foreign peoples” (πρὸς τοὺς ἀλλοφύλους) did not suit civil wars. Thus, Demetrios was to be applauded for his forbearance, preferring a lesser share of the spoils than he merited to shedding the blood of his countrymen. By marching out with his own forces and “foreign” allies (i.e., the Ottomans) against Thomas, he had showed himself the injured party, not the aggressor.³⁸ For Pletho, this alliance in no way merited rebuke, but served

³⁶ Explaining Pletho’s attendance at the council has been a challenge for scholars who see him as a neo-pagan; see Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon*, 130, who credits the persuasion of Bessarion; Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism*, 400–1, who argues that Pletho saw the union as a necessary precondition to the establishment of his utopian Platonic state in the eastern Mediterranean.

³⁷ The precise nature of the conflict remains shadowy. Only Chalkokondyles mentions it, and then only briefly, Chalkokondyles II, 7.68; see also Zakythinios I, 241–43; Woodhouse, *Gemistos Plethon*, 313–14.

³⁸ Pletho, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 209.5–15.

to demonstrate the strength of Demetrios's anti-unionist convictions and his manifestation of the virtue of restraint.

A starker example of the migration from unionist to anti-unionist was John Dokeianos, orator and teacher at the despot's court in Mistra. Between 1435 and 1442, Dokeianos wrote four panegyrics to successive despots, first Theodore, then Constantine, speeches that avoided overt expressions on the issue of church union. Yet in the final years of the empire, he had abandoned his affiliation with Constantine and embraced Demetrios as well, praising him in 1451 for his wise policy of rapprochement with the Ottomans and for perceiving them as allies rather than enemies.³⁹

The orations by Pletho and Dokeianos espoused positions on ecclesiastical union within speeches that remained superficially panegyric. The union's most fervent opponent, however, dropped the pretense of praise to upbraid Constantine XI for his continued support for the union. John Eugenikos, who had previously crafted anodyne verses for John VIII full of ideological boilerplate, addressed to Constantine XI a strident denunciation of his church policy after his ascension in 1449.⁴⁰ Eugenikos had previously sent to the emperor an *apologia*, an anti-unionist screed insisting that no accommodation could be found between the Latins and Orthodox. "What is there between truth and falsehood, approbation and denial? It is 'from the son,' [or] it is not 'from the son.'"⁴¹ In closing Eugenikos insisted that he and the Orthodox would

³⁹ On Dokeianos's shifting politics, see Calia, "Meglio il turbante del sultano," 193–94; *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos from Elena*, *ibid.*, 290.21–23: "τό τε βάρβαρον ἔθνος καταπραύνεις σοφώτατα, καὶ ἀντὶ πολέμιων φίλους ἀποφαίνει καὶ συναγωνιστὰς τοῦ δικαίου."

⁴⁰ The verses remain unpublished in BAV, Reg. gr. Pio II 37, fols. 1–2; and Vat. gr. 134, fols. 124r–v. On Eugenikos's discourse to Constantine XI and whether it was an oration or merely a written castigation, see Chapter One, n. 151.

⁴¹ LPP I, 152.37–38: "Τί μέσον ἀληθείας καὶ ψεύδους, καταφάσεως καὶ ἀποφάσεως; Ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐστὶν, οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐστὶν." On this incident, see Philippides, *Constantine XI*, 238–39.

not permit any congregant under anathema into communion with them.⁴² The emperor asked for a longer explanation; Eugenikos obliged, spitting fire.⁴³

Abandoning his previous versified blandishments about the emperor's role in "rousing common acclaim and moving every mouth to the glorification of God" as the well-spring of virtues, Eugenikos instead advanced a more contractual idea of the emperor's relationship to the church, one in which the church would only acclaim the emperor *after* proof of his orthodoxy.⁴⁴ The emperor had to first demonstrate through deeds his "hereditary piety," then he might be named first in the heavenly church and first among Christians on earth—that is, accorded the honor Constantine thought was his due as emperor.

So whenever the emperor is adorned with the imperial crown and anointed with the holy chrism, then he entrusts to the shepherd of the church and the guardian [i.e., the patriarch] the imperial chrysobull oath and written confession, undertaking the defense of right doctrine, giving this as some recompense to the one who granted him political authority (τὴν ἀρχὴν), the head of the church, lord Christ, from whom kings and dynasts rule. So that when in church, on the bema of Christ, saying such-and-such's name we pray not for a servant of Christ but for our most pious and Christ-loved emperor, just as if we were speaking of the champion and defender of the teachings of Christ's church.⁴⁵

⁴² LPP I, 153.60–62: “Καὶ τέταρτον ἐπὶ τούτοις τοὺς ὑπὸ ἀνάθεμα καὶ κανόνα τῶν συνοδικῶν ὄρων διὰ τὴν τῆς προσθήκης τόλμαν εἰς κοινωνίαν οὐ παραδεχόμεθα.”

⁴³ On Eugenikos's justification for the oration, as well as the link to his previous *apologia*, see the first lines of Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 123.1–4: “Τὸν λόγον ἀπαιτούμενοι, καθ’ ὃν μόνοι ἡμεῖς ἢ μετ’ ὀλίγων οὐ παρεδεξάμεθα, οὔτε μὴν ἔτι μέχρι τοῦ νῦν παραδεχόμεθα ἐπὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας Χριστοῦ τὸ μνημόσυνον τῆς κραταιᾶς καὶ ἀγίας βασιλείας σου,” which echoes the same verb (παραδεχόμεθα) used in his *apologia*.

⁴⁴ See BAV, Reg. gr. Pio II 37, fols. 1v: ὦ βασιλεῦ τὸ θαῦμα τοῦ κοινοῦ κρότου
καὶ πάντα κινοῦν εἰς θεοῦ δόξαν στόμα

⁴⁵ Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 124.28–25.8: “καὶ ὅταν τῷ βασιλικῷ στεφάνῳ κοσμήται καὶ τῷ ἀγίῳ μύρῳ χρίηται, ἐγχειρίζει τότε τῷ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ποιμένι καὶ προστάτῃ ἔνορκον βασιλικὸν χρυσόβουλλον καὶ ὁμολογίαν ἔγγραφον, ὑπισχνουμένην τὴν παρ’ αὐτοῦ τῶν ὀρθῶν δογμάτων ἐκδίκησιν καὶ δεφένδουσιν, οἷον ἀμοιβὴν τινα ταύτην διδοὺς τῷ τὴν ἀρχὴν παρασχομένῳ, τῇ τῆς ἐκκλησίας κεφαλῇ, τῷ δεσπότη Χριστῷ, παρ’ οὗ βασιλεῖς βασιλεύουσι καὶ δυνάσται κρατοῦσι γῆς, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ὅταν ἐπ’ ἐκκλησίας, ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἱεροῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ οὐχ ἁπλῶς οὕτως ὑπὲρ τοῦ δούλου τοῦ θεοῦ ὀδεῖνα λέγοντες, ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου καὶ φιλοχρίστου βασιλέως ἡμῶν εὐχόμεθα, παραπλήσιόν τι νοοῦμεν, ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ἐλέγομεν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐκδικητοῦ καὶ προμάχου τῶν ὀρθῶν δογμάτων τῆς ἐκκλησίας Χριστοῦ.” The oath and confession referenced here are surely the same as those noted in the fourteenth-century ceremonial protocol of Pseudo-Kodinos, where its submission to the patriarch was the emperor's first act upon arrival at Hagia Sophia: see Pseudo-Kodinos, 210.8–14.12. This profession, recorded by Pseudo-Kodinos, promised to observe the very strictures enjoined by Eugenikos in this oration. Thus, it is possible that this is an implicit critique of Constantine's coronation, famously held at Mistra not in Constantinople, as non-

This view marked the logical, if radical, end of the Alexandrian Anonymous's injunctions to defend the faith and its ancient precepts. But where the Anonymous left the consequences of imperial failure to defend orthodoxy implicit, Eugenikos clarified: the church justly excluded any monarch who introduced "innovation" or "accommodation" from being "proclaimed within the heavenly church."⁴⁶ The theology of proclamation must have remained austere, since Eugenikos enjoined Constantine to embrace a virtuous path not only for his own sake, but to aid his brother John's imperiled soul.⁴⁷ The vision of kingship espoused by Eugenikos echoed the ninth-century Byzantine legal protocols in the *Eisagoge*, as well those embraced by papalists in the Latin West, replete with the familiar corporal metaphors.⁴⁸ The kingship and priesthood were "united and indivisible . . . like the soul with the body and the body with the soul."⁴⁹ The priesthood remained the implicit soul, of course, animating the body and preventing true equality between the two. Nonetheless, chaos would ensue for an imperfectly matched pair. For the church to be led by a heterodox priest—a clever inversion by Eugenikos—while the kingship remained pious

canonical; no source addresses whether Constantine submitted this profession of faith the patriarch Gregory III on his arrival in Constantinople.

⁴⁶ Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 124.21–22: "πρώτον ἐν τῇ οὐρανίῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ, εἶτα καὶ ὑφ' ἡμῶν εὐθὺς δικαίως ἀνακηρυχθῆς."

⁴⁷ Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 132.24–25: "Οὕτω καὶ σαυτῷ βοηθήσεις καὶ τὴν τοῦ ὁμαίμονος καὶ βασιλέως ὠφελήσεις ψυχὴν."

⁴⁸ On the *Εἰσαγωγή τοῦ νόμου*, originally edited under the incorrect title *Ἐπαναγωγή*, see ODB I, 703–4 with bibliography. For the passage Eugenikos seems to echo here, see *Ἐπαναγωγή τοῦ νόμου*, 3.8, in ed. P. Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, vol. 2 (Athens, 1931): "Τῆς πολιτείας ἐκ μερῶν καὶ μορίων ἀναλόγως τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ συνισταμένης, τὰ μέγιστα καὶ ἀναγκαϊότατα μέρη βασιλεὺς ἐστὶ καὶ πατριάρχης. διὸ καὶ ἡ κατὰ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα τῶν ὀπηκῶν εἰρήνη καὶ εὐδαιμονία βασιλείας ἐστὶ καὶ ἀρχιερωσύνης ἐν πᾶσιν ὁμοφροσύνη καὶ συμφωνία." In the Latin Christian tradition, corporal metaphors drew authority from the Pauline epistle 1 Cor. 12:12, an idea which saw new flights of elaboration during the Investiture Conflict in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; for examples, see I. S. Robinson, "Church and Papacy," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, 253–54.

⁴⁹ Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 126.17–20: "ἡ βασιλεία δηλαδὴ καὶ ἡ ἱερωσύνη, ἡνωμένα πάντα καὶ ἀδιάρρηκτα τρόπον ἕτερον, ὃν λόγον ἡ ψυχὴ μετὰ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τὸ σῶμα μετὰ τῆς αὐτῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὸ συναμφότερον τούτων, ὁ ἄνθρωπος."

and orthodox would produce destruction, corruption, and death, until the two were torn apart.⁵⁰

Eugenikos, like the Alexandrian Anonymous before, showed that what he wanted was not a church apart from the empire, as Kiousopoulou has argued, but one more perfectly fused, in which the king acknowledged his fealty to the priest.⁵¹

Despite Eugenikos's uncompromising approach to kingship, the second half of his oration adopted a stern and paternally admonitory tone that might have been at home in another panegyric. He seemed to acknowledge Constantine's service to his people by exhorting him to see that "the noble and marvelous name, which you have acquired with so many labors up to now throughout the world, be heralded among all the orthodox in eternal memory."⁵² A cascading series of imperatives nudged him to imitate his father and the first Constantine in his piety; embrace unshakeable faith; reject accommodation; teach the people and confound the compromisers.⁵³ In these last sections of his oration, Eugenikos not only echoed the encomia of the Alexandrian Anonymous twenty years earlier, he nearly passed for a panegyrist himself. That imperial oratory could be distorted to accommodate such stark censure alongside conventional admonitions to virtuous behavior illustrates its capacity to bind its consensus function to more divisive politics.

⁵⁰ Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 126.21–25: “καὶ τὸν ταύτης προστάτην ἀλλοτριόφρονα καὶ ἑτερόδοξον, βασιλείας οὐσῆς ὀρθοδόξου καὶ εὐσεβοῦς, ἐν τι τῶν ἀδυνάτων καὶ πάντῃ ἀμήχανον λογιζόμεθα, ἕως ἂν τὸ διεσπᾶσθαι ταῦτα καὶ ἀπερρῆχθαι τοῦ ὅλου νέκρωσιν καὶ φθορὰν καὶ ἀφανισμόν τέλειον ἐμποιῇ,”

⁵¹ See Kiousopolou, *Emperor or Manager*, 128; see also 124 where she argues, unsustainably given the ecclesiastical politics I have described, that these orations represent an appeal to the “pro-western” party in Constantinople.

⁵² Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 132.10–12: “καὶ παρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς ὀρθοδόξοις αἰδίῳ μνήμῃ λαμπρῶς καὶ γνησίως ἀνακηρύττεσθαι καὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ θαυμαστὸν ὄνομα, ὃ κόποις πλείστοις ἐκτίσω μέχρι τοῦ νῦν ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ”

⁵³ Eugenikos, *Discourse to Constantine XI*, 131.29–34.13.

Imperial City to Urban Empire

The second change that strained the bonds forged by imperial oratory was the changing perception of Constantinople. In the last decades of the empire, imperial orators viewed the conquest of the city as the end of the empire, suggesting that Constantinople had transformed from an imperial city to an urban empire. This rhetoric implied that the city had become the empire in and of itself, and no one could claim imperial legitimacy except by its possession. This transformation from an imperial city to urban empire was a product of both the political realities of shrinking territory and the innovative strategies of imperial panegyrists who increasingly stressed the close association of the city and the empire and the city's importance to the empire's salvation.

Constantinople had always distorted the political geography of the eastern Mediterranean by its sheer gravity in Byzantine imperial ideology and metaphysics. From its dedication as a new imperial capital in 330 CE, Constantinople had been the stable center of the eastern empire. Called the “Second Rome” and “New Rome,” Constantinople swelled in importance after the “Old Rome” had ceased to be a seat of the Roman Empire in the West, and after the loss of imperial territory in the Near East in the seventh century. This idea of Constantinople as the New Rome gave the Byzantines their political identity as Romans, while the city itself was often called ἡ βασιλεύουσα, the “reigning one” or the “empress city.” The city's association with Rome and Zion also underpinned the empire's claim to universal lordship over the world, a providential role in Christian metaphysics, and the emperor's special connection to God.⁵⁴ Bolstering its importance, Constantinople—and the Genoese entrepôt of Pera across the Golden

⁵⁴ See Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae*, 316–25.

Horn—thrived as the center of Mediterranean market awash in linen, spices, grain, wine, and even steel.⁵⁵

This role changed in critical ways in the late Byzantine period. To begin with, by the thirteenth century, Constantinople's aura of imperial indispensability had been dented by the Fourth Crusade, after which rival imperial centers emerged in Nicaea and Epiros. These polities, especially the exile empire in Nicaea, struggled to re-capture Constantinople from the crusader state that had been established there, but they also forged new imperial identities around their new locales.⁵⁶ The forces of the Nicaean empire achieved the reconquest of Constantinople in 1261, and with the relocation of the emperors back to Constantinople, the city once more became the center of politics, ceremony, and the idea of the empire. Michael VIII styled himself as a "New Constantine" and praise of the city returned to the repertoire of imperial panegyrists under the Palaiologoi emperors.⁵⁷

But the recovery of Constantinople marked not a territorial resurgence, but a permanent shift westward in the empire's center of gravity, the beginning of the end of Byzantine rule in Asia Minor. Where the Laskarid emperors in Nicaea had expended their efforts on regaining Constantinople, Palaiologan emperors in Constantinople struggled to preserve the old core

⁵⁵ See Matschke, "Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money: Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries"; on the steel trade in Pera, see Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 206–07.

⁵⁶ The standard works on the successor states are Donald M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros* (Oxford, 1957); Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society Under the Laskarids of Nicaea, 1204–1261* (Oxford, 1975); on the "multi-polarity" and political instability that ensued after the Fourth Crusade and subsequent recovery of Constantinople, see Angeliki E. Laiou, "Byzantium and the Neighboring Powers: Small-State Policies and Complexities," in *Byzantium, Faith, and Power*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New York, 2006), 42–53.

⁵⁷ Ruth Macrides, "The New Constantine and the New Constantinople – 1261?," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 6, no. 1 (1980): 13–41; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 103–04.

regions of the empire in the Balkans and Asia Minor.⁵⁸ Their efforts could not maintain the hegemony of previous centuries over these territories. Similar losses in Europe followed over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as civil war, famine, plague, and warfare with Serbs and Ottomans all collaborated to dramatically reduce the territorial holdings of the empire.⁵⁹ By the early fifteenth century, little remained outside of Constantinople, Thessalonike and the imperial province in the Peloponnese.

In the first decades of the fifteenth century, imperial oratory preserved conventional ideas about Constantinople as though fixed in amber, a conservatism sustained by several factors: Constantinople's enduring place in the ideological foundation of the empire; Menander's influential precepts on imperial orations that stressed amplification on the πατρίς; as well as the continued presence of the imperial court in the city. As a result, the speeches and letters that praised the emperor and his kingship that flourished anew in the fifteenth century took the importance of Constantinople as a popular theme.⁶⁰ Makarios Makres described it, even under barbarian assault, as the commanding center of a universal empire, "that great and common city beloved of God and all men . . . the leader and the eye of the inhabited world."⁶¹ Others saw the

⁵⁸ See Dimitri Korobeinikov, *Byzantium and The Turks in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 2014), 217–81, who rehabilitates somewhat Michael VIII's reputation for negligence of Asia Minor and illuminates the critical political changes that emerged on the Turkish side of the frontier.

⁵⁹ See Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453* (London, 1972), 159–264.

⁶⁰ See the useful summary in Calia, "Meglio il turbante del sultano," 187–90, who notes that urban panegyric—even outside imperial oratory—flourished in this period, an indicator of the changing relationship between imperial center and periphery. On late Byzantine urban panegyric, see Helen Saradi, "The Kallos of the Byzantine City: The Development of a Rhetorical Topos and Historical Reality," *Gesta* 34, no. 1 (1995): 37–56; eadem, "The Monuments in the Late Byzantine *Ekphraseis* of Cities: Search for Identities," *Byzantinoslavica - Revue internationale des Etudes Byzantines* 69, no. 3 (2011): 179–92; Aslihan Akışık, "Praising a City: Nicaea, Trebizond, and Thessalonike," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 36, no. 2 (2011): 2–25.

⁶¹ Dendrinios, "An Unpublished Funeral Oration," 443.49–51: "καὶ τὴν μεγάλην καὶ κοινὴν ἐρωμένην Θεοῦ τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων, καὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἡγεμόνα καὶ ὀφθαλμὸν καταστρέφασθαι πόλιν"

city's role as even more essential, protecting not just the inhabitants of the city and the empire, but the whole world. Foreshadowing the fears of Christians across Europe after 1453, an anonymous oration to Manuel II around 1410 described the fear instilled by the Ottomans and the way the city represented a sign of stout resistance. "Once Constantinople, which surpasses all other cities, is conquered, it will be easier to compel the Christians of the world to yield to the sultan's commands and abandon their piety, and easier [for the sultan] to overrun and enslave the whole earth and sea."⁶² Both of these conceptions lent the city universal and supreme importance.

By far the most extensive treatments of the city appeared in two near contemporary orations to John VIII. The first, from the Alexandrian Anonymous's first oration to John VIII (around 1427) expressed the city's singularity as a climatic marvel, always in moderation so that its agricultural production abounds; it "shares" Europe and Asia together, yoking the two in harmony; and it glows like a beacon of virtues: piety, strength, wisdom.⁶³ Beyond its natural virtues, it radiated with cultural ones as well: abundant churches, beautiful mosaics and marbles, sights such that one who had never seen them would claim to never have lived.⁶⁴ This sole empire of the Romans, the Anonymous declared, ruled both Europe and Asia, marking its

⁶² Gautier, "Un récit," 108.22–25: "Τῆς γὰρ πασῶν πόλεων ὑπερκειμένης ἀλούσης, ῥᾶον εἶναι τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν χριστιανῶν εἶζαι τοῖς ἐκείνου προστάγμασι καὶ τὴν εὐσέβειαν ἐξομῶσασθαι, κἀντεῦθεν λοιπὸν ὡς ἀπὸ τινος ὀρμώμενον ἀκροπόλεως πᾶσαν καταδραμεῖν εὐθέως καὶ δουλώσασθαι γῆν τε καὶ θάλατταν."

⁶³ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 202.6–28.

⁶⁴ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 202.29–3.03: "Νεῶν μέντοι πληθὺν καὶ γραφῶν κάλλη καὶ σύνθεσιν ψηφίδων παντοδαπῇ μαρμάρων τε καλλονῇ ἅμα καὶ λαμπρότητα καὶ τᾶλλα δὴ ὅσα παρέχει τὴν ἡδονὴν μετὰ θαύματος, θεωρούντων μὲν ταῦτα οὐκ ἔνι ῥαδίως ἀπαλλάττεσθαι, τῶν δ' ἐξ ἀκοῆς μόνης παρειληφόντων τὰ ἱστορούμενα, εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλισθ' ἅπασαν γῆν τε καὶ θάλατταν εἰς θεὸν ἔλθοιεν, μόνης δ' ἀπολειφθεῖεν, ἀβίωτον σφῶν αὐτῶν τὴν ζωὴν λογίζόμενοι μὴ καὶ ταύτῃ γε θεωρίᾳ ἐντρυφήσαιεν."

frontiers at the Pillars of Hercules in the west and the “deep-eddying ocean” in the east.⁶⁵ To qualify the breezy assertion of the enduring universality of Roman imperial power despite current affairs, the orator closed by noting, “now the age is accustomed to arrange imperial affairs differently.”⁶⁶

Isidore of Kiev, in his extended panegyric to John VIII in 1429, went even further, offering an entire urban panegyric within his imperial oration, a kind of rhetorical *mise-en-abyme* unique among late Byzantine imperial orations in its depth and nuance. Here, Isidore emphasized Constantinople as the midpoint of the world, joining together the three continents: Europe, Asia and Libya (i.e., Africa), a balance of such delicacy that only Constantinople could keep these perpetually hostile continents at peace.⁶⁷ Like the Alexandrian Anonymous, Isidore praised the city for its natural advantages: its moderate seasons and mild weather, bountiful crops, fresh air and water, and rich hinterlands, as well as its specific geographical features like the Bosphorus, Golden Horn, and Galata.⁶⁸ Then he turned to an extended recounting of the history of the city, from its mythical founding by Byzas, to Constantine’s transfer of the imperial seat there and the subsequent triumphs of late Roman emperors.⁶⁹ Throughout, Isidore lauded

⁶⁵ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 203.6–11: “Αὕτη μόνη ἀρχὴ τῶν Ῥωμαίων τὴν τ’ Εὐρώπην καὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν ἅπασαν διωκεῖτο ἀπὸ τε τῶν Ἑσπερίων τὰς ἀρχὰς ποιουμένη καὶ τῆς στήλης τοῦ Ἡρακλέους κατὰ τοὺς ἄδομένους τῶν ποιητῶν μύθους θατέραν λήξιν τῆς Ἑώρας οὐκ ἐπαύσατο διέρχεσθαι μέχρις αὐτῶν τῶν ρείθρων τοῦ βαθυδίνεω Ὀκεανοῖο.”

⁶⁶ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 203.17–18: “εἰ καὶ τανὺν ἄλλως ὁ χρόνος ἔοικε τὰ πράγματα διοικεῖν.”

⁶⁷ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 137.4–38.9. For other geographical reflections on Constantinople, see Angelov, “Asia and Europe Commonly Called East and West’.”

⁶⁸ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 202.6f; Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 139.25f; praise of the city’s weather and harvest was emphasized in a well-known eleventh-century imperial oration: Gautier, *Théophylacte d’Achrida*, 181.2–21.

⁶⁹ Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 136.13–154.31.

the city's sufficiency for her inhabitants, an allusion to the civic αὐτάρκεια praised by Aristotle in Bk. 7 of the *Politics* as well as a Byzantine economic ideal.⁷⁰ In both these orations, praise of Constantinople doubled as praise of the empire.

Yet in spite of the rhetorical insistence on Constantinople casting a commanding gaze over the horizon, a city of bounteous harvests and unbreachable walls, the reality was much shabbier. The imperial body had withered. By 1430 Thessalonike had been seized by the Ottomans. Mistra had become in its place the second city of the empire. This manifest political decline was a development that did not escape the notice of travelers who visited Constantinople in these final decades. These writers often expressed a moralizing disillusionment with the modest state of the empire—even if their grasp of the precise geography left something to be desired. In 1432, a Burgundian visitor, Bertrandon de la Broquière, stopped in Constantinople on his travels throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Enumerating the remaining imperial possessions, he listed only a town on the sea of Marmara (Silivri, i.e., Selymbria) and a castle north along the Bosphoros as those that complemented Constantinople.⁷¹ Just a few years later, a young Castilian visitor to the imperial court, Pero Tafur, mordantly called the emperor “a bishop without a

⁷⁰ See also Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 136.28; 137.16; 145.22; 153.28. Isidore uses variants of the verb ἐξαρκεῖν, “to be strong, sufficient,” which is different from Aristotle’s αὐτάρκεια but lexically derivative. Moreover, the context of Isidore’s usage makes it clear that self-sufficiency is the essential principal praised; for instance at 145.17-23, the hinterland is praised for its abundance: “Ὅσα μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ἀρόσιμα καὶ γεωγία καθυπείκει τῶν παρ’ ἄλλοις ὑπτίων εὐφορώτερα, ὅσα δὲ ἀποπέφυκε τοῦδε δένδρεσιν ἀμφιλαφέσι κομῇ καὶ παντοίοις, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἡμερώτερα καὶ καρποῖς βρίθοντα τέθηλε, τὰ δὲ πρὸς πᾶσαν πέφυκε χρήσιν ἀνθρώπων, λάσια καὶ πολύδενδρα, τοῦτο μὲν ἐρέπτειν, τοῦτο δὲ ναυπηγεῖν, τοῦτο δὲ οἰκοδομεῖν ὥστ’ οὐ ἐξαρκεῖν τῇ πόλει, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς χρήζουσι πᾶσι” (emphasis mine). The clear implication here is that self-sufficiency is not just for the city but for those (presumably neighbors) in need. For Aristotle’s concept of self-sufficiency in the city, see *Politics*, 1252b29, 1253a1, 1253a28, 1256b32, 1257a30. The discourse of self-sufficiency was also central to Byzantine economic ideology; see Angeliki E. Laiou, “Economic Thought and Ideology,” in *EHB* III, 1125–30, where the author argues that self-sufficiency was chiefly an ideological value, not a practical one.

⁷¹ Bertrandon de la Broquière, *The Voyage d’Outremer*, ed. and trans. Galen R. Kline (New York, 1988), 104–05.

see.”⁷² These descriptions were not strictly accurate, of course, but they reinforced a broader narrative wherein political decline and territorial reduction signified moral decay.

The Byzantines were of course also keenly aware of the severe constriction of imperial territory, though on occasion they tried to put a brave face on the dire situation. Joseph Bryennios delivered an oration to Manuel II at the very end of the fourteenth century, when the city was under intermittent siege by Bayezid and the Ottomans. Bryennios observed that although the empire ruled only Constantinople, still at the ends of the earthy people commemorated the emperor’s name—perhaps a cold comfort to the emperor besieged in his city.⁷³ More than decade or so later, the idiosyncratic Byzantine intellectual George Gemistos Pletho, in his exhortation to Theodore II Palaiologos that the young prince reorganize political society in the Peloponnese, complained that the empire of the Romans had receded to such a degree, that it now possessed only two cities in Thrace and the Peloponnese.⁷⁴ Like the Western travelers, the Byzantine witnesses exaggerated for rhetorical effect; but everyone, Byzantine and Latin alike, could see the lamentable state of the empire in the first decades of the fifteenth century.

How then did Byzantines deal intellectually with this dramatic reduction of their imperial power? How did they assimilate the new, increasingly desperate political reality into a tradition of thought and rhetoric that made, as Isidore and the Alexandrian Anonymous demonstrate, the

⁷² Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures, 1435–1439*, ed. and trans. Malcom Letts (London, 1926), 145. On the views of these and other travelers, see Michael Angold, “The Decline of Byzantium Seen Through the Eyes of Western Travellers,” in *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Aldershot, England, 2002), 213–32.

⁷³ Ἰωσήφ μοναχοῦ τοῦ Βρυεννίου τὰ εὐρεθέντα, vol. 2, 35.

⁷⁴ Pletho, *On the Peloponnese to Theodore*, 129.13–17: “ὁρῶμεν γὰρ οἱ ἡμῖν ἐκ τῆς μεγίστης Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας κεχώρηκε τὰ πράγματα, οἷς ἀπάντων οἰχομένων δύο πόλεις μόνον ἐπὶ Θράκης περιλέλειπται καὶ Πελοπόννησος, οὐδὲ ζύμπασα αὕτη γε, καὶ εἰ δὴ τι ἔτι νησίδιον σῶν ἔστι.”

grandest metaphysical and providential claims about the nature and purpose of their empire? One approach adopted subtly changed the relationship between the empire and the city of Constantinople. Against the backdrop of conventional descriptions of Constantinople, a key strategy emerged that showed how the ideological sinews between center and periphery were straining and snapping. In Constantinople, John Argyropoulos embraced the idea of the city as an *ἑστία*, a “hearth” for the Greek people, forming linkages between this social space and the idea of salvation.

The Alexandrian Anonymous had already fused the older idea of Constantinople as a global hinge or a continental yoke with that of the imperial bastion. Speaking of John VIII’s efforts to preserve the city in the 1420s, the Anonymous said, “The emperor knew that should such a great city, as a link (*σύνδεσμος*) between the eastern and western parts of the world and the sole vessel of our hopes, suffer a terrible fate, everything for us would perish utterly.”⁷⁵ This emphasis on Constantinople as a bulwark, for either the Byzantines themselves or for Europe, represented a subtle shift from the older, more triumphal corporal metaphors of the “eye” and the “heart” of the world.⁷⁶ Under the severe political strain of the 1420s and 30s, imperial orators like the Anonymous and Isidore bolstered the associations of the city of Constantinople with the empire. Even set beside other expansive claims to political authority—such as the empire that stretched across Europe and Asia—this language anticipated a change in the ideological position of Constantinople. Instead of representing the center of a universal dominion, it became the lone

⁷⁵ Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, 206.16–20: “Ὁρῶν μὲν οὖν ταῦτα ὁ μέγας βασιλεὺς, δεινῶς ἦν ἀλύων καὶ διαπορούμενος εἰ τοσαύτη γε πόλις, εἰς ἣν μόνην τὰ τῆς ἐλπίδος ἔστηκε, εἴ τι δεινὸν πάθῃσι, ἔτι δὲ σύνδεσμος οὗδ’ ἀμφοτέρων, ἑῶν τε λήξεων καὶ ἑσπερίων μερῶν, εἰ οὕτω ταύτη γε τελείως συμβαίῃ φθαρῆναι, παντελῶς οἰχήσεσθαι τὰ ἡμέτερα”

⁷⁶ On these metaphors in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae*, 132–67.

guardian of the Byzantine, or even the Christian people. From this new vantage point, an orator could view the losses of territory outside Constantinople as far less important than retaining control over the imperial core.

No orator exemplified this trend better than John Argyropoulos, teacher and orator at the court of Constantine XI in the last years of the empire. In place of metaphors of vision and command, Argyropoulos employed those of safety and salvation, especially Constantinople as ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ γένους ἑστία, “the common hearth of the people.” The phrase was not without antecedents, but John Argyropoulos used it with new frequency, and with a new emphasis.⁷⁷ Speaking at a time when the empire was beset on all sides by enemies, the ἑστία became for Argyropoulos an image of salvation.

Argyropoulos knew well the peril Constantinople faced. As a teacher in the city under the protection of Constantine XI, Argyropoulos wrote a number of speeches for the emperor, including an oration to Constantine XI that combined panegyric and reflections on kingship; a consolatory address (παραινθετικός) to Constantine XI on the death of John VIII; a consolatory address to Constantine XI on the death of his mother; as well as a monody on the death of Constantine’s mother. These speeches, all written between 1449 and 1450, show how an orator in the imperial city represented its parlous position to the monarch and the assembled audience. Preserving the “common hearth” became an existential imperative for the emperor. Argyropoulos’s monody on John VIII, perhaps more a rhetorical piece for circulation than a speech to be delivered, lauded the emperor’s achievement in preserving Constantinople, the “common hearth of the the people,” along with the “lands and cities under it, the language of the

⁷⁷ For the antecedents, see Aelius Aristides, *Panathenaios*, 98.20, 112.19, in *Aristides*, ed. Wilhelm Dindorf, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1829); Theodore Metochites, *Orationes in imperatorem Andronicum II*, 2.10.17, in Ioannis Polemis, *Oἱ Δύο Βασιλεῖς Δόγῃ* (Athens, 2007); Isidore, *Encomium on John VIII*, 145.29.

Greeks, the whole character of the people (ἔθος) along with its ancestral law.”⁷⁸ Constantinople’s preservation became an act of cultural as well as political preservation. In his consolatory addresses, the city and the imperial office holders (ὅσοι τε τῶν ἐν τέλει), even those outside Constantinople, were together the “common savior and lord” who nonetheless looked to the emperor for preservation.⁷⁹ If here the relationship between the city and imperial territory remained implicitly linked, elsewhere this connection was more explicitly severed. In a prayer that the emperor imitate God in his beneficence to his people, Argyropoulos observed that Constantine had “justly received by good fortune the kingship of this our *genos* and this common hearth of the Hellenes from your forerunners and brother and mother.”⁸⁰ The people he ruled may have been all the “Hellenes,” but the land he ruled was only the city of Constantine.

This narrow association of the empire with the city, a rhetorical tool that represented the two as if they were coterminous, was convenient for thinkers looking for ways to assimilate the territorial diminution of the empire. But it carried grave risks as well. For if the city had become the empire, then establishing an imperial capital in exile, as Byzantines had done in 1204 after the Fourth Crusade, was no longer feasible. Any threat to the city itself was a threat to the empire. Indeed, Argyropoulos himself acknowledged this hazard in his imperial panegyric to

⁷⁸ See his monody on John VIII: LPP III, 318.6: “δι’ ἧς ἐσώζετο μὲν ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ γένους ἐστία, ἐσώζοντο δὲ καὶ ὅσαι νῦν ὑφ’ αὐτὴν καὶ χώραι καὶ πόλεις καὶ ἡ τῶν Ἑλλήνων φωνὴ καὶ ἅπαν ἔθος καὶ νόμος πάτριος.”

⁷⁹ See his consolatory address on the death of John VIII: Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, 28.7–11: “Ὁρᾷς ὅσοι τε τῶν ἐν τέλει καὶ ὅσον ἐν Πόλει σύστημα αὐτὴν τε ταύτην τὴν κοινὴν τοῦ γένους ἐστίαν, ὃν εἴχομεν κοινὸν σωτήρα καὶ πρύτανιν ἀπολωλεκότας, εἰς σὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τείνεις καὶ μονοῦ θεὸν ἄλλον ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ νυνὶ τῶν ὅλων ἐφεσθηκότα νομίζεις.” Cf. the near-identical passage in his address on the death of Constantine XI’s mother (idem, 67.6–10).

⁸⁰ Lampros, *Ἀργυροπούλεια*, 66.19–67.2: “τοῦ δ’ ἡμετέρου τουτουὶ γένους καὶ τῆς κοινῆς ταύτης τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐστίας ἀγαθῇ μοίρᾳ δικαίως τὴν βασιλείαν ἐξ αὐτῶν προγόνων καὶ ἀδελφοῦ δεξάμενος καὶ μητρός καὶ μόνος ἡμῖν ὦν ἐς ὃν ἔχομεν βλέπειν ἅπαν γένος Ἑλλήνων . . .”

Constantine XI. Writing with prescience just a few years before the fall of the city, Argyropoulos lamented the coming end.

I don't know now how we have come to be seen contrary to our merit worse than some barbarians . . . deprived of power which was over the earth, sea, cities, wealth, and every byway, bereft of allies and friends and fearing for our one lone city, the hearth of our people, the sole salvation left to the Hellenes.⁸¹

Argyropoulos sought to ground the empire's strength on its last solid foundations—the impregnable walls of the reigning city. This change, arising from the territorial reduction of the empire and perhaps in implicit comparisons with contemporary Italian city-states, made the city's role in the empire loom even larger.⁸² As future events would show, this transition from imperial city to urban empire would be embraced by western intellectuals and would elevate the empire to a new immortal plane, though in ways unanticipated by orators like Argyropoulos.

King or Prince: Breaking Bonds of Alliance

In the last decades of the empire, several imperial orators—John Dokeianos, the Alexandrian Anonymous, and George Gemistos Pletho—wrote a flurry of imperial orations that addressed neither John VIII nor Constantine XI. Instead, these panegyrics celebrated the imperial despots:

⁸¹ Argyropoulos, *Basilikos*, 45.18–23: “νῦν οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅπως παρὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀξίαν βαρβάρων ἐνίων ἤττους ὀφθέντες καθήμεθα, πῶς ἂν εἴποι τις, ἀφηρημένοι μὲν ἀρχὴν ἡντινοῦν γῆς, θαλάττης, πόλεων, χρημάτων, πόρου παντὸς, ἐστερημένοι δὲ ζυμμάχων τε καὶ ζυνήθων καὶ περὶ τῆς μίας ταυτησί πόλεως δεδιότες, τῆς κοινῆς τοῦ γένους ἐστίας, ἥ μόνη λέλειπται σωτηρία τοῖς Ἕλλησι.”

⁸² See Alexander Kazhdan, “The Italian and Late Byzantine City,” *DOP* 49 (1995): 1–22, who illustrates the economic similarities between northern Italian and Byzantine cities in the late period; on views of Italian politics in Byzantine sources, see also Vasileios Syros, “Between Chimera and Charybdis: Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Views on the Political Organization of the Italian City-States,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 14, no. 5 (2010): 451–504; for a rich study of the intersection of social, economic, and intellectual trends and the mutual exchange of ideas between Byzantium and northern Italy, see Teresa Shawcross, “Mediterranean Encounters before the Renaissance: Byzantine and Italian Political Thought Concerning the Rise of Cities,” in *Renaissance Encounters: Greek East and Latin West*, ed. Marina S. Brownlee and Dimitri H. Gondicas (Leiden, 2013), 57–93.

Theodore, Demetrios, and Constantine Palaiologos. The despot, ὁ δεσπότης, was—despite the word’s negative connotation in English—the second-highest rank in the late Byzantine hierarchy, just behind the emperor.⁸³ These officers, both the sons and brothers of the emperor, held a quasi-imperial status at the court; this status was communicated with their attire, which the treatise of Pseudo-Kodinos from the mid-fourteenth century described as “just like the emperor’s” (ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ βασιλικόν) in many regards. The red or violet of despot’s stockings, caftan, and shoes illustrated his close connection to the emperor who alone retained access to this ideologically charged color.⁸⁴ Yet despite the despot’s status beside the emperor, prior to 1435, no Byzantine despot in the fourteenth or fifteenth century enjoyed ritual celebration in imperial panegyric like the Palaiologoi brothers.

This series of orations by Dokeianos, the Alexandrian Anonymous, and Pletho represent a new phase of fifteenth-century imperial oratory. While other speeches to imperial family members had employed panegyric language, they were uniformly death speeches: funeral orations or monodies.⁸⁵ The orations of Dokeianos, the Anonymous, and Pletho are conventional imperial panegyrics in every way—except that they address the emperor’s brothers. This sudden turn to the imperial princes, I argue, is rooted in the bitter fraternal competition over the

⁸³ On the despot, see ODB I, 614; Rodolphe Guilland, *Recherches sur les institutions byzantine*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1967) 2:1–24.

⁸⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 36.2, 38.3, 38.6–7, 37.18. It is significant that the oldest known manuscript containing Pseudo-Kodinos (Parisinus gr. 2991A, copied in 1419) can be securely connected with an aristocrat in court of the despotate of the Morea, Matthew Palaiologos Sgouromales (PLP 24995): see Pseudo-Kodinos, 21.

⁸⁵ See Chrysostomides, *Manuel II: Funeral Oration*; several orators wrote monodies on Manuel II’s wife, Helena Palaiologina, who died in 1450: Pletho, in LPP III, 266–80; Argyropoulos, in Lampros, Ἀργυροπούλεια, 48–67; Scholarios in LPP II, 40–51; for an anonymous monody to wife of Despot Constantine who died in 1429, see I. Vassis, “Ein unediertes Gedicht anlässlich des Todes von Teodora, erster Gemahlin des Despoten Konstantinos (XI) Palaiologos,” *JÖB* 49 (1999):181–89. We might consider exceptions Pletho’s memorandum on the Peloponnese to Theodore II, which lacks panegyric elements: Pletho, *On the Peloponnese to Theodore*; as well as Bessarion, *Discourse to Constantine Palaiologos*.

imperial succession between 1435 and 1449. These encomiastic orations, in hailing the brothers as though they were the emperor, allocated power to political rivals, celebrating one brother over the others, and sometimes even over the emperor himself. Although these speeches sounded like panegyrics to the emperor, the very fact that they were addressed to *other* political figures gave their conventional refrains stark new meaning.

The social function of these speeches remained unchanged; they still forged communal consensus around these princes and their policies through commendation and advice. But where that power to cultivate assent to praise of the prince had formerly stabilized imperial authority, lauding Manuel II's virtues or the benefits he delivered to his subjects, now orators like Dokeianos used that power to challenge the emperor by hailing adversaries as monarchs. Building consensus around someone other than the emperor constituted a stark departure from early fifteenth-century practice, but these speeches also made more subversive claims, ranging from subtly replacing the emperor with the prince as the indispensable political actor—to almost explicitly approving usurpation.

The catalyst for these orations was conflict over imperial succession. In 1435, John VIII had been married to Anna of Trebizond for eight years without an heir, and it had become clear that the next emperor would be one of his brothers. The next eldest was Theodore Palaiologos, the waffling despot who could not decide whether he wanted to be a monk or an emperor. In 1427, he reportedly toyed with an adoption of the monastic habit.⁸⁶ John Eugenikos even wrote a protracted discourse to Theodore on the merits of the monastic life, but at the last minute the

⁸⁶ See Chalkokondyles I, 5.27; whether it was truly because he wanted to escape an unhappy marriage to his Italian wife, Sophia of Montferrat (whom Doukas cruelly described with the coarse phrase “She looks like Lent in the front, and Easter from behind,” 20.6), is unclear.

despot retreated from the brink.⁸⁷ By 1435, Theodore had decided he preferred to be emperor and began maneuvering to ensure his position in the imperial succession. In 1436 John VIII had attempted to settle this uncertain imperial succession among his brothers by appointing a regent for his upcoming voyage to the church council in Italy. But John's attempts to move Theodore to the capital and delegate rule of the Morea to Constantine (along with their brother Thomas) led Theodore to attack his brothers in the summer of 1436. This simmering conflict was only quelled by a new settlement that left Theodore in the Morea and moved Constantine to Constantinople as John's regent.⁸⁸

During the intervening winter, Dokeianos delivered an encomium to Theodore that celebrated his virtuous rulership in the Morea. Using the familiar language of imperial panegyric, not only did Dokeianos subtly hint at the recent unrest in the Morea, his celebration of Theodore in such a context was meant to support his power in a struggle against his brother Constantine. Using the season to celebrate the despot's similarity to the sun and hinting at the unrest in the Morea: "The sun in the midst of winter exchanges the abuse of clouds [or clouds of abuse?] for its brilliant rays . . . You, most powerful of despots, in the double winter of the season and such hardships, have shined upon us."⁸⁹ Dokeianos continued to shower Theodore with praise, embedded in the conventions of imperial oratory.

⁸⁷ For Eugenikos's discourse, see *Υπόμνημα παρανευτικόν ἐπὶ διορθώσει βίου καὶ ἀρχῇ τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν πολιτείας*, in LPP I, 67–111.

⁸⁸ Sphrantzes's chronology (22.11) leaves it unclear whether the embassy that achieved the peace resolved the matter in September 1436, or whether it took a full year of negotiations; possibly the latter, since Constantine only arrived back in Constantinople in September 1437, just two months before John VIII left for Italy.

⁸⁹ Dokeianos, *Address to Theodore Palaiologos*, 236.1–6: "Ἡλιος μὲν ἐν χειμῶνι μέσῳ τῆς τῶν νεφῶν ἐπιηρείας ἀπαλλαγείς φαιδραῖς ταῖς ἀκτίσιν ἐπιλάμπει τὴν γῆν καὶ πρὸς τὰς οἰκείας αὐτὴν ὠδίνας ἐγείρει, θέαμα ποθεινὸν τοῖς ὁρώσι φαινόμενος καὶ τὴν χάριν προαγγέλλων τοῦ ἔαρος. Σὺ δὲ, κράτιστε καὶ θειότατε δεσποτῶν, ἐν διπλῷ χειμῶνι τοῦ τε καιροῦ καὶ τῶν τοιούτων δυσχερῶν ἐπιλάμψας ἡμῖν"

Do you not show yourself to us as noble, lordly, and enduring toward the things attacking us? . . . What virtues do you not have? For these reasons, all your dependents and those under your hand depend on your knowledge and soul, or rather they have bound the entire faithful *genos* of ours by ineffable bonds of love, and they judge that you *alone* are worthy of power.⁹⁰

Possessed of all virtues, beloved of his people, solely deserving of power: Dokeianos did all but call Theodore the emperor. Later in the oration, he crept up to this line again. “God granted that you manifest in reality the words of Homer, ‘a speaker of words and doer of deeds.’ So must the emperor be in every way, an image and example of every virtue for his subjects.”⁹¹ These declarations of kingly imitation infringed upon the emperor’s exclusive claims to political authority. But they also claimed the consent of the despot’s subjects to this arrogation of imperial qualities, implicitly elevating Theodore over his fraternal competitors, if not the emperor himself.

But while Dokeianos had been a partisan for Theodore in 1436, only a few years later he had shifted his allegiance to Constantine, perhaps out of political pragmatism.⁹² Constantine’s selection as regent during the emperor’s absence at the Council of Ferrara-Florence signified the emperor’s preference for him as his successor. Sometime after the emperor’s return in January 1440, Dokeianos addressed an encomium to Constantine that celebrated prince as next in line to

⁹⁰ Dokeianos, *Address to Theodore Palaiologos*, 237.8–15: “Αὐτὸς δὲ ἡμῖν οἶον σεαυτὸν παρέχεις, οὐ γενναῖον, οὐ μεγαλόφυχον, οὐ καρτερικὸν πρὸς τὰ ἐπιόντα, οὐ πρᾶον τοῖς ἐντογγάνουσι καὶ πατέρα ὡς ἥπιον, οὐ προεκτικὸν τοῖς δεομένοις καὶ μεγαλόδωρον; οὐχ ὃ τι ἂν τις εἴποι τῶν ἀγαθῶν; Διὰ ταῦτ’ ἄρα καὶ τῆς σῆς ἐξήρτηται γνώμης τε καὶ ψυχῆς οἱ σοὶ πάντες οἰκέται καὶ ὑπὸ χεῖρα, μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ πιστὸν ἅπαν ἡμῶν γένος δεσμοῖς ἀρρήκτοις ἀγάπης συνδεδεμένοι, καὶ σὲ μόνον ἄξιον τοῦ κράτους εἶναι ψηφίζονται.”

⁹¹ Dokeianos, *Address to Theodore Palaiologos*, 237.19–23: “Σοὶ γὰρ τῷ ὄντι θεὸς ἔδωκε, καθ’ Ὅμηρον φάναι, ῥητῆρά τε λόγων ἔμμεναι πρὸς κτήρᾳ τ’ ἔργων. Τοιοῦτον εἶναι δεῖ τὸν βασιλέα πάντως, εἰκόνα καὶ τύπον παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῖς ὑπηκόοις προκείμενον.” The reference is to *Il.*9.443.

⁹² On Constantine’s service as regent, see Philippides, *Constantine XI*, 141–52, where he corrects the previous panegyric accounts of the emperor’s life (cf. Donald M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans* [Cambridge, 1992]) with a soberer interpretation of his achievements. Philippides, however, misdates Dokeianos’s oration to Constantine’s ascension to the throne: see 167 n. 128. The reasons for Dokeianos’s change of allegiance are unclear.

the imperial throne.⁹³ Constantine had descended from the imperial root and had been “adorned with the highest honor of imperial succession.”⁹⁴ After recounting Constantine’s admirable exercise of imperial authority in John’s absence, Dokeianos described the Constantinople’s scarcely restrained enthusiasm for the prospect of Constantine’s ascension.

As you uplifted the whole city in affection for you and as if all the people uttered a prayer that you be present, the inhabitants of Constantinople dream of seeing you holding the scepter of kingship; although this is truly worthy to marvel at, it’s necessary to pass over the details (τὸ πλάτος), since the moment does not call for it.⁹⁵

Dokeianos ended his speech with a prayer, as advised by Menander, that the people might delight in Constantine’s “imperial providence” and that he might enjoy just rewards from Christ, “the King of Kings who *will* grant the kingdom to you, the earthly along with the heavenly one.”⁹⁶ Passages like these, as well as the rich panegyric language have convinced some modern

⁹³ Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*; the precise date and context of the oration is difficult to fix: Dokeianos’s language suggests that Constantine was departing to take a new position, possibly his departure from the Morea in anticipation of his appointment as lord of Selymbria. The chronology in Sphrantzes (24.11–25.1) suggests that he had returned to the Morea in September 1441, though as Philippides notes (*Constantine XI*, 172), the purpose of this trip remains unclear. Theodore and Thomas remained the despots, so Constantine’s position in the Morea would have been ambiguous at best. Nonetheless, the internal evidence from the oration suggests that the oration was delivered in Mistra prior his departure for another position. Combined with Sphrantzes’s chronology, that would suggest a date of between October 1441, when Constantine dispatched Sphrantzes to pitch his plan to swap appanages with Demetrios, and January/February 1442, when it became clear that the plan would founder on Demetrios’s refusal.

⁹⁴ Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 224.13–15: “τὸν δ’ ἄνωθεν ἐκ βασιλικῆς καταγόμενον ρίζης τῷ ὑπερτάτῳ ἀξιώματι τῆς αὐτοκρατορικῆς διαδοχῆς καλλυνόμενον.”

⁹⁵ Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 230.10–15: “Ὡς δ’ ἅπασαν Πόλιν καὶ πρὸς σὸν ἀνήρτησας ἔρωτα καὶ τὴν εὐχὴν ἀμηγέπη πάντων ὥσπερ κεκηνότων ὡς ἐνεστήσω κάπὶ τὴν τοῦ κράτους ἰδεῖν σε σκηπτουχίαν οἱ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου πάντες ὠνειροπόλουν, θαυμάζουν μὲν ἄξιον τῷ ὄντι, παρατρέχειν δὲ τὸ πλάτος ἀναγκαῖον, τοῦ καιροῦ μὴ καλοῦντος.” The last line’s *praeteritio*, calling attention to a subject by announcing that it will be disregarded, could either mean that the speech does not afford the space to elaborate—or that the political moment of Constantine’s ascension had not yet arrived.

⁹⁶ Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 231.24–28: “τῆς τε σῆς ἀπολαύοιμεν προνοίας βασιλικῆς, τὰ καθήκοντα ἐκάστοις ὑπὸ σοῦ δωρὰ τε καὶ βραβεῖα ἀποφερόμενοι, ὧν τὰ πρῶτά σοι δαφιλῶς παράσχοι Χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ βασιλείαν σοι δωρησόμενος μετὰ τῆς οὐρανίου καὶ τὴν ἐπίγειον.”

scholars that Dokeianos wrote his oration Constantine as emperor, not despot.⁹⁷ Dokeianos calls Constantine “most divine of despots” (θείοτατε δεσποτῶν) in the very first line, and repeatedly throughout. Therefore, we must read this speech as a celebration of designation as successor, not a celebration of the succession itself.

Commending Constantine’s role as presumptive successor may not have been subversive in itself, but the form of the oration and the nature of the praise implied Constantine was emperor in all but name. In all, Dokeianos’s enthusiasm for Constantine reads as a little precipitous and his bold assertions that the inhabitants of Constantinople and the Morea all praised Constantine with one voice sat uncomfortably alongside the political reality of a Byzantine society in the early 1440s deeply divided over church union.⁹⁸ Although Dokeianos’s oration referenced John VIII briefly, his account of Constantine’s family—a natural place to describe his similarity to his brother, the current monarch—effaced the emperor altogether. Dokeianos panegyricized Manuel II, his wise and virtuous kingship. “Men become good by being born from good men,” Dokeianos insisted, comparing Constantine to the rich fruit of a well-planted tree.⁹⁹ “The proof of a virtuous root is for the emperor to delight in descent from such parents and noble emperors.”¹⁰⁰ Yet in all his praise of the despot’s imperial roots, his brother, the emperor, appeared nowhere. Constantine may have been designated to succeed John, but according to Dokeianos, he owed his brother nothing.

⁹⁷ See Lampros who edits it as ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν βασιλέα; see also Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*, 115; Philippides, *Constantine XI*, 51.

⁹⁸ On the praise of the empire’s subjects, see Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 228.6–7; 230.10.

⁹⁹ Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 226.6: “Ἀγαθοὶ δὲ ἐγένοντο, φησὶ, διὰ τὸ φῶναι ἐξ ἀγαθῶν.” A quote from Plato, *Menexenus*, 237a.

¹⁰⁰ Dokeianos, *Encomium on Constantine Palaiologos*, 226.11–13: “Καὶ γε τὸ παράδειγμα κομιδῇ τῆς ἀγαθῆς ῥίζης, ἄριστε δεσποτῶν, τηλικούτων ἀπολελαυκότα γονέων καὶ βασιλέων ἀζίων τῷ βασιλεῖ τῆς κτίσεως”

Dokeianos's oration celebrated Constantine's impending succession, a position which the proposal to exchange appanages with Demetrios—Constantine moving to Selymbria, Demetrios moving to the Morea—was intended to cement.¹⁰¹ In the carousel of appanage appointments in the 1430s and 1440s, proximity to the city denoted proximity to the throne. But in June of 1443, the emperor had reallocated these territories once again; this time Constantine returned to the Morea and Theodore arrived in Constantinople.¹⁰² Philippides has suggested these developments represented John's attempt to pacify anti-unionists by appointing the fervently Orthodox Theodore as imperial successor; this reading makes Constantine's removal to the Morea a demotion.¹⁰³

A second, shorter, encomium delivered by Dokeianos after Constantine's return to the Morea in the summer of 1443 obliquely referenced these challenges and used the language of imperial panegyric to build support for Constantine in his new position. Dokeianos first stressed Constantine's endurance (καρτερία), a virtue rarely praised in imperial oratory, during unspecified tribulations. Endurance had distinguished Hercules and Odysseus and brought similar virtue to Constantine.¹⁰⁴ But where in his first panegyric to Constantine, Dokeianos had acknowledged (albeit briefly) that John VIII was the emperor, in this second oration, Constantine had assumed all the imperial functions. Constantine's rule was indistinguishable from conventional descriptions of Byzantine kingship:

¹⁰¹ Sphrantzes, 25.1.

¹⁰² Sphrantzes, 25.7–26.1.

¹⁰³ Philippides, *Constantine XI*, 176, who notes a cryptic passage in Sphrantzes, 25.6, where Constantine instructed Sphrantzes to defend Selymbria against not just Demetrios and the Ottomans, but against the emperor himself. This passage, Philippides suggests, represents evidence that the relationship between Constantine and John had deteriorated.

¹⁰⁴ Dokeianos, *Address to Constantine Palaiologos*, 233.29–34.2.

. . . all those of the *genos* enjoy the most beautiful things through you. So by your good foresight and zeal and goodwill for the *genos*, and by your brilliant deeds achieved through all the virtues, you have obtained the excellence and power of the sun, guiding with beams of foresight your subjects to see and take cheer in living according to God, imitating as far as possible their own despot, from whom they acquire these things liberally.”¹⁰⁵

Dokeianos’s oration, delivered to celebrate Constantine’s return to the Morea as despot, lauded him (like Theodore before him) as a Byzantine emperor. He emphasized how much the people in the Morea depended solely upon him. It was by Constantine’s foresight that his people were led to prosperity; through Constantine’s virtue and sun-like qualities that all were inspired to live in imitation of God. In the mimesis which stood at the core of the emperor’s metaphysical role on earth, Dokeianos replaced John VIII with Constantine, rhetorically promoting him from despot to emperor.

Dokeianos’s orations represented a subtler form of subversion, not so much challenging the current emperor as tacitly displacing him in favor of his brother. But the Alexandrian Anonymous adopted a more bombastic assault on the emperor’s legitimacy in his panegyric to Demetrios, arguing that Demetrios deserved to be emperor in place of his brother. Although Demetrios had sought to return to the emperor’s favor after his improvident attack on the capital, John VIII suspected him of further machinations in early 1443 and had his brother arrested. Chalkokondyles reported that Demetrios escaped from his confinement one night and managed to negotiate a settlement with the emperor, one that granted to this unruly brother

¹⁰⁵ Dokeianos, *Address to Constantine Palaiologos*, 234.6–12: “πάντες οἱ τοῦ γένους ἐκ σοῦ τῶν καλλίστων ἀπώναντο. Οὕτω τῇ σῇ μὲν ἀγαθῇ προνοίᾳ καὶ σπουδῇ σοι καὶ προθυμίᾳ περὶ τὸ γένος καὶ τοῖς διὰ πάντων καλῶν ἔργοις σου παιδροτάτοις τὴν τοῦ ἡλίου φυσικῶς ἀρετὴν τε καὶ δύναμιν ἐκπληρώσω, ταῖς προνοητικωτάταις ἀκτίσι χορηγῶν τοῖς οἰκέταις μετὰ θεὸν τὸ ζῆν ὁρᾶν καὶ παιδρύνεσθαι. μιμουμένοις καθόσον ἔξεστι τὸν οἰκεῖον δεσπότην, ὅθεν ἀφθόνως καὶ ταῦτα κομίζονται.”

several Aegean islands including Lemnos, an appanage tantamount to exile.¹⁰⁶ The Alexandrian Anonymous evidently accompanied Demetrios to Lemnos, where he likely delivered this oration before his patron and his entourage.¹⁰⁷ Like Dokeianos, the Anonymous used the conventions of imperial oratory to represent Demetrios as the emperor. But unlike Dokeianos, the Anonymous also advocated, albeit obliquely, Demetrios's usurpation of the imperial throne.

The core of the Anonymous's oration struck many of the refrains familiar from the same orator's speeches to John VIII some years earlier.¹⁰⁸ Demetrios exhibited the usual litany of imperial virtues: temperance and courage, prudence and justice.¹⁰⁹ Demetrios's governance resembled a doctor preserving his patient, a judicious pilot at sea, similar to Pericles the Athenian statesman.¹¹⁰ The Anonymous summarized Demetrios's noble origin from the imperial dynasty and his virtuous youth; he described his first assignment of rulership on the island of Lemnos and how he had increased the bounty and prosperity of the land; above all he lauded Demetrios for his piety and service to God, echoing his panegyrics to John VIII.

The anonymous used these topoi of imperial oratory to urge Demetrios to a nobler struggle, the constant battle for piety, than the petty squabbles over worldly goods. Lifting his gaze heavenward allowed Demetrios to perceive the immaterial and transcendent things above

¹⁰⁶ On Demetrios's arrest and escape, see Chalkokondyles II, 6.32; see Philippides, *Constantine XI*, 176 for the argument that Demetrios remained in exile on Lemnos.

¹⁰⁷ The mention of Lemnos gives a *terminus post quem*: Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 216.2–5.

¹⁰⁸ These speeches were Anonymous, *Encomium on Manuel II and John VIII*, c. 1427; Anonymous, *Encomium on John VIII*, c. 1434.

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 212.13–17.

¹¹⁰ Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 214.6–24.

and to understand that glory on earth was only a reward from God.¹¹¹ To clarify these abstruse theological abstractions, the Anonymous offered a historical example drawn from the Book of Genesis. Joseph, son of Jacob, had earned admiration (and power) in Egypt not from his visions, but from his chastity and his ever-present fear of God. “I consider that the reward in Egypt was recompense from God given to him for the sake of his assault and sale at the hands of his brothers,” the Anonymous insisted in an observation heavy with significance.¹¹² Seized by his jealous brothers and sold into slavery in Egypt, Joseph nonetheless showed himself a model of temperance; the wealth and power he attained in Egypt a reward from God for the unjust fraternal violence he had endured. No one in Demetrios’s court could miss the pregnant parallels with the prince’s own recent persecution at the hands of his brothers.

The Anonymous also found rich comparison to the sufferings of Demetrios in the figure of the prophet Daniel. He too, like Joseph, had been deemed worthy of “visions and prophetic sights” (ὁράσεων ἀζιωθῆναι καὶ θεωριῶν) for the purity of his mind and his ceaseless contemplation of God. These gifts allowed him to defy the flames and beasts that surrounded him. Demetrios also struggled with beasts all too real, but he showed himself a “pillar of virtue to those around him.”¹¹³ Not only was the Anonymous speaking to Demetrios here but using the consensus function of oratory to assure his court that the prince remained steadfast in his faith and endurance. Given Demetrios’s continuing affinity for the Ottoman sultan, with whom he

¹¹¹ Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 213.4–12.

¹¹² Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 213.20–24: “Εγὼ νομίζω ἀντιμισθίαν μὲν πρὸς θεοῦ εἶναι τὴν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τιμὴν αὐτῷ δεδομένην τῶν παρὰ τῶν συγγόνων ἀπεμπολήσεών τε καὶ πράσεων εἵνεκα, τὴν δὲ διάκρισιν τῶν τοῦ βασιλέως θαυμάτων γέρας χάριν τῆς μισαχθείας καὶ ἀποστροφῆς τῆς ἀμαρτίας.”

¹¹³ Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 215.6–12: “Ὡς περ οὖν ἐκεῖνος ἐν τῇ ἀλλοδαπῇ ὃ τε περὶ αὐτὸν χορὸς οὐ μόνον θηρῶν καὶ φλογὸς κατεκράτησαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ὑπηρέταις τουτοισὶ χρώμενοι τοὺς δυσμενεῖς ἡμόναντο, κατὰ ταυτὸν δὴ καὶ οὗτος οὐ νοητῶν θηρίων καὶ μόνον δυνάμει παντουργικῇ κρείττων ὢν καὶ ἐφορμούντων συστέλλων κατ’ αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς στήλη τις ἔμφυχος τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν ἅπασιν ἀναδείκνυται”

allied repeatedly in the last two decades of his life, it is worth noting that Joseph and Daniel share another trait beyond the rewards they earned from God for their piety. Both acquired renown in the court of foreign kings. The Anonymous, like Dokeianos, had turned away from the emperor and toward Demetrios Palaiologos, who alone among his brothers joined the numerous ecclesiastics, scholars, and aristocrats who came to repudiate the Decree of Union agreed at the Council of Ferrara-Florence.¹¹⁴

The Anonymous ended his speech to Demetrios with a final comparison from the Hebrew Bible, this time to David. After describing David's elevation to king in place of Saul, the orator posed a rhetorical question quoted from one of Paul's sermons in *Acts*: "What did God testify about [David]? 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will do all my will.'"¹¹⁵ Comparisons to King David had become rare in Palaiologan imperial oratory, as he had come to represent the kind of elevation through virtue that the dynasty sought to replace with an emphasis on blood lineage.¹¹⁶ His invocation carried this implication, that virtue and piety rather than blood should determine eligibility for imperial authority. Even more audacious, this allegorical reading figured Demetrios as David, a man amenable to the will of God and prepared for promotion to kingship in place of a less worthy monarch. The Anonymous argued that Demetrios's piety, manifest in his opposition to the union, would see this prince anointed by God and promoted to replace a wicked and sinful Saul.

¹¹⁴ See Tsirpanlis, "John Eugenikos and the Council of Florence," 268–69, who notes the various estimates the number of repentants at 23 (Scholarios) or 30 (Eugenikos).

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, *Address to Demetrios Palaiologos*, 219.19–22: "Τί οὖν φαίνεται μαρτυρῶν αὐτῷ; Εἶδρον Δαβὶδ τὸν τοῦ Ἰεσσαὶ ἄνδρα κατὰ τὴν καρδίαν μου, ὃς ποιήσει πάντα τὰ θελήματά μου. Ἀλλὰ καὶ οὗτος ὁδῶ καὶ τάξει προβαίνων ταχέως ἐπὶ τὴν περιωπὴν τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀναβήσεται." The Anonymous here is (nearly) quoting Acts 13:22, in which Paul preaches to the inhabitants of Antioch of Pisidia.

¹¹⁶ See Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 127–33.

Dokeianos's orations reveal the competition inherent in this late Byzantine imperial discourse—where the orator could strengthen the authority of an imperial rival by representing him as possessed of imperial virtues, or as supported by the acclaim of his subjects. But the Anonymous here gives us the briefest glimpse of the actual confrontation implicit in this very real struggle for political power, where an orator could use the forms of imperial oratory to advocate usurpation, figuring Demetrios as David to the John VIII's Saul. This dynamic illustrates that even if the linguistic and thematic conventions of imperial praise remained consistent, the context and purpose of its use evolved over the last decades of the empire, subverting the imperial authority it had previously supported.

Conclusion

In the final decades of the empire, orators like the Alexandrian Anonymous, Dokieanos, and Argyropoulos hastened the erosion of political stability within the empire with their tendentious arguments over church politics, Constantinople's status, and the legitimacy of the Palaiologan princes. By fraying the fragile bonds of unanimity around the emperor's policies, sinews that tied the emperor to his elite subjects, Constantinople to the Peloponnese, and the realm's princes to the imperial court, they attacked the sense that the empire's subjects shared a single providential political community. The first of these arguments magnified the growing divide between those like Argyropoulos and Isidore, and both John VIII and Constantine XI, who saw doctrinal compromise as just price for political survival, and those like Eugenikos and Dokeianos who preferred purity to pragmatism. The second argument isolated the Morea, by 1430 the only significant territory in the empire outside Constantinople. Even more deleterious, however, was the way Argyropoulos's rhetoric around the city foreclosed the possibility of an empire in exile

such as Constantinopolitan elites had formed in Nicaea after the Fourth Crusade. It is significant that though Thomas and Demetrios Palaiologos ostensibly resisted Ottoman conquest in the Morea, neither rushed to proclaim himself the new emperor after Mehmed's sack of the city. That is, even the surviving brothers believed the empire had been destroyed. The final argument was perhaps the most insidious for it used the rhetoric of empire and the social function of oratory to build elite consent around imperial rivals, the emperor's brothers. The Alexandrian Anonymous's comparison of Demetrios to David illustrates that such rhetoric could even countenance usurpation. The social cleavages reflected and reinforced by these arguments were not distinct but mutually reinforcing. It seems that the anti-unionist party flourished more outside of Constantinople, at the despot courts of princes like Demetrios and Theodore Palaiologos, while the intellectual elite in the imperial court, like Argyropoulos and Apostoles, remained committed to the imperial party, and to seeing their salvation in the urban empire alone.

In promoting these arguments, which fractured the appearance of unanimity around the emperor's policies—if not his normative role in the Byzantine polity—these orators look like agents of imperial destruction, undermining the fading empire's last vestiges of political stability. Yet their sincere commitment to the empire's prosperity, their persistent vision of the *basileia* as the institution through which recovery and regeneration could be attained, suggests that their historical role was more complicated, especially as other elites were already looking to future elsewhere. Certainly, they were no longer propagandists as imperial orators had been in the late thirteenth century. They were also less fawning and beholden to the emperor than the first generation of orators like Demetrios Chrysoloras and John Chortasmenos. Committed to the empire more than any particular emperor, they were political actors who appear motivated less by patronage than a clear sense of political preservation and social prosperity—though their sense of that varied according to location, religious commitment, and political affiliation. They

were without doubt political mediators in this competitive landscape, perhaps at once something like civic activists and doctrinaire ideologues.

Their amplification of these arguments was not the sole cause of the empire's social and political dissolution in the years before its ultimate collapse. Constantinopolitan elites were already deeply divided by economic and political ties to the West—in some cases even enjoying citizenship rights in Italian cities—and profound religious commitment to their Orthodox identity, affiliations that drew them in opposite directions politically.¹¹⁷ The empire was militarily weak, economically poor, and religiously divided. The arguments I have detailed here exacerbated those divisions by combining the affirmation of the central tenets of Byzantine political identity with the pursuit of polarizing disputes.

The development of imperial oratory I have traced through the first fifty years of the fifteenth century, then, reveals an unanticipated aspect. What began as a renaissance of celebrating imperial power that bolstered the emperor's authority devolved into subversions of that authority, opposing imperial policies and supporting imperial rivals. In this way, these orators collaborated in the empire's ultimate demise. This was not the last unexpected turn in the development of ideas of eastern empire in the fifteenth century, however. As the next chapters illustrate, Byzantium's collapse liberated new ideological capital for western intellectuals. These figures observed the imperial ruins in Constantinople and saw the potential for their own imperial renewal.

¹¹⁷ See Harris, "Constantinople as City State"; Kiousopoulou, *Emperor or Manager*.

Chapter Four

Johannes Vitéz, Enea Sylvio Piccolomini and the Revival of the Imperium Orientale in Fifteenth-Century Crusade Oratory

Introduction

When news of Constantinople's seizure first raced like wildfire around the Mediterranean in the summer of 1453 it elicited an outpouring of grief. In rhetorical laments, lurid reports of atrocities, detailed descriptions of combat, and even Vergilian hexameter, Byzantine and western writers gave voice to the anguish and fury the city's conquest provoked.¹ In these literary works, the city's destruction marked the annihilation of a state, the enslavement of a religion, the extirpation of a culture. Later the event assumed an iconic, epochal status, even marking the end of the Middle Ages "in the days when historians were simple folk," as Sir Steven Runciman once observed somewhat waggishly.² But not all reactions were maudlin or sensational. Some were calculating and aimed with clear-eyed precision on the reconquest of the city.

In this chapter, I explore one such reaction to Constantinople's conquest, a change in the terminology orators and statesmen applied to the erstwhile Byzantine imperial city. I show how two figures close to the king of Hungary and the Holy Roman Emperor, Johannes Vitéz and Enea Sylvio Piccolomini, made a simple calculation: a Roman imperial Constantinople would exert a greater pull on heart and purse strings Europe's hesitant princes than the capital of

¹ For useful summaries of some of the literature, see Robert Black, *Benedetto Accolti and the Florentine Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1985), esp. 230–34; Ludwig Schmugge, *Die Kreuzzüge aus der Sicht humanistischer Geschichtsschreiber* (Basel, 1987); James Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II," *DOP* 49 (1995): 111–207, which also publishes several previously unedited works. Two collections, though not exhaustive, have attempted to not only survey but also reproduce much of this literature: Agostino Pertusi, ed., *La Caduta di Costantinopoli*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1976); Vincent Déroche and Nicolas Vatin, eds., *Constantinople 1453: des Byzantins aux Ottomans: textes et documents* (Toulouse, 2016), with texts translated into French; an incomparably thorough catalog of the sources of Constantinople's siege and capture can be found in Marios Philippides and Walter K. Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies* (Farnham, Surrey, 2011).

² Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople: 1453* (Cambridge, 1965), xi.

schismatic and contumacious state. Therefore, they exploited Byzantium's destruction to invest Constantinople with revived imperial significance in order to rouse a crusade. Constantinople became in their letters and orations the *imperium orientale*, the "eastern empire." In choosing an imperial terminology associated with the late antique Roman Empire, Vitéz and Piccolomini attributed to Byzantium a share of the Roman imperial heritage and legitimacy that western thinkers and writers had long denied or disputed.

Rhetorically transforming Constantinople from the "empire of the Greeks," as the Byzantine Empire was generally known in the West, to the *imperium orientale*, replete with echoes of late antiquity, ruptured the old conventions of Western imperial thought and nomenclature. Vitéz and Piccolomini described Byzantium not as the Hellenized and corrupt vestige of the Roman Empire, as centuries of western imperial ideology had represented it, but as a majestic Roman imperial capital in captivity. They changed the stakes of a crusade from avenging crimes against the schismatic Greeks to reuniting the Roman Empire, first divided in late antiquity. This semantic move, I argue, initiated a gradual change in late medieval imperial language and thought. Disseminated through copies of their popular and inspiring orations on the impending Ottoman threat to the Christian polities of Europe, the idea of Constantinople as the *imperium orientale* spread slowly throughout Europe, appearing in other humanist orations, papal bulls, and eventually humanist historiography.

The two proponents of this rhetorical innovation were Johannes Vitéz, an obscure Hungarian bishop, and Enea Sylvio Piccolomini, the illustrious humanist and later Pope Pius II. They shared their roles as prelates, scholars, fervent apostles of the crusade, and representatives of a new generation of politically active humanists in transalpine courts. Both stressed the empire's coterminous identity with the city—all other territories, including the Byzantine Morea still gamely resisting Ottoman conquest, became implicitly insignificant—and both made the city

an imperial token. Instead of articulating and resolving Byzantium's ambiguous place in Europe's political geography, Vitéz and Piccolomini used the *imperium orientale* to efface this problematic past with a seemingly historical veneer. But the very idea constituted an ahistorical projection, a conquest fantasy around an idealized imperial city. This Constantinople was unburdened by a history of medieval disputes and divisions, and uninhabited by a conquered population who remained hostile to the Catholic religion. Driven by nostalgia for a time of imperial and Christian unity, Vitéz and Piccolomini imagined an empty, uncomplicated imperial space that they could invest with significance.

But while their revival of the *imperium orientale* owed much to their common origins, they differed on precisely what they saw as the significance of the eastern empire. For Vitéz the phrase did little more than allow rhetorical connections between the city's conquest and the threats to central Europe. As a representative of the Hungarian monarch, he remained committed to a vision of European politics in which monarchs were equal members of an exclusive fraternity. Piccolomini, on the other hand, saw the *imperium orientale* as a piece of a larger ideological project, the defense of unified Roman Empire as a supra-national construct whose defense would transcend the petty rivalries of the German and Italian princes.

Both figures have attracted considerable scholarly attention, although for Vitéz most of it has been in Hungarian.³ Piccolomini in particular has long been recognized as the most prolific literary pope of the Middle Ages, as well as a fascinating political and intellectual figure of the

³ On Vitéz, see Leslie S. Domonkos, "János Vitéz, the Father of Hungarian Humanism (1408–1472)," *New Hungarian Quarterly* 20 (1979): 142–50; Klára Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, trans. Zsigmond Nyáry (Budapest, 1984); Ágnes Ritoók-Szalay, "Der Humanismus in Ungarn zur Zeit von Matthias Corvinus," in *Humanismus und Renaissance in Ostmitteleuropa vor der Reformation*, ed. Winfried Eberhard and Alfred A. Strnad (Cologne, 1996), 157–71, esp. 159–64. The richest bibliography on Vitéz is published in Hungarian, which I am unable to consult. For a comprehensive list, see the bibliography in the most recent critical edition of his works *Iohannes Vitéz de Žredna, Opera quae supersunt*, ed. Iván Boronkai (Budapest, 1980), 14–16.

fifteenth century.⁴ Together they are renowned for their patronage and political activity, with Piccolomini standing out for his remarkable literary corpus that stretches from erotic-didactic fiction and lively letters to historiography, autobiography and political treatises. Each is well known as an ardent and eloquent advocate of crusade. Yet the abundant scholarship on the two has not addressed their role as agents in the imperial reimagination of Byzantium in the wake of the conquest of Constantinople.

Nor has the conquest earned appropriate consideration as a catalyst for transformations in the concept of Europe.⁵ This is not to say that the conquest of Constantinople has been little regarded. Indeed, scholars have identified the mid-fifteenth century as a critical time for Western

⁴ Piccolomini remains one of the most famous humanists and popes of the fifteenth century, and consequently the related bibliography is enormous. An indispensable and concise guide to his life, works, and pertinent bibliography in Franz-Josef Worstbrock, "Piccolomini, Aeneas Silvius (Papst Pius II.)," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 7 (Berlin, 1989), cols. 634–69; see also Marco Pellegrini, "Pio II.," in *Enciclopedia dei papi*, vol. 2 (Rome, 2000), 663–85, with older bibliography; idem, "Pio II, papa," in *DBI*, vol. 83 (Rome, 2015), with more recent bibliography. Still considered unsurpassed in breadth is Georg Voigt, *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini, als Papst Pius der Zweite und sein Zeitalter*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1856–63; repr. Berlin, 1967), though the author casts aspersions on Piccolomini's motives throughout and more recent scholarship has rehabilitated this complex scholar. See also Ludwig Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters: mit Benutzung des päpstlichen Geheim-Archives und vieler anderer Archive*, vols. 1–2 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1886–89); his sections on the pontificate of Pius II are printed in a single volume in the English translation: Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes: From the Close of the Middle Ages: Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*, trans. Frederick Ignatius Antrobus, vol. 3 (London, 1894). For important twentieth-century revisions of Voigt see Berthe Widmer, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Papst Pius II. Ausgewählte Texte aus seinen Schriften*, (Basel, 1960); Gioacchino Paparelli, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini: l'umanesimo sul soglio di Pietro*, 2nd ed. (Ravenna, 1978), both of which portray humanism as central to Piccolomini's career both before and after his famous "conversion" to an ecclesiastical career. Important reconsiderations of his legacy proceed apace: Barbara Baldi, *Il "cardinale tedesco": Enea Silvio Piccolomini fra impero, papato, Europa (1442–1455)* (Milan, 2012), which examines Piccolomini's burgeoning career and political positions in the imperial court and argues this experience contributed to his commitment to international solutions to Europe's many problems; Franz Fuchs, Paul-Joachim Heinig, and Martin Wagendorfer, eds., *König und Kanzlist, Kaiser und Papst. Friedrich III. und Enea Silvio* (Vienna, 2013), on Piccolomini's role within the imperial court; Emily O'Brien, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II (1458–1464) and the Crisis of the Fifteenth-Century Papacy* (Toronto, 2015), which reexamines the great autobiographical work of the pope as an extended defense of both his own history with the conciliarists and the untrammelled sovereignty of the papacy more generally.

⁵ "Europe," like "the author," is a concept for which scholars have identified many births: see the bibliography cited in n. 5 of the Introduction. Among the studies that have considered the Byzantine impact to some degree, see Wallach, *Das abendländische Gemeinschaftsbewusstsein*, 47–52, who argues that the Roman-German nations defined their westernness against the Byzantine-Greek east, a ethnic-cultural barrier that humanism begins to erode at the end of the Middle Ages; Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453–1517)* (Nieuwkoop, 1967), 23, who claimed that the fall of Constantinople galvanized renewed affinity to the idea of a Christian commonwealth and, in boosting a sense of common cause, helped postpone the Reformation.

engagement with the Ottomans. Recent work has emphasized the crucial contributions of humanists to the crystallizing literary and historical representations of the Ottomans as nomadic and bloodthirsty. Scholarship has also shown how humanists deployed the tools of historiography and scholarship to construct a self-serving discourse that both reified and moralized the geographic binary West and East, mapping them onto ideals of civilization and barbarism. Mobilizing ancient and, often tacitly, medieval categories, modes, and examples, these scholarly and ideological projects helped erect the cultural, political, and discursive frontiers between West and East. Indeed, they formed a critical stage in formation of Europe's sense of the "East" that Edward Said would later critique so influentially in *Orientalism*.⁶

Humanist engagement with the Byzantine past has naturally garnered significant attention in these works, but scholars have overlooked subtle changes in the terminology of imperial affiliation and identity, where signifiers were ideologically charged. On the one hand, no one has yet traced how Latin terminology for the Byzantine Empire evolved over the course of the Middle Ages, an essential precursor to understanding how the phrase *imperium orientale* marked a contrast to common appellations like "empire of the Greeks" or *imperium Constantinopolitanum*. On the other hand, scholarship has betrayed little sensitivity to the ideologically charged nature of the usual Latin ethnonym applied to Byzantines, *Graeci*.⁷ This nomenclature did not reflect the

⁶ See most recently Bisaha, *Creating East and West*; Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought*; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

⁷ A point long emphasized by Anthony Kaldellis: see *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007), 336–37. For works, their other virtues notwithstanding, that refer uncritically to Byzantines as Greeks without acknowledging the dynamic politics of historical identity in the late Middle Ages, see, for instance, Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*; Bisaha, *Creating East and West*; Meserve, *Empires of Islam*; Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*.

complexities of Byzantine self-identification, usually as Romans who spoke Greek.⁸ Nor does it acknowledge the fraught and fluid identity politics of the fifteenth century. As Han Lamers has shown, the Byzantine emigrés who came to Italy consciously marginalized their Romanness in favor of self-representation as “ancient Hellenes,” an invented Greekness that brought them significant cultural capital in Renaissance Italy.⁹ Identification—of a people or of an empire—was always a political act, constantly subject to manipulation and negotiation. By recognizing this quality in the long semantic history of medieval imperial terminology, we can investigate what historical actors meant when they called the Byzantines “Greeks”—or when they suddenly implied their city was “Roman.”

The existing scholarship, then, has overlooked some important linkages between empire, identity, political geography, and emerging concepts of Europe. These connections were activated in a new way by the conquest of Constantinople, when Vitéz and Piccolomini reconceptualized the threat posed by the Ottomans to their political community. In order to illustrate the striking nature of the *imperium orientale*’s sudden reemergence after the fall of Constantinople, I first review the conventions of imperial terminology from the fourth century to the fifteenth. A review of the ways Latin writers identified the empire in Constantinople illustrates how jarring and unprecedented the *imperium orientale* would have appeared in 1454. Next, I turn to a close reading of the letters and orations of Vitéz and Piccolomini, arguing that their revival of the *imperium orientale* constituted a campaign of shrewd, if ultimately ineffective, maneuvering in a political and ideological landscape where crusading lacked enthusiastic support. I conclude by

⁸ Foundational is Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*. For a stimulating recent consideration of the topic that emphasizes the fluid and historically contingent ways Roman identity was activated, see Stouraitis, “Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach.”

⁹ Lamers, *Greece Reinvented*.

showing how the two authors differed from one another—and how their halting steps toward the re-Romanization of the Byzantine past foreshadowed other, more thorough considerations of imperial Constantinople’s implications for the papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Ottomans.

Eastern Empire in the Middle Ages

To be Roman in the Middle Ages was to be special. The identity had inherently offered multiple ways to perform itself even in antiquity, but throughout the Middle Ages *Romanitas* had retained a sense of special purpose and sanction.¹⁰ The humanist fetishization of Roman antiquity only heightened the privilege of this identity. The Romans were the preeminent people of providence, possessed of a claim to the most authoritative source of political legitimacy, ancient Rome. As Piccolomini observed, the Roman Empire represented the intersection of multiple strands of authority: “This is thus the highest authority of the Roman *princeps*, which common utility desired, nature discovered, God granted, the Son confirmed, and the consent of men approved . . .”¹¹ Since affiliation with the Roman Empire carried the sanction of nearly every conceivable authority—God, history, law—western imperial dynasties from the Carolingians onward all struggled to assert their exclusive claim to the Roman past. But the arrogation of imperial authority meant wresting the mantle of Roman legitimacy away from the Byzantine emperors. The tools for such expropriation were ideological, evident in the slowly coalescing

¹⁰ On the multiplicities of Roman identity in the early Middle Ages, see Walter Pohl, “Romanness: A Multiple Identity and Its Changes,” *Early Medieval Europe* 22, no. 4 (2014): 406–18.

¹¹ See Enea Sylvio Piccolomini, *De ortu et auctoritate imperii Romani*, in Wolkan III, no. 3, pp. 6–24, here at 13: “hec igitur summa Romani principis auctoritas, quam communis utilitas desideravit, natura invenit, deus dedit, filius confirmavit, consensus hominum approbavit . . .”

medieval consensus that Charlemagne's coronation had constituted a "translation of empire" from the Greeks to the Franks; mythographic, visible in the circulation of fabulous tales about Charlemagne's journey to the eastern Mediterranean recounting Byzantine surrender of legitimacy to the western emperor; even diplomatic, manifest in one legate's account of his audience with the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II (r. 969–76). After a confrontation where a courtier insisted the ambassador's lord, Otto I (r. 962–73) was not an emperor but a king, the ambassador retorted that Byzantine emperors' claim to be Roman was ornamental, not actual.¹² The Ottonians, Salians, Hohenstaufen, and Habsburg agreed on at least one thing—they, not the Byzantines, were the real Roman emperors.

Medieval thinkers and writers of all kinds tended to accept and disseminate that imperial ideology, arguing that the western emperors had displaced the Byzantines as rulers of the *imperium Romanum*. Early medieval imperial partisans, especially under the Ottonians, labored to justify their monarchs' special claim to Roman imperial legitimacy from the tenth century onward. This justification took the form of representing Charlemagne's coronation as a translation of the empire from the Greeks to the Franks, thus grounding the western claim to an empire already allegedly ruling in Constantinople. Thinkers justified this ideological move on the basis of the Hebrew Bible. Passages from the books of Daniel and Ecclesiasticus, which had acknowledged God's power to establish and depose kings and kingdoms (*regna*), became the source of the pope's authority to transfer imperial authority from the Greeks to the Franks.¹³ The

¹² Liudprand of Cremona, *Legatio*, 2, 4–5, pp. 176–79.

¹³ The canonical passages from the Vulgate on the *translatio imperii* include Daniel 2:21 ("et ipse mutat tempora et aetates transfert regna atque constituit") and Sirach 10:8 ("regnum a gente in gentem transfertur propter iniustitias et iniurias et contumelias et diversos dolos.") Note the political authority referenced is *regnum* not *imperium* (though of course the word for both in Greek is βασιλεία); it was Jerome's intervention that read the Roman Empire into these passages, lifting *imperium transferre* from Roman historiography (where it appeared in authors like Justin, Pompeius Trogus, and Velleius Paterculus) and imported it into his translation of Eusebius's chronicle: see Goetz, *Translatio*

effectiveness of this ideological frame for Charlemagne's coronation became manifest in the eventual hegemony of the *translatio imperii* in the medieval West. In manifold forms and guises, variously deployed to support the pope or the emperor as the “translating” agent, at its root the *translatio imperii* provided a foundation myth for the western empire and gave its claim to descent from the ancient Roman Empire plausibility. Even more, the idea of the *translatio imperii*, whether expressed to favor the pope or the emperor, conveniently marginalized the Byzantines, by showing that they had lost their Roman imperial status to the Franks after Charlemagne's coronation.

Nevertheless, from the thirteenth century onward we can trace a minor discourse that at least questioned the Holy Roman Empire's status as the sole legitimate empire of the Middle Ages. Laconic lists of emperors in manuscripts show little consensus or conviction about when Byzantine emperors ceased to be part of single thread running from Julius Caesar or Augustus to the present.¹⁴ Canon law glosses censuring anonymous arguments that the emperor in Constantinople might be the *verus imperator* show that such arguments continued to circulate and rankle some jurists.¹⁵ And some historians vacillated over whether Charlemagne's coronation

imperii, 17–37. On Carolingian and Ottonian engagement with the idea, see idem, 62–104; van den Baar, *Die kirchliche Lehre der Translatio Imperii Romani*, 1–31.

¹⁴ Illustrative of the range of imperial chronologies in late medieval manuscripts: Florence, BML, Plut. 83.2, fol. 41r–v, which omits Byzantine emperors after Charlemagne; BAV, Vat. lat. 5269, fol. 97r, which presented a unified imperial descent through the Byzantine emperors to the Latin emperors of Constantinople (conveniently appended to a copy of the Venetian historian John the Deacon's chronicle); BAV, Urb. lat. 392, fol. 260r, which listed a number of Byzantine after Charlemagne, concluding glumly before returning to the western emperors: “Alexius. Nicolaus. Mortulfus. Blandonius. Henricus. Petrus. Robertus. Regnaverunt in oriente quorum tempora ignorantur.”

¹⁵ See A. M. Stickler, “Sacerdotium et regnum nei decretisti e primi decretalisti. Considerazioni metodologiche di ricerca e testi,” *Salesianum* 15 (1953): 589, who cites a gloss in the *Glossa Palatina* (BAV, Reg. lat. 977): “c. 11, ad v. *divinitus*: non ergo a papa. h. et b.; nam a celesti maiestate habet gladii potestatem: C. de ve. iu. enu., l. i, in princ. Quod concedo de vero imperatore. Set quis est verus imperator? Dicit b. quod constantinopolitanus; iste alius procurator est sive defensor romane ecclesie: ar. de cons. di. V, in die et huic romana ecclesia concedit gladium et coronam. Set contra extra iij de elect., venerabilem. Dicitur ibi, quod romana ecclesia transtulit imperium in occidentem a grecis et ita iste romanus est verus. (fol. 68rb)”; see also p. 595, where Stickler quotes a gloss of the 13th-c. canonist Zoën in Cod. ms. Tours 565: “I, I, 1 ad v. *romanorum imperatore*: Qui verus imperator est, licet quidam

had really transferred the empire to the Germans, as Innocent III had confidently assured all Christians, or whether his assumption of the imperial dignity had simply returned the empire to the divided state that had obtained in late antiquity.¹⁶ But although textual evidence permits us to identify isolated moments of skepticism about the singularity of the Holy Roman Empire, such occasions serve only to illustrate how consistently Latin authors, lawyers, and polemicists adhered to the prevailing notion that the *Sacrum Imperium Romanum* rather than Byzantium was the continuation of the universal and providential Roman Empire.

Written culture in the Latin West marked affiliation with the Roman Empire through terminological signifiers. These were most often territorial (*Imperium Romanum*) or ethnic (*Imperium Romanorum*); but they could also use geographical language to signal participation in the Roman Empire. When Orosius wrote his *Seven Books Against the Pagans* in the early fifth century, he inhabited an empire that, though divided and ruled by two imperial partners, nonetheless preserved administrative and ideological unity. He and others used geography to distinguish between the two halves of the empire: the territory ruled from Constantinople was the *imperium orientale*, the “eastern empire”; that ruled from Ravenna (and earlier Milan) was the *imperium occidentale*, or the “western empire.”¹⁷ Only after the imperial division under the sons of

dicant, quod verus imperator sit Constantinopolitanus. Set decipiuntur; Romana enim ecclesia transtulit imperium a grecis in occidentem ut S. de electione, venerabile(m) . . .”

¹⁶ In the later Middle Ages, the bedrock authority for the *translatio imperii* (as evidenced in canonist glosses cited above) became Innocent III’s decretal *Venerabilem*, issued in 1202: *Decretales Gregorii IX* 1.6.34, in CIC II, cols. 79–82. Among the late medieval historians who diverged from medieval consensus in casting Charlemagne’s coronation as *divisio* of the empire as opposed to a *translatio*: Riccobaldo of Ferrara, *Compilatio Chronologica*, ed. A. T. Hankey (Rome, 2000), 127, 132; Benvenuto da Imola, *Augustalis Libellus (Vita Romanorum Imperatorum)*, (Venice, 1503), fol. 19r; Leonardo Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, ed. and trans. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 1.68–72; Bernardo Giustiniani, *De origine urbis Venetiarum* ([Venice], [1493?]), fols. 89–93. Of course, it must be noted that meaning attached by each author to the *divisio* differed. I will explore this tradition in a later publication.

¹⁷ Orosius, *Histoires contre les païens*, ed. Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet, 3 vols. (Paris, 1991), 7.37: “Interea cum a Theodosio imperatore seniore singulis potentissimis infantum cura et disciplina utriusque palatii commissa esset, hoc est Rufino orientalis aulae, Stiliconi occidentalis imperii.” Another early witness is *Historia Augusta*, ed. Ernest Hohl, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1971), Aurelianus cap. 22.1 (=2:165). Interestingly, the phrase may lend additional weight to the

Theodosius in 395 did contemporaries consistently describe the empire as “eastern” and “western,” which explains why the phrase *imperium orientale* does not appear in the historical breviaries that abounded in the third quarter of the fourth century such as Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, or Festus.¹⁸ Even after the end of the imperial authority in the western parts of the empire with the death of Romulus Augustulus in 476, writers such as Jordanes and Cassiodorus still occasionally called the state centered in Constantinople the *imperium orientale*.¹⁹

But in the Middle Ages, especially from the ninth century onward, Latin writers began to distinguish between a *Roman* empire, residing in the West with the Franks or Germans, and a *Greek* empire, the Byzantine state centered in Constantinople. Although Charlemagne’s letter of 813 to Michael I Rangabe thanked God for having “established peace between the eastern and western empire,” his usage signified the still uncertain imperial relationship between the two polities, and was abandoned in favor of more polemical and exclusive language.²⁰ Einhard, in his

arguments of those who generally follow Dessau in assigning the *Historia Augusta* a late fourth-century date as opposed to an origin under Diocletian or Constantine. For a concise summary of the disputes see Klaus-Peter Johnen, “*Historia Augusta*,” in *Der Neue Pauly*, vol. 5 (1998), 637–40.

¹⁸ These breviaries do occasionally indicate that the general geographical conception of the empire was that of a division into “east” and “west,” even if the precise term *imperium orientale* did not appear; see Eutropius on Aurelian who “ingressusque Romam nobilem triumphum quasi receptor Orientis Occidentisque” (Eutropius, *Breviarium ab urbe condita*, ed. Hans Droysen, MGH AA 2 [Berlin, 1879], 9.13, p. 158).

¹⁹ See, for instance, Jordanes: *Romana et Getica*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 5 (Berlin, 1882), 291, 339; *De origine actibusque Getarum*, ed. Francesco Giunta and Antonino Grillone (Rome, 1991), 236, 244, 307. Cassiodorus: *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita*, ed. Walter Jacob and Rudolf Hanslik, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 71 (Vienna, 1952), 4.4; 9 capitula. Orosius states that Galerius and Constantius were the first to divide the empire among them, though it was a partition in which the “east” was only one of the three provinces Galerius obtained rather than a title for the entire half of the empire (*Histoires contre les païens*, 7.25.15). The references in Jordanes and Cassiodorus seem to suggest that, Orosius notwithstanding, it was generally in the sixth century that the imperial division was retrojected from Honorius and Arcadius back onto the separation of imperial administration under the sons of Constantine; see Procopius, *De bellis*, 3.1.3 in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Jacob Haury and Gerhard Wirth, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1962), who asserts that the Roman Empire had been divided since Constantine and his sons. For other references, see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, 11 vols. (Leipzig, 1900–) 9.2, s.v., *orientalis* (pp. 974–76).

²⁰ *Epistolae Karolini aevi II*, ed. Ernest Dümmler, MGH Epp. 4 (Berlin, 1895), no. 38, p. 556: “Benedicimus dominum Iesum Christum verum deum nostrum et gratias illi iuxta virium possibilitatem et intellegentiae nostrae quantitatem ex toto corde referimus, qui nos ineffabili dono benignitatis suae in tantum divites efficere dignatus est, ut in diebus nostris diu quaesitam et semper desideratam pacem inter orientale atque occidentale imperium stabilire et ecclesiam

influential biography of Charlemagne, called the emperors in Constantinople “Greeks,” and later medieval authors similarly employed this ethnonym as a slur.²¹ Otto of Freising, the renowned twelfth-century historian whose universal chronicle *History of Two Cities* Piccolomini constantly raided, employed the Greek-Roman paradigm as well. For him, Constantine’s foundation of his capital on the Bosphorus marked the watershed between Roman and Greek rule, a transition signifying the concomitant decline of the “kingdom of the world.”²² But even though he cast aspersions on the people possessing imperial dignity as “Greeks,” he still regarded the empire as both united and Roman well after Constantine I.²³ For Otto, non-Roman ethnicity was no impediment to ruling the Roman Empire, controlled first by the Greeks, then by the Franks.²⁴ This gave Otto’s Greeks passing relevance to Roman imperial history; but it also meant that the empire’s translation to the Franks authorized Otto to write them out of the rest of his history. From the ninth-century onward, the Byzantine emperor no longer ruled the *imperium orientale*, but only *apud Grecos*.²⁵ Another twelfth-century author, Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173), a monk and theologian who wrote a massive methodological treatise on biblical exegesis as *The Book of*

suam catholicam sanctam et immaculatam, quae toto orbe diffusa est, iuxta cotidianas ipsius postulationes sicut semper regere ac protegere ita etiam nunc idem in nostro tempore adunare atque pacificare dignatus est.”

²¹ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS rer. Germ. 25 (Hanover, 1911), cap. 15, p. 18; cap. 19, p. 24; though see also cap. 16, p. 20 where it is clear that he regards the Franks as apart from the Romans as well.

²² Otto of Freising, *Historia de duabus civitatibus*, 4.5, p. 191: “Ex hoc regnum Romanorum ad Grecos translatum invenitur mansique propter antiquam Urbis dignitatem solo nomine ibi, re hic, sicut Babyloniorum. Vide regno Christi crescente regnum mundi paulatim imminui.”

²³ Otto of Freising, *Historia de duabus civitatibus*, 4.26, p. 216; 4.30, p. 222. His source for much of the late Roman and early medieval material was the chronicle written by Frutolf of Michelsberg and revised by Ekkehard von Aura, which frequently described post-Theodosian division in terms of *occidentale-orientale*: see Ekkehard von Aura, *Chronica*, ed. Georg Waitz, in *Chronica et annales aevi Salici*, MGH SS 6 (Hanover, 1844), 128, 137, 138, etc.

²⁴ Otto of Freising, *Historia de duabus civitatibus*, 5.Prologus, p. 227.

²⁵ Otto of Freising, *Historia de duabus civitatibus*, 6.1, p. 262.

Extracts, also used the eastern-western division to describe the Roman Empire, almost exclusively between the reign of Constantine I (d. 337) and Leo II (d. 474).²⁶ His account of Byzantine emperors, presented in a brief universal historical synopsis, ended starkly with the translation of empire and the terse observation: “The kingdom of the Greeks remained in Constantinople.”²⁷

For Einhard, Otto, and Richard, voices in a literate culture where expression was studied rather than casual, these distinctions were significant. Most importantly, they communicated that the two empires existed in fundamental asymmetry: that the Holy Roman Empire—whether ruled by Franks, Italians, or Germans—stood alone atop the political summit of the world, and the “empire of the Greeks” remained somewhere below. This language explicitly inscribed these polities within the hierarchies of Roman antiquity, which had perceived the Romans as politically and morally superior to the Greeks. As Cato the Elder (d. 149 BCE), that vehement critic of Hellenic corruption in ancient Rome, reportedly thought, “The words of the Greeks were carried upon their lips, but the words of the Romans in their hearts.”²⁸ This dyad of “Romans” and “Greeks” was never truly equal in a mindset that valorized Rome as the well-spring of virtue and authority.²⁹ Thus, the semantic displacement of the Byzantine state from the

²⁶ Richard of St. Victor, *Liber exceptionum*, ed. Jean Châtillon (Paris, 1958), book 8, pp. 176–88; see also M.-A. Aris, “Richard de Saint-Victor,” in *LdM* 7, cols. 825–26.

²⁷ Richard of St. Victor, *Liber exceptionum*, I.9.23, p. 202: “In Constantinopoli vero regnum Grecorum permansit.”

²⁸ According to his Second Sophistic biographer (a Roman writing in Greek no less): Plutarch, *Cato Maior*, in Konrat Ziegler, *Vitae Parallelae*, 4th ed., vol. 1, (Leipzig, 1969), 12.7.4–6: “τὸ δ’ ὅλον οἶεσθαι τὰ ῥήματα τοῖς μὲν Ἑλλήσιν ἀπὸ χειλῶν, τοῖς δὲ Ῥωμαίοις ἀπὸ καρδίας φέρεσθαι.”

²⁹ See also Dante’s encounter with Ulysses and Diomedes in his *Inferno*, in *La Commedia secondo l’antica vulgata*, ed. Giorgio Petrocchi, 4 vols. (Milan, 1966), Canto 26.55–63 (2:442–43). Dante’s emphasis on the “craft” or “cunning” for which they wept (“Piangevi entro l’arte per che, morta, / Deidamia ancor si duol d’Achille” ll. 61–62) mobilized Virgilian stereotypes of Greek deceit that persisted throughout the Latin Middle Ages, grafted onto figures like Alexios I Komnenos (see Chapter Six, n. 103). On the great poet’s views of the Greeks, see the foundational article by Glenn W. Most, “Dante’s Greeks,” *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 13, no. 3 (2006): 15–48, who notes that for Dante the Greeks “were not a historical people, but a moral and aesthetic one.” (19)

imperium orientale to the *imperium Graecorum* marked an ideological demotion, one that persisted for centuries to come.

The examples of Otto and Richard also clarify the chronology associated with the *imperium orientale* as well: it had predominated in late antiquity. Few were as specific as Richard, who fixed the division between 305 and 474; many more were like Otto, who used the phrase chiefly in the late antique context.³⁰ In the thirteenth century the temporal bounds of the *imperium orientale* were stretched even further. Martin of Troppau's thirteenth-century *Chronicle of Popes and Emperors*—enormously popular, widely imitated, repeatedly translated, and extended by numerous continuations—marked the definitive moment of imperial decline in the ninth century. Under Nikephoros I (r.802–811) “the eastern empire had declined as if to nothing.”³¹ Despite some differences in chronology, the principle remained undisputed—the eastern empire had only existed before the translation of empire to the Franks.³²

³⁰ Richard of St. Victor, *Liber exceptionum*, I.7.23, p. 175, where he identifies the elevation of Galerius and Constantius Chlorus as the inception of the divided empire.

³¹ Martin of Troppau, *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, in *Historici Germaniae saec. XII*, 2. MGH SS 22 (Hanover, 1872), 461.24–25. On Troppau, see K. Schnith, “Martin von Troppau,” in *LdM* 6, cols. 347–48. As Heike Johanna Mierau has argued, papal-imperial chronicles like Troppau's advanced an ideological argument about the unity of the *imperium Romanum*, in which the Byzantine empire had a place up to a point. After Charlemagne's coronation, emperors in Constantinople make only occasional appearances, and never as rulers of the “eastern empire.” Mierau sees this as pragmatic, that the authors and readers were simply more interested in the *res gestae* of the western empire. Heike Johanna Mierau, “Die Einheit des imperium Romanum in den Papst-Kaiser-Chroniken des Spätmittelalters,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 282, no. 2 (2006): 281–312, esp. 307–08. In my view, however, Mierau, like other late medieval historians, has overlooked the ideological implications of the semantic shift from *imperium orientale* to *imperium Constantinopolitanum*, which marked a demotion from full to ambiguous participants in the Roman imperial project.

³² The only exception to this generalization that I have found is a terse passage in Sicard of Cremona, *Cronica*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, in *Annales et chronica Italica aevi Suevici*, MGH SS 31 (Hanover, 1903), 179: “Anno MCCVI. Et in orientali et in occidentali imperio et aput Antiochiam predictis ex causis inter predictos certatur illustres.” This passage follows his account of the Fourth Crusade and the aftermath of its conquest of Constantinople, so it is possible that he conflated the contest for imperial succession in the west between Philip of Swabia and Otto of Brunswick with the undisputed succession of Henry of Flanders after the death of Baldwin in 1205. The only other author to follow Sicard was the Franciscan friar Salimbene de Adam (d. c. 1290), whose *Chronicon* lifted this line verbatim: see Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Scalia, 2 vols. (Bari, 1966), 1:30, 143.

Therefore, in late medieval Europe the terminology of empire had long been fixed. The Holy Roman Empire represented the continuation of the ancient *imperium Romanum*. It was a sacred kingship that had revived the providential and universal monarchy of the Christian-Roman empire of late ancient world, once it had gone into abeyance under the emperors in Constantinople at the end of the eighth century. By the fifteenth century, court historians and imperial propagandists for both Sigismund (d. 1437) and Frederick III (d. 1493) repeated the traditional account of the origin of the Holy Roman Empire's political authority, emphasizing the coronation of Charlemagne in 800 as the moment when the *imperium Romanum*, sole imperial legitimacy, had been transferred from the "Greeks" to the "Franks."³³

In such accounts, as in Einhard and Otto of Freising, terminology reflected the political order. Dietrich of Niem, for instance, in his *Deeds of Charlemagne* (c. 1398) noted that the translation of empire to the Franks occurred with Charlemagne and that although the emperors in Constantinople had previously been called *Romani imperatores*, after Charlemagne's coronation they were known as *imperatores Grecorum sive Constantinopolitani*, while the Franks became the kings and emperors of the Romans.³⁴ A generation later under the emperor Frederick III, Thomas Ebendorfer went even further, suggesting that the Byzantines had called themselves Romans but had always been a corrupt simulacrum. Borrowing liberally from Martin of Troppau, Ebendorfer

³³ On late medieval disputes over whether Charlemagne had been a "German" or a "Frank" (naturally a semantic preference of the French), see Goetz, *Translatio imperii*, 199–214, esp. 208–09.

³⁴ Dietrich of Niem, *Historie de gestis Romanorum principum – Cronica – Gesta Karoli Magni imperatoris*, ed. K. Colberg and J. Leuschner, MGH Staatsschriften 5.2 (Berlin, 1980), 304–05; for a biographical sketch and a chronology of his works, see the introduction to the volume, pp. VII–XV.

observed that under Nikephoros I (r. 802–811) the eastern empire had dwindled to nothing.³⁵

Once again semantic changes signified an order transformed.

But these two cannot both be called Roman emperors, since the empire had at that time devolved to Charlemagne, and to the kings of the Franks through him, who was made the first emperor of the Romans, as we will see . . . although by position (*dignitate*) the emperors in Constantinople from Constantine the Great up to this point (i.e., 800 CE) were called *Romanorum*, really they were *Romeorum*.³⁶

Ebendorfer deployed a vitiating distinction by calling the Byzantines *Romeorum*, one that acknowledged the Byzantines' self-identification as Ῥωμαῖοι, while marking them pointedly as “not-quite-Roman.” He and Dietrich may have disagreed on whether the post-Charlemagne Byzantines should be called “Greeks,” “Constantinopolitans,” or “Romeans,” but the critical point remained that they were no longer “Roman” in an imperial sense—if they ever had been. In these ways, Latin authors of the Middle Ages manipulated the semantics of imperial terminology to communicate political primacy and the ideological boundaries of Roman Empire. As a manifest sign of their disregard, such authors wrote the imperial history of Europe without the Byzantines and their emperors after the early ninth century. From Charlemagne onward, it was the Franks or the Germans, not the Greeks, who ruled the Roman Empire and whose deeds remained at the center of historical accounts of the imperial Middle Ages.

As changing terminologies signified changing political hierarchies, so this view that the Byzantine state was no longer imperial in the exclusive “Roman” sense reflected the cultural and

³⁵ Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica regum Romanorum*, ed. Harald Zimmermann, MGH. SS rer. Germ. N.S. 18, 1–2 (Hanover, 2003), 1:291.12–13.

³⁶ Ebendorfer, *Chronica regum Romanorum*, 292.5–12: “Verum quod hii duo vocari non possunt imperatores Romani pro eo, quia tunc ad Karolum Magnum et iam devolutum erat imperium, ad reges Francorum per eum, qui primus Romanorum imperator factus est, ut videbitur. . . quamvis dignitate post Constantinum Magnum usque ad hec tempora Constantinopolim imperatores eciam Romanorum dicti sunt, sed veri Romeorum.” Like much of his history, Ebendorfer lifted parts of this passage from a predecessor—in this case the aforementioned twelfth-century theologian and exegete Richard of St. Victor, *Liber exceptionum*, I.9.23, p. 202.

religious disdain with which many in late medieval West viewed Byzantium.³⁷ Their stubborn refusal to enforce the union between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic church, even while under grave threat of Ottoman conquest from the mid-fourteenth century onward, only exacerbated the prejudices of western observers. Giving voice to centuries of Latin disdain, the Roman historian Flavio Biondo, in a 1452 oration intended to spur Frederick III and Alfonso of Aragon to unite against the Ottomans, recounted the glories of the First Crusade. But Emperor Alexios I (d. 1118), whose appeal to the papacy for aid had spurred Urban II's famous speech at Clermont in 1095, Biondo denounced as a "semi-infidel."³⁸ Between this vituperation, on the one hand, and the valorization of the Roman Empire's providential remit and boundless virtue on the other, most Western intellectuals left no room in their monist conception of empire to admit the Byzantines.

By the fifteenth century, the *imperium orientale* did not fit the political order of the medieval world. Its evocation of the late ancient Mediterranean, a world at least notionally unified under one empire and one religion, administratively divided between imperial co-rulers, must have felt arcane and irrelevant in an age where the political and cultural center of gravity had shifted from the eastern Mediterranean to the West. Moreover, Europe teemed with kings, princes, bishops and communes who were increasingly loath to acknowledge temporal subjugation to a universal empire. Thus fifteenth-century orators, historians, and jurists were not only following the venerable models of their predecessors in eschewing the imperial terminology of late antiquity

³⁷ For the history of this cultural disdain in both antiquity and the Middle Ages, see Herbert Hunger, *Graeculus perfidus—Ἰταλὸς ἱταμὸς: Il senso dell'alterità nei rapporti greco-romani ed italo-bizantini* (Rome, 1987).

³⁸ Flavio Biondo, *Oratio coram serenissimo imperatore Frederico et Alphonso*, in Bartolomeo Nogara, ed., *Scritti inediti e rari di Biondi Flavio* (Rome, 1927), 112.28.

and the early Middle Ages; they were also consciously choosing imperial descriptors that fit the geography of power in their own world, one where Byzantium was a marginal province at best.

So Western intellectuals in the later Middle Ages—that is, from around the ninth century onward—both defended the imperial continuity of the Holy Roman Empire, and scrupulously avoided connecting Byzantium with the “eastern empire” of late antiquity. To them, the phrase’s echo of the late Roman epoch—a world where two emperors, eastern and western, jointly ruled a single Roman empire through a legitimate division of political authority—was ill-suited to the relationship between the Holy Roman Empire and Byzantium, whose ideologically ambiguous status made it a rival more than a partner. Such was the scene in the mid-fifteenth century, when Ottoman conquest of Constantinople gave onlookers to the west new cause to consider the nature of the state whose collapse they mourned.

Vitéz and Piccolomini

As with many innovations, the figure who popularizes often overshadows, and even effaces, a little-known inventor. In this case, the first to revive the imperial semantics of the late ancient empire was Johannes Vitéz (1408–72), a leading Hungarian humanist and prelate.³⁹ Vitéz may seem now an obscure figure, but in the mid-fifteenth century the Hungarian bishop stood just as close to seats of power as his Italian contemporary Piccolomini. In fact, Vitéz and Piccolomini shared a number of characteristics: employment as secretaries and advisors to transalpine monarchs; a rich humanist engagement with the texts of classical antiquity; a common *telos* for their political activity—organization of the crusade—undergirded by the clear-eyed recognition

³⁹ On Vitéz, see the bibliography listed in the introduction.

of the Ottoman threat to central Europe. Before we turn to Piccolomini, we must look first at this Hungarian scholar and his role in the recovery of the *imperium orientale*.

The early life and education of Vitéz, nearly the same age as Piccolomini, remain obscure, but fortune, talent, and eloquence raised him from an anonymous clerk in the chancery of Emperor Sigismund to the leading prelate in Hungary before the end of his life. As a scholar and a savvy political operator, Vitéz served as diplomat, emissary, secretary and confidant to a generation of Hungarian rulers, from János Hunyadi (d. 1456) to Matthias Corvinus (d. 1490).⁴⁰ Vitéz's glittering political career faltered only when he and his nephew, the famous Neolatin poet Janus Pannonius, grew disillusioned with Corvinus and plotted against him with the neighboring king of Poland. Corvinus thwarted their conspiracy and Vitéz died ignobly, imprisoned in his own episcopal palace in Esztergom.⁴¹

As royal counselor and bishop, Vitéz played a critical role in Hungary, nurturing Latin eloquence and knowledge of antiquity through his rich library and the extensive patronage he accorded to scholars at his episcopal courts.⁴² Influenced by the Italian humanist Pier Paolo Vergerio, who came to Hungary with Emperor Sigismund after the Council of Constance and died there in 1444, Vitéz inherited from Vergerio classical manuscripts, as well as a distinct

⁴⁰ Marianna D. Birnbaum, "Humanism in Hungary," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, vol. 2, *Humanism Beyond Italy*, ed. Albert Rabil, Jr. (Philadelphia, 1988), 295; Domonkos, "János Vitéz," 143; Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 10–11. On Hunyadi, see K. Nehring, "Hunyadi, Janos," in *LdM* 5, col. 226. For a concise summary of late medieval Hungarian politics, see Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526* (London, 2001), 195–371.

⁴¹ Domonkos, "János Vitéz," 144–45; Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 12–15.

⁴² See Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 28–79; Tibor Klaniczay, "Das Contubernium des Johannes Vitéz. Die erste ungarische 'Akademie,'" in *Forschungen über Siebenbürgen und seine Nachbarn: Festschrift für Attila T. Szabó und Zsigmond Jakó*, ed. Kálmán Benda, 2 vols. (Munich, 1987–88) 2:227–44. That said, modern scholars have perhaps flattened out the rich topography of intellectual life in late medieval Hungary in praising the singular contributions of Vitéz to Hungary's burgeoning humanism; see Birnbaum, "Humanism in Hungary," 298; see also Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 28–29.

epistolary style he employed in his elegant letters and orations for his subsequent employers.⁴³ His books and his Latin enabled him to cultivate a new generation of young scholars in Hungary. In the dedications and testaments of contemporaries, Vitéz emerges as a generous and learned patron. Vespasiano da Bisticci, who knew the business of books better than most, acclaimed Vitéz's library, learning, and liberality in one of his biographical sketches.⁴⁴ As one of his humanist clients, Galeozzo Marzio, declared in the dedication to his medical lexicon, "To you [Vitéz] the learned owe a great deal for your munificence, since they are driven to literary pursuits, true learning, and greater industry by the goad of your judgment."⁴⁵ Later in the same work Marzio, with mock restraint, abstained from castigating kidney stones, since they had had the honor of afflicting such a preeminent scholar as Vitéz.⁴⁶

Alongside Vergerio, the other humanist influence upon Vitéz was Enea Sylvio Piccolomini, then bishop of Siena and secretary to Frederick III. When Vitéz served as secretary and advisor to the young Hungarian king Ladislaus V, a minor under the regency of Frederick III, Vitéz and Piccolomini consorted at the emperor's court in Wiener Neustadt. Piccolomini's

⁴³ On Vergerio, see John M. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder: The Humanist as Orator* (Tempe, AZ, 1996), esp. 158 and 159 n.13, where he lists (with some corrections) the manuscripts of Vitéz identified as having originally belonged to Vergerio. Csapodi-Gárdonyi has identified nine manuscripts of Cicero's works which belonged to Vitéz: see Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, nos. 24–32, pp. 93–98; on the actual connections between the two, see *ibid.*, 18–28, where she points out that the actual evidence for their interactions is quite limited.

⁴⁴ Bisticci, *Renaissance Princes, Popes and Prelates*, 188–92.

⁴⁵ Florence, BML, Plut. 84.27, fol. 1v–2r: "Sed tibi reverende pater studiosi ob munificentiam debent multum. Cum vero iudicii tui stimulo ad studium litterarum veramque doctrinam maioremque industriam impellantur."

⁴⁶ Florence, BML, Plut. 84.27, fol. 112v–13r: "Sed hic morbus magnos plerunque viros infestat, et maxime Iohannem Archiepiscopum Strigoniensem virum divino consilio, doctrina admirabili integritate vite conspicuum, rebus gestis clarissimum. Qui tempestate nostra musas ex toto orbe fugatas ad se revocavit, hungariamque novum musarum domicilium constituit . . . non possum igitur hunc morbum non insectari quando quidem unicum studiorum fautorem tam vehementer affecerit." Several other scholars dedicated their works to Vitéz, including Regiomontanus, *Tabulae ac problemata primi mobilis*; George Peurbach, *Trattato della geometria*; and George of Trebizond's translation of Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*: see Domonkos, "János Vitéz," 147, 150.

letters in the spring of 1453 to the pope and other prelates back in Rome, for instance, cited Vitéz as a source of reliable information on affairs in Hungary.⁴⁷ Five months later Vitéz recommended Piccolomini to Nicholas V for promotion to cardinal, ostensibly in return for Piccolomini's long defense of Ladislaus's royal claims.⁴⁸ And Piccolomini wrote one of his longest letters to Vitéz as an account of the imperial diet at Regensburg in 1454, the first of the "crusade" diets convoked after the fall of Constantinople.⁴⁹ Such epistolary contacts forged a strong bond between the two and showed Vitéz how oratorical and epistolary eloquence might serve political goals. And for Vitéz, his highest ambition remained the defense of Hungary against the Ottomans.

Vitéz had good reason to worry about the Ottoman threat to Hungary. His employer, king Ladislaus V, was still a boy, only twelve and not yet fully independent from his uncle and protector, Frederick III. The king did not even have a court in Buda, Hungary's royal city; instead he remained in Vienna, still well within the orbit of the emperor in Wiener Neustadt, barely a day's ride away. These connections to the emperor's court and advisors meant Vitéz

⁴⁷ On his references to Vitéz's authority in Hungarian matters, see Wolkan IV, no. 62 (to Nicholas V), p. 132; no. 63 (to Juan Carvajal), p. 134. Later he asked an intermediary to thank Vitéz for the gift of a horse and promised to resolve with the emperor some unspecified business regarding a Florentine merchant, while expressing a desire for future communication and collaboration; see *ibid.*, no. 73, pp. 143–44.

⁴⁸ See Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 2 (Epistolae Variae), no. 11 (12 September 1453), pp. 186–87. Piccolomini learned of this generosity from the chancellor of the king of Bohemia and, having recognized Vitéz's distinctive voice (*sentio vestrum esse dictamen*), he dispatched a letter of effusive thanks on 24 December 1453 (Wolkan IV, no. 206, pp. 391–95). On Frederick III's contested supervision of Ladislaus in his minority and Piccolomini's role, see Voigt, *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini*, 2:70–79. Germane as well is Piccolomini's oration for the conference to settle the Austrian succession in December 1452, composed but never delivered, *Sentio*, which defends the inviolable sovereignty of emperor and pope, as well as the emperor's faithful preservation of Ladislaus's rights and dignities: see Mansi I, 184–248. Later Piccolomini was also instrumental in rescuing Vitéz from prison, where the bishop had landed for his association with the Hunyadi family after John's death in 1456.

⁴⁹ The letter, sometimes called the *Historia Ratisponensis*, is published in Wolkan IV, no. 291, pp. 492–563. See also the important discussion of the context and transmission in RTA 19/1, 28–31, which also reproduces the brief companion letter (p. 30) that Piccolomini wrote which clarifies that he wrote the account at Vitéz's behest. The letter was originally published in *Joannis Vitez episcopi Varadiensis in Hungaria orationes*, ed. Vilmós Franknoi (Budapest, 1878), no. 4, but the editors of the RTA emend the recorded date (14 March 1455) to June–August 1454.

understood how fragile the political situation was for both Ladislaus and the emperor. Neither had the resources to confront the Ottomans. Indeed, it was a recent rebellion of fractious Austrian nobles that had forced Frederick III to relinquish his regency over Ladislaus and permit his ascension to the Hungarian throne. A monarch who could be bullied by the petty princes of Innviertel and Cilli could realistically offer little aid to his Hungarian neighbors against the Ottomans.⁵⁰ In these circumstances, Vitéz recognized the need for other, more powerful allies.

These ends were in view when Vitéz wrote to Pope Nicholas V in January 1453 to describe the parlous situation developing beyond Hungary's eastern frontier, including news of Constantinople recently gleaned from a Byzantine embassy.⁵¹ Here Vitéz employed new language to describe the political geography of eastern Europe. The Byzantine emissaries had delivered a stirring oration describing the imperiled empire and Vitéz anxiously conveyed the baleful news about the "eastern empire and Constantinopolitan city" to Nicholas.⁵² Its first invocation, then, activated a connection between the *imperium orientale* and the Ottoman threat, an association that would persist thereafter.

⁵⁰ On Ladislaus V, see Günther Hödl, "Ladislaus V Postumus," in NDB 13 (1982), 393–94.

⁵¹ A detail related in Vitéz's letter to Constantine XI thanking him for the embassy: Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 2, no. 6 (16 January 1453), pp. 177–78. The oration, insofar as can be discerned from Vitéz's reply, emphasized the suffering of Christians in the East as well as the special nature of Constantinople. How he hit upon the phrase, presumably encountered in his broad reading, remains unclear. His letters and orations reveal citations or allusions to chiefly classical authors like Lucan, Seneca, Livy, and Cicero; and the reconstructions of his library do not reveal clear evidence of his familiarity with the late antique or medieval writers who used the term to describe the late antique empire. We can, however, surely eliminate the possibility that Vitéz lifted the actual phrase *imperium orientale* from the Byzantine oration, however, since the Greek formulation, as evident for instance in the sixth-century John Lydos (*Liber de mensibus*, ed. R. Wünsch [Leipzig, 1898], 1.27.8), was unheard of in fifteenth-century Byzantine discourse. For good reason, of course—such a phrase would have explicitly contravened the prevalent Byzantine imperial ideology that perceived their imperial state as the undivided Roman Empire. On the embassy, see Elizabeth Malamut, "Les ambassades du dernier empereur byzantin," *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron* (Paris, 2002), 429–48; Andriopoulou, "Diplomatic Communication between Byzantium and the West," no. 190, p. 307, 343.

⁵² For the letter, see Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 2, no. 5 (16 January 1453), p. 176: "de infaustis casibus ac minacibus rebus imperii orientalis atque Constantinopolitane urbis. . ."

The grim prospect facing the young king, marshaling Hungary's defense alone, explains Vitéz's tone, "begging and pleading" that the pontiff turn his gaze to the tenuous position of that "afflicted city, that eastern state and empire going to ruin, or rather destruction."⁵³

Constantinople was not only home to many Christians; it had served an indispensable role as refuge and bastion for persecuted Christians across the eastern Mediterranean. This role of the imperial city meant its loss was a threat to the "liberty" of all Christians.⁵⁴ The layered appositions suggest that Vitéz was improvising, yet the fact he repeated his use of the *imperium orientale*—both in the first line and again toward the end of the letter—indicates that his phrase was hardly accidental. Instead, the secretary appeared to be searching for a powerful expression to rhetorically amplify the hazard to Christian Europe and to Hungary.

Vitéz's new imperial terminology made no evident impression on the pope. Not that Nicholas V needed any convincing on the subject of the crusade; in September 1453 he issued a bull, *Etsi ecclesia Christi*, calling for the princes of Christendom to unite against this common threat.⁵⁵ But his bull employed only conventional touchstones like the infidel's long quest to subjugate the East before moving to the West. The geography here was ecclesiastical not imperial. Constantinople remained a city—an important one, to be sure—but devoid of imperial

⁵³ Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 2, no. 5, p. 177: "afflicte civitatis supratacte, ac ruituri vel pocius perituri illius orientalis status et imperii . . ."

⁵⁴ Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 2, no. 5, 177.: "Declaratur enim nobis inter cetera hanc fuisse in orientalibus partibus civitatem precipuam, in qua Christiane libertatis portus, servitutis vero propulsio ac laxamentum consistebat. Hec—uti didicimus—captivorum suscipiebat profugia, fovebat latibula et liberationem procurabat; hec vendicabat in libertatem servos, hec denique exulantes patria condonabat. In cuius ruina atque occasu quid aliud, quam totam circumvicinam Christianorum libertatem casuram putemus, et in quo maxime casu servitus fidelium illic degencium ac illac de cetero succedencium ne cumulari solum, sed et confirmari videbitur!"

⁵⁵ The text of the bull is transmitted in an abbreviated version in *Annales Ecclesiastici*, vol. 18, ad an. 1453, nos. 9–11, pp. 408–10; in a full critical edition based on over a dozen manuscripts with indispensable introductory remarks in RTA 19/1, no. 10.1, pp. 56–64. See also Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 18; Setton II, 150–51.

status or significance. Rather *Etsi ecclesia Christi* depicted the city as a stage for the shocking desecration of churches, relics, and icons.⁵⁶

These terms were echoed by the papal legate, Giovanni di Castiglione, during the rounds he made to enjoin princes to support the pope's efforts in 1453 and 1454. Preaching to Ladislaus V on the crusade, Castiglione cleaved to the traditional designation of Constantinople as simply "that royal city" (*illa regia urbs*). Vitéz's cool rejoinder on the king's behalf, however, spurned this description.⁵⁷ The legate had touched upon "the calamity, or rather the destruction of that eastern empire—I will not say 'that conquered city'"⁵⁸ This unambiguous rejection of the legate's formulation signified Vitéz's conviction that the import of the loss of Constantinople transcended the terms employed Nicholas V and Castiglione. Constantinople was not only a leading city of Christendom, the "most powerful bulwark" (*murale fortissimum*) as Castiglione had called it in the exordium of his oration, but an imperial city.

Vitéz's oratorical insistence on the imperial status of Constantinople tried to change the stakes of the conquest. Instead of representing Constantinople's conquest as blow to Christianity alone, Vitéz tried to show the event as an imperial catastrophe as well. His attempt failed; Nicholas V and Castiglione persisted in framing the city's loss as a religious disaster.

⁵⁶ RTA 19/1, no. 10.1, p. 60.

⁵⁷ This oration is also published, along with Vitéz's other extant works, in the edition of Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 3 (Orationes), no. 4, pp. 242–44. While it lacks the contextual notes provided in RTA 19/1, Boronkai's edition is marginally preferable, since it is more recent, more complete (the RTA abbreviates several portions of the oration) and provides a more thorough *apparatus criticus* and *fontium*. I have consulted both, but I cite Boronkai's edition here and below.

⁵⁸ Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 3, no. 4, 244: "Tetigit preterea superius reverendissima paternitas vestra de casu, vel potius occasu orientalis imperii—ne dicam capte urbis illius." In a second oration several weeks later Vitéz repeated his view that Constantinople's fate had constituted an imperial, not just a religious or political, catastrophe: Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 3, no. 5, 245: "post subactum nuper orientalis imperii venerabilem arcem rursus ingentem minarum molem ex animo cientes omnibus inter se consultacionibus Christianum coquunt bellum."

Nevertheless, Vitéz's letter showed that he understood instinctively how critical the terms of the debate were. In the realm of persuasion, Vitéz sought a new way to express Europe's common obligations for common defense. In searching for an apposition to *patria* and *respublica Christiana*, Vitéz reached for the imperial geography of late antiquity and the *imperium orientale*. In doing so, he influenced another humanist, whose voice would echo well beyond the court of the Hungarian king.

Piccolomini and the Rhetoric of Roman Empire

Vitéz may have been the first to experiment with the innovative imperial terminology, but his idea was adopted and promulgated by his friend and contemporary Piccolomini (1405–64), who both granted it ideological heft and circulated it throughout Europe.⁵⁹ Piccolomini, who later became Pope Pius II (r. 1458–64), became one of the most famous humanist prelates of the fifteenth century and a tireless advocate of war against the Ottomans.⁶⁰ But if he remained steadfast in his commitment to religious warfare, his political affiliations were less resolute. He was an early adherent to the conciliar party at the Council of Basel, and later served the anti-pope elected there, Felix V.⁶¹ As Felix's fortunes waned, Piccolomini nimbly hopped to the court of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III (d. 1493), where he served as diplomat, orator, and partisan for over a decade, from 1442 to 1455, when he journeyed to Rome and joined the curia.

⁵⁹ For bibliography on Piccolomini, see the footnote in the introduction to this chapter.

⁶⁰ Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 113, who calls him the "greatest crusading pope of the Renaissance."

⁶¹ Such allegiances required significant rehabilitation once he converted to an ardent absolutist—first imperial, then papal—and one of the roles of his massive autobiographical *Commentaries* was a broad apologetic: both personal, for his previous, conflicted loyalties; and institutional, for the beleaguered papacy; see O'Brien, *The Commentaries of Pope Pius II*, esp. 47–61.

After the death of Calixtus III, Piccolomini was elected pontiff as Pius II at a suspenseful conclave, memorable for a cabal of cardinals scheming in the latrines of St. Peter, which must have been near insufferable in Rome's August heat.⁶²

Piccolomini had known Vitéz since at least 1452 and the two developed a strong professional bond.⁶³ Piccolomini had been instrumental in securing Vitéz's release from prison, where the bishop had been confined for his association with the Hunyadi family after John's death in 1456.⁶⁴ Moreover, in addition to their common interests in the literature of antiquity and their investment in the fraught politics of central Europe, the two shared an unwavering fixation on the Ottoman threat to Christianity and Europe. If their political priorities differed—Vitéz as an advocate of the Hungarian king, Piccolomini of the Holy Roman Emperor—each was passionate supporter of an immediate crusade.

Given the intertwined paths of these two political advisors and crusade advocates, we can be almost certain that this rhetorical revival of the eastern empire was communicated from one to another, though the precise vector is unclear. Only months after Vitéz's pioneering invocation of Constantinople as the *imperium orientale* in his letter to Nicholas V, Piccolomini's letters adopted the phrase in his own letter to the pope. Soon after news of the conquest arrived at the imperial court in Graz, Piccolomini compared the loss of Constantinople to "one of the two eyes of

⁶² Pius II, *Commentaries, Volume I, Books I–II*, ed. and trans. Margaret Meserve and Marcello Simonetta (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 1.36.8, p. 182.

⁶³ As described above, Vitéz is first mentioned in Piccolomini's letters in the spring of 1453 (see Wolkan IV, no. 62, p. 132), referenced as an authority on Hungarian affairs, which at that point parlous to Frederick III whose guardianship of Ladislaus V was being contested by Austrian nobles. But they both attended a meeting in Vienna in late 1452, and presumably met there, if not earlier. See Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Historia Austriacis, Teil 2: 2. und 3. Redaktion*, ed. Martin Wagendorfer, MGH SS rer. Germ. N.S. 24 (Hanover, 2009), 748.

⁶⁴ Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz*, 35; Domonkos, "János Vitéz, the Father of Hungarian Humanism (1408–1472)," 144.

Christendom torn out.” Piccolomini complained that while their forefathers may have lost Jerusalem, Antioch, and Acre, these were nothing compared to the capture of Constantinople, “the most powerful city among Christians, the head of the eastern empire, the pillar of Greece, abode of learning.”⁶⁵ His lament was affective and ambiguous; Piccolomini did not, for instance, explain the meaning of the “two eyes” metaphor, implicitly Rome-Constantinople here. Nevertheless, the purpose behind his deployment of the phrase was clear: the conquest of Constantinople represented a religious, imperial, and cultural catastrophe—and a threat to the rest of Europe. As he continued, “Now Mehmed reigns among us. Now the Turk threatens our throats. . . . From here the Turkish sword will penetrate into Hungary, into Germany. . . .”⁶⁶ The responsibility for rousing Christian Europe rested with Nicholas, but Piccolomini put himself at the pope’s disposal.⁶⁷ Piccolomini struck a similar refrain in letters to Nicholas of Cusa and the Venetian orator Leonardo Benvoglianti later that summer, again describing Constantinople in the same guises: famous city, pillar of Greece, capital of the eastern empire.⁶⁸

The idea found expression not only in personal letters filled with sorrow, but also—and perhaps more importantly—in the diplomatic correspondence written for Frederick III in the months after the Ottoman conquest. In this series of letters, Piccolomini elevated the *imperium*

⁶⁵ Wolkan IV, no. 109, pp. 189–202, at 201: “ecce, quod timui, ex duobus Christianitatis luminibus alterum jam videmus erutum, orientalis imperii eversam sedem, Grecam omnem gloriam extinctam cernimus.” On the circumstances of the letter, see Baldi, *Il “cardinale tedesco,”* 193–97.

⁶⁶ Wolkan IV, no. 109, p. 201: “jam regnat inter nos Maumethus. jam nostris cervicibus Turchus imminet . . . inde ad Hungaros, inde ad Germanos Turchorum gladius penetrabit . . .”

⁶⁷ Wolkan IV, no. 109, p. 201–02: “et quamvis de tanto et tam arduo negocio maiores viros quam ego sim loqui deceat, quia tamen Christianus sum, nihil a me alienum puto, quod Christiane religionis utilitatem concernat.”

⁶⁸ See Wolkan IV, no. 112, p. 212; no. 153, p. 280. See also his long letter to the Polish cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki, where in his lament over the premature death of Władysław III of Poland (among the crusaders who died at Varna in 1444) and Hungary, he cleverly replaces “eastern empire” with “eastern church.”

orientale from the Vitéz's *ad hoc* usage to part of a larger ideological argument about the imperial order of the world. The eastern empire supported a broader claim regarding Frederick's universal imperial authority and served as a justification for imperial leadership of a European congress to combat the Turkish threat. Yet these letters also conveyed that Piccolomini was sensitive to the ideological import of his claims. The distinctions with which he deployed the phrase confirm that it was not simply a synonym for the "empire of the Greeks," but a novel and tendentious claim.

Frederick's diplomatic letter to the pope after the city's fall, for instance, carefully described Constantinople as only a "former" imperial capital. Promising imperial aid in calling a European congress as well as in the pacification of Italy, both seen as preliminaries to a crusade, Piccolomini moderated his previous imperial claims with the subtle addition of an adjective *quondam*, to make Constantinople only "formerly the seat of eastern empire."⁶⁹ This cleverly inserted modifier dislocated the city's imperial status to an indistinct past. The letter, then, walked a fine line between amplifying the severity of the Ottoman threat while not derogating the singular authority claimed by the emperor, especially important in relation to the pope, who was both an ally and a rival. Piccolomini adopted the same useful ambiguity in his letter to Alfonso of Aragon (April 1454), where he asked that the king turn his bellicosity from the Florence and other Italian cities to the Turks.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The letter was printed in numerous places, including *Annales Ecclesiastici*; most recently Wolkan IV, no. VII, p. 577; RTA 19/1, no. 3.1, pp. 31–33: "Constantinopolim Graeciae caput et orientalis imperii quondam sedem"; see also a brief translation of this letter in Setton II, 150 n. 40. The editions of both Wolkan and the RTA represent the version of the letter as reworked by Piccolomini in his own hand, as it exists in Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. 3389.

⁷⁰ Piccolomini also adopted this useful ambiguity in a letter to Alfonso of Aragon (April 1454), asking that the king turn his bellicosity from the Florence and other Italian cities to the Turks: RTA 19/1, no. 14.9, pp. 101–03; Wolkan IV, no. 12, p. 593. Two other authors lit upon similar formulations, though whether there was any cross-pollination is difficult to say. Isidore of Kiev, in his letter to Bologna and Florence, called the city "caput est orientis et olim sedes imperii," though his subsequent reference to Constantine I later clarifies that the period referenced by *olim* was the 4th c. CE: see RTA 19/1, no. 40c, p. 336; also printed in Hofmann, "Quellen zu Isidor von Kiew als Kardinal und Patriarch," 146–48. Lauro Quirini also invoked the city's imperial past in a letter Nicholas V; see Agostino

In other diplomatic epistles, Piccolomini omitted temporal qualifications like *olim* or *quondam*. Reflecting perhaps Piccolomini's more focused sense of the political and ideological possibilities to be exploited, his letters to leading European monarchs projected a bolder vision of imperial geography. Constantinople remained the seat of eastern empire, he insisted, while the Holy Roman Empire encompassed the entirety of the West. This geography implicitly made Constantinople a part of a unified Roman Empire, whose universal nature had been diminished by the city's seizure. A form letter of invitation to a proposed European congress—dispatched to the kings of France, Denmark, and Poland—invoked the foundation of the city, “which our ancestor Constantine the Great raised up in imitation of the Roman city.”⁷¹ Piccolomini then enumerated the catastrophes attendant on the conquest: the throne of eastern empire and the patriarchal seat destroyed; the royal city in the hands of the enemy; and the bulwark of Christendom pierced. Destruction, slaughter, enslavement and humiliation followed the conquest.⁷² The opening reference to Constantine I recalled the late ancient origin of the city and established its fate as a particularly imperial concern. Piccolomini reinforced this claim when he wrote that the need for assistance had convinced the emperor to summon a meeting of the ecclesiastical and secular princes and “all the subjects of the empire.” These letters, therefore, and the entire attempt at a European congress, communicated an imperial claim, that the temporal supervision of all of the princes of Europe belonged to the Holy Roman Emperor.

Pertusi, “Le epistole storiche di Lauro Quirini sulla caduta di Costantinopoli e la potenza dei Turchi: Epistola ad Nicolaum V, Epistola ad Lodovicum cardinalem, Epistola ad Pium II, Epistola ad Paulum Maurocenium,” in *Lauro Quirini umanista: studi e testi*, ed. Konrad Krautter (Rome, 1977), 225–26: “Ita hoc nostro misero tempore Civitas antiqua, nobilis, dives, quondam Imperii Romani sedes, totius Orientis dominatrix . . .”

⁷¹ RTA 19/1, no. 14, 2–4, p. 97.45–46: “quam magnus olim Constantinus, antecessor noster, in emulacionem Romane urbis erexit . . .”; cf. his similar, though bespoke, letter to the Duke of Burgundy, which includes the universalist motifs, though it skips the historical references to Constantine I: *ibid.*, no. 14, 10, pp. 103–05.

⁷² RTA 19/1, no. 14, 2–4, p. 98.

Piccolomini's conflation of "the West" with the territory notionally subject to the Holy Roman Empire made Mehmed's threat "to subject the whole West to himself" an affront to imperial sovereignty.⁷³ In response, he prayed that the monarch would raise up the forces of his kingdom "in defense of the faith, in praise of Christ, for the glory of the western people."⁷⁴ By "western people," Piccolomini meant Christians, of course, but also subjects to the Roman Empire, for the two were coterminous in his construct. The Roman Empire had bound the inhabited world together with the fetters of the orthodox (i.e., Catholic) faith, had joined Rome and Constantinople, *imperium occidentale* with *orientale*. Thus, the universal empire was the animating, if implicit, organization behind this invitation to the other monarchs.

Piccolomini's burst of epistolary activity was not the first attention he paid to the Ottomans. In two orations before 1453—one to a Burgundian embassy, the other to the pope—he had stressed the pressing need for collective military action.⁷⁵ But these speeches displayed neither the passionate intensity of his later orations, nor the reliance on universal Roman Empire as a justificatory scheme. The chief complaint of these speeches remained with the indignities suffered by the community of Christians, not the Roman Empire. The language and themes of

⁷³ RTA 19/1, no. 14, 2–4, p. 98: "Maumethum . . . intollerabili fastu et incredibili superbia elatum occidentem sibi totum polliceri subigendum . . ."

⁷⁴ RTA 19/1, no. 14, 2–4, p. 99: "in subsidium fidei, in Christi laudem, in occidentalis populi gloriam . . ."

⁷⁵ The first of these orations, *Quamvis in hoc senatu*, Piccolomini addressed in 1451 on behalf of the emperor to an embassy of Philip III, Duke of Burgundy, himself an ardent proponent of crusade who would later famously take the cross himself at an elaborate festival in Lille in 1454. This was the famous feast where participants swore the *Voeu du Faisan*—the "oath of the pheasant"—governing a knight's behavior on the coming crusade. On Philip III ("the Good"), see J. Richard, "Philippe le Bon, duke of Burgundy," in *LdM* 6, cols. 2068–70. The oration was not published by Mansi, but it is described, along with the initial Burgundian oration in RTA 19/1, p. 104, n. 1; it has been finally edited on the basis of two of the three surviving manuscripts in Cotta-Schönberg IV, no. 17, pp. 175–98, with accompanying introduction and translation. The second oration, *Moses vir Dei*, addressed to the pope in 1452 is published in Piccolomini, *Historia Austriacis*, *Teil* 2, 826–42.

these two speeches only reinforce the profound difference wrought by the Ottoman conquest of the city, after which the Roman Empire assumed renewed priority.

Eastern Empire in Anti-Ottoman Oratory

As many scholars have noted, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 marked a point of inflection for the Christians all over Europe.⁷⁶ The grisly accounts of the Ottoman sack of Constantinople, which sped from Greece to Italy, Austria and beyond in the summer of 1453, galvanized many onlookers in the west. But desire for retribution demanded real action, not just literary laments, and the most tangible political achievement of that clamor was the series of imperial diets of 1454–1455. The first of these was European congress to which Piccolomini had invited the monarchs of Denmark and France. There prelates and princes were supposed to agree on a plan for a collective campaign against the Ottomans, a show of Christian force that would restore Europe's bulwark in Constantinople and humble the arrogant Turks.

Piccolomini himself was instrumental to coordinating and shaping these diets, the “Turkish Reichstage,” as they are sometimes known⁷⁷ As Piccolomini's letters of invitation to the

⁷⁶ A point reiterated in nearly all literature on European responses to the conquest, which is vast. On the general effect, see Erich Meuthen, “Der Fall von Konstantinopel und der lateinische Westen,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 237, no. 1 (1983): 1–36; Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*, 1–29; Setton II, 108–37. Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ, 1978), 117–28; Pertusi, *La Caduta di Costantinopoli*; Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 62–63. More specifically, see Marios Philippides, “The Fall of Constantinople 1453: Classical Comparisons and the Circle of Cardinal Isidore,” *Viator* 38, no. 1 (2007): 349–83; on Piccolomini in particular, see Nancy Bisaha, “Pius II and the Crusade,” in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley (Basingstoke, 2004), 40. For the artistic reflections of this epochal event, see Ulrich Rehm, “Westliche Reaktionen auf die Eroberung Konstantinopels im Bild,” in *Sultan Mehmet II. Eroberer Konstantinopels - Patron der Künste*, ed. Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger and Ulrich Rehm (Cologne, 2009), 161–76; Gülru Necipoğlu, “Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation: Artistic Conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople,” *Muqarnas Online* 29, no. 1 (2012): 1–81.

⁷⁷ On the nature of the imperial assemblies, not properly *Reichstage* in the fully institutionalized sense, see the foundational article of Peter Moraw, “Versuch über die Entstehung des Reichstags,” in *Politische Ordnungen und soziale Kräfte im alten Reich*, ed. Hermann Weber (Wiesbaden, 1980), 1–36; more recent reflections on the *Reichstag* as a forum

monarchs of Denmark and France conveyed, these meetings were meant to assert the emperor's imperial authority. They disappointed in that regard, undermined by Frederick's refusal to attend the first two and marked their abject failure to turn aspiration into action. In the end, these assemblies achieved little more than confirming what a cynic might have suspected from the outset: individual princes, in Germany or elsewhere, were ill-disposed to sacrifice blood and treasure for a common cause, especially when the threat to themselves remained distant. But Piccolomini succeeded in another way, for his orations at these diets introduced political humanist oratory to a wide transalpine audience for the first time, as Helmrath and Mertens have established.⁷⁸ These speeches appealed to communal ideals, like *patria, respublica Christiana, imperium*, and *Europa* in order to encourage moral investment in a common political enterprise and to construct a collective identity.⁷⁹ As these speeches became widely read and imitated exemplars of humanist and anti-Ottoman oratory, they spread Piccolomini's revived concept of the *imperium orientale* and the universal Roman Empire throughout Europe.

for rhetoric in Johannes Helmrath, "The German Reichstage and the Crusade," in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, 53–69, esp. 54–57.

⁷⁸ Critical work on oratory and assemblies, especially in the imperial diets, has been done by Johannes Helmrath, both in his methodological contributions, as well as indispensable text critical work on the orations of the Turkish Reichstage. See his collaborative publications with Jörg Feuchter: Johannes Helmrath and Jörg Feuchter, "Einleitung - Vormoderne Parlamentsoratorik," in *Politische Redekultur in der Vormoderne: Politische Redekultur in der Vormoderne: die Oratorik europäischer Parlamente in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Jörg Feuchter and Johannes Helmrath (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), 9–22; eidem, "Oratory and Representation: The Rhetorical Culture of Political Assemblies, 1300–1600," *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 29, no. 1 (2009): 53–66. Helmrath also edited RTA 19/2, in which is found Piccolomini's most canonical crusade oration, *Constantinopolitana Clades*. Both Helmrath and Dieter Mertens have further identified these imperial diets held in 1454 and 1455 as the chief vector through which humanist oratory penetrated imperial assemblies and thereby transalpine courts. Dieter Mertens, "Europa, id est patria, domus propria, sedes nostra...". Zu Funktionen und Überlieferung lateinischer Türkenreden im 15. Jahrhundert," in *Europa und die osmanische Expansion im ausgehenden Mittelalter*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin, 1997), 39–57; Helmrath, "The German Reichstage and the Crusade," 57–62.

⁷⁹ See Mertens, "Europa, id est patria, domus propria, sedes nostra...". 54–55, where he identifies appeals to ideas like "Europa" and "patria" as part of a "transfer of legitimation" intended to generate buy-in among princes with strictly parochial interests.

As the emperor's proxy, Piccolomini spoke at all three of these diets. At the first in Regensburg in the spring of 1454, he delivered the oration *Quamvis omnibus*, in which he expressed the emperor's fervent desire to organize a crusade. At Frankfurt in the fall of 1454, he gave a much longer and more stirring amplification on the proposed crusade, *Constantinopolitana Clades*, defending the campaign's justice, utility, and feasibility. And in Wiener Neustadt in early spring of 1455, when any lingering enthusiasm among the attendees for funding a crusade had evaporated, he delivered two orations, *In hoc florentissimo* and *Si mihi*, which attempted to mollify those princes concerned about Turkish superiority and in particular to galvanize support for the Hungarians, whose frontiers were immediately threatened by the Ottomans. These speeches, along with his opening oration at the Congress of Mantua as Pius II in 1459, convoked early in his tenure as pope, eventually became the most widely copied and circulated speeches in sub-genre of the *Türkenrede*, or the crusade oration.⁸⁰

These orations hastened Byzantium's ideological journey from Greek to Roman, but they also illustrate the limits of Piccolomini's idea of eastern empire, for the rhetoric's implications were territorial only—it made no claims about the people of Constantinople. Piccolomini frequently (but not always) returned Constantinople to its late ancient role as a second city in the Roman Empire, almost fully equal to Rome in the imperial geography and hierarchy. But equally critical, he made no such accommodations for the inhabitants, current or former, of Constantinople. These remained perpetually frozen in the second rank of Europe's cultural and political hierarchy. That is, Piccolomini made the city Roman again, but its inhabitants remained Greek. This distinction points to the essence of the rhetorical-historical project broached by Piccolomini. He sought to appropriate the imperial space vacated by the fall of the Byzantine

⁸⁰ Helmrath, "The German Reichstage and the Crusade," 62–63; RTA 19/2, 466–69.

Empire. Constantinople retained its geographic, historical, and terminological associations with the late Roman Empire, which made it useful for appropriation. The Byzantines, their emperor, and their religion, however, Piccolomini showed no interest in redeeming, as they contributed little to his mission. His imperial imagination had a finite horizon.

Quamvis omnibus, Piccolomini's first oration to the imperial diet in Regensburg convened in May 1454, reiterated the phrasing of his letters.⁸¹ Constantinople was the city of Constantine, where "the throne of the eastern empire and the patriarchal see long flourished." Indistinctly blending distant and recent past, Piccolomini drew the obvious parallels between the city's foundation and fall, both of which occurred under an emperor Constantine. "It is extraordinary to say that the empire of the Greeks was extinguished under one with the same name as he who founded it."⁸² The city's association with Constantine was of course inscribed in its very name, and many other humanists riffed on the sainted emperor's memory and providential foundation, which remained part of the origin story concocted and circulated in the *Donation of Constantine*.⁸³

⁸¹ There are several extant editions of the oration, as well as several stages of its composition. For the initial or early version, see Mansi III, 54–65; which does not specify the manuscripts used; Wolkan IV, 538–47, which embeds the oration within his letter to Vitéz (*Historia Ratisponensis*) and reproduces Mansi. An intermediate version of the oration based on several manuscripts, which shows some editing and rearranged materials, was prepared in RTA 19/1, no. 34, 1, pp. 265–70. A final version of the oration, representing the ultimate curated text prepared by Piccolomini late in his life, was edited in Mansi I, 251–58; more thoroughly, and with synoptic presentation of early, intermediate, and final versions of the text, as well as a rigorous unpicking of the editorial history of the oration, see Cotta-Schonberg V, no. 21, pp. 5–76. In the analysis to follow, I will cite the RTA edition with indications in the notes regarding important variants in the early version. For scholarly judgments on the oration, see Voigt, *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini*, 3:98–118; Helmrath, "Pius II. und die Türken," 293–94, esp. n. 40 where he rejects Pertusi's opinion that this oration was "perhaps the most interesting" of his crusade speeches.

⁸² RTA 19/1, no. 34, 1, p. 266.27–29: "ubi orientalis imperii solium et patriarchalis sedes longo tempore floruit. Illic occisus est imperator Constantinus ejus nominis ultimus. Mirabile dictu, ut in eo nomine Graecorum imperium sit extinctum, in quo sumpsit initium." For a contemporary reflection on the historico-terminological parallels, taken as a sign of the coming end of the world, see the eschatological calculations in George Scholarios, *Chronographia*, in Scholarios IV, 504–12, here at 510.26–30: "Ἡ βασιλεία τῶν χριστιανῶν, ἣτις καὶ βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἦν, ἀρχὴν εἶχε τὸν βασιλέα Κωνσταντῖνον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ Ἑλένην · τέλος δὲ τῆς βασιλείας ταύτης, Κωνσταντῖνος ἦν βασιλεὺς καὶ μητὴρ Ἑλένη, καὶ ἡ μὲν μικρὸν πρὸ τῆς ἀλώσεως τῆς πόλεως μετέστη τοῦ βίου · ὁ δὲ υἱὸς αὐτῆς Κωνσταντῖνος ἐφονεύθη ἐν τῇ ἀλώσει."

⁸³ Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 132.

But Piccolomini reshaped this argument by eliding the subsequent imperial transfer to the Franks. In his account, the imperial authority vested in the city had never been transferred.

Elsewhere it was not the city but Byzantine imperial kingship that he elevated from its conventional place below Roman in the medieval hierarchy to apparently equal. In one startling passage from Piccolomini's oration at Frankfurt, *Constantinopolitana Clades*, the orator recycled his ocular metaphor from the letter to Nicholas V. "What now that one of the two Christian emperors has been slain? Is it not as though one of the two eyes of Christendom has been torn out? One of its hands amputated?"⁸⁴ This strategic reuse illustrates the deftness with which Piccolomini manipulated the familiar political categories and relationships. In the oration, he notably abandoned the ambiguity of his previous reference to the "two eyes of Christendom"—which had suggested a religious binary of the Latin and Greek churches, or perhaps the Roman and Constantinopolitan patriarchates—instead harnessing the imagery of the body to an imperial rubric. His "two Christian emperors" left no doubt that the binary he invoked was that of the western and eastern empires, and that their relationship was symmetrical just like the eyes in the body. His metaphor echoed Themistios's oration on brotherly love before the senate of Constantinople in 364, an extended defense of the administrative division of the empire between Valens and Valentinian.⁸⁵ Even if Piccolomini was not intentionally referencing Themistios, the

⁸⁴ RTA 19/2, no. 13,1, pp. 497–98: "quid, quod ibi ex duobus imperatoribus Christianis alter occisus est? nonne ex duobus Christianitatis oculis erutum esse alterum dicere possumus, ex duabus manibus alteram amputatam?" This passage also echoed a speech Piccolomini gave to Frederick III during fraught negotiations between the emperor and the Austrian nobles who demanded Ladislaus's release from Frederick's regency in return for peace. The emperor's intransigence appeared to be dooming the negotiations to failure before Piccolomini stepped in to plead for the greater value of peace with the Austrians and Hungarians. It would, he argued, deprive the Turks of the opportunity to conquer Constantinople, "nam liberi Hungari non sinent, alterum Europae oculum in manus infidelium devenire." The oration is preserved partially in Piccolomini, *Historia Austriacis*, 2:808; more fully and with an extensive description of the context in a letter to Cardinal Carvajal (6 April 1453): Wolkan III, no. 61, p. 129.

⁸⁵ See Themistios I, Or. 6, 83c: "ἢ καθάπερ σώματος ἑνός, ὅλης τῆς γῆς δεύτερος ὀφθαλμός, μᾶλλον δὲ καρδία καὶ ὀμφαλὸς καὶ ὃ τι ἂν εἴποι τις τῶν μερῶν τὸ κυριώτατον;"

equilibrium implicit in the eyes depicted an evenly shared imperial mantle—more evocative of the late ancient than the late medieval world.

Reactions to these orations are hard to judge. After his first speech at Regensburg Piccolomini reported that he was greeted by “remarkable silence” (*mirum silentium*), a reaction loaded with ambiguity.⁸⁶ And after *Constantinopolitana clades*, where Piccolomini spoke in an impassioned pitch for almost two hours—an impressive feat for both modern speakers and audiences now that we have lost our appetite and aptitude for sustained oratory—he admitted to a friend in a letter, “Whether anyone enjoyed it, I don’t know. Many asked for a copy, out of flattery I imagine.”⁸⁷ Flattery or not, the oration circulated widely, extant now in over fifty manuscripts and innumerable printings after the *editio princeps* in 1478.⁸⁸ But one measure of the impact of his efforts to reimagine Constantinople as the fourth-century Roman imperial capital emerges from the last of the three Turkish Reichstage, at Wiener Neustadt in 1455. Here Vitéz, who had first employed the *imperium orientale*, became Piccolomini’s interlocutor and respondent as the two gave a series of mutually responding orations over the course of a month in March and April of 1455.⁸⁹ Piccolomini’s speeches, *In hoc florentissimo* and *Si mihi*, disingenuously considered the issue of crusade settled; it remained only to discuss details, like the conduct of Christians at war, and the support the empire would render to the Hungarians along the way.

⁸⁶ *Historia Ratisponensis*, in Wolkan IV, 547.

⁸⁷ RTA 19/2, no. 13,1, p. 391: “an placuerit, nescio. multi, ut puto per adulationem, eam petunt.” A second letter only days later reports laconically “auditus sum equis animis.” (ibid., no. 13,7, p. 414). His later memory of the event, recorded in his *Commentaries*, was less modest, recalling “no one thought excessive—and all lamented its end.” Pius II, *Commentaries* I, Vol. I, 1.27.4, p. 134.

⁸⁸ On the transmission and circulation of the oration, see RTA 19/2, 468–69.

⁸⁹ For this series of orations, delivered between 23 March and 25 April, see RTA 19/3, nos. 35–38, 40, pp. 544–600, 605–08.

Vitéz's opening oration *Pulsatis merore*, in response, took the defense of Hungary as the chief goal of the diet and spared no efforts to persuade the audience that Hungary faced an existential crisis. To do so, Vitéz appropriated Piccolomini's imperial reimagination, which he himself had first employed two years earlier. It is fitting that he did so in dialogue with Piccolomini, who had elevated Vitéz's imperial musings to a central element in his case for the common crusade.

Vitéz had come to convince the diet's participants—not only the emperor but also the princes—to support Hungary in her hour of need. The hopes of the Hungarians, Vitéz reiterated, rested upon the emperor, who alone could repel the Ottomans. *Bellum grave* threatened not only the Hungarians but all of Christendom. Echoing the sentiments of Piccolomini in the imperial diets at Regensburg and Frankfurt, Vitéz represented the Turks as almost an incidental calamity. The real issue remained the discord among Christians, a society furnishing the means of its own destruction. Vitéz offered as the ultimate example of this descent into ignominy the recent destruction of eastern empire.

I'll ignore the many profane deeds perpetrated upon the faithful from the beginning of that war. It will be enough to mention the most recent calamities, worthy of tearful annals. The eastern empire, from of old oppressed and attacked by a hostile horde, has been destroyed due to the sluggishness of its allies and the grave infamy of all the Christians, and has been trampled by the fourth heel of the enemy.⁹⁰

Laying the blame at the feet of squabbling and reluctant princes followed the script for *Türkenrede* written by Piccolomini, and Vitéz emulated his fellow orator as well in drawing a line from the conquest of the eastern empire to a threat to the western. “[Mehmed] subjugated the eastern empire, which stood once alongside your predecessors (*olim tuis precessoribus collaterale*)—now he

⁹⁰ RTA 19/3, no. 35, p. 549: “Taceo de iniuriis divine bonitati irrogatis, que corde apcius, quam ore pensanda puto; pretereo fidei nostre preciosa damna, fidelium clara funera ac innumera prophane gentis eiusdem prophana facinora ab exordio illati belli cumulata: satis erit novissimos casus attingere, lacrimosis annalibus dignos. Orientale imperium ab olim infesta diuturnitate oppugnatum hostili tandem mole, sociorum desidia et omnium Christianorum gravi infamia subversum est, ac tetri hostis calcaneo proculcatum.”

seeks your western one.”⁹¹ This move lent imperial gravity to the religiously tinged “domino-theory” that Piccolomini had advanced at Regensburg. Ascribing to Mehmed an avaricious appetite for *imperial* conquest and linking the fate of the eastern and western empires would prove perhaps the most enduring image from Vitéz’s oration.

But Vitéz’s deployment of the eastern empire ultimately lacked the force of Piccolomini’s, for it rested upon a more transparently terminological, rather than ideological, foundation. For Vitéz, the *imperium orientale* represented not one half of the Roman empire, not “one of the two eyes of Christendom,” as Piccolomini called it, but one of many legitimate kingdoms of central and eastern Europe. Vitéz employed the historical language, but consciously abstained from the historical and political implications. He strained to convince the emperor and German princes to take up arms, but he was, justifiably, concerned primarily with the fate of Hungary. Nor did he wish to valorize a supra-regnal political entity like the Roman Empire of antiquity, which might subsume the sovereignty of the kingdom of Hungary. As he noted in the *narratio* of his oration, this war would fall upon not the “tributaries” of the empire, but the empire’s allies in the true faith, “common heirs in the expectation of the true kingdom.”⁹² The distinction between “tributary” (*vectigalis*) and “ally” (*socius*) drew on the ancient hierarchy in relationships with the Roman Empire, and marked Hungary as a political peer to the empire not its subject. It also revealed his attitude toward the idea, advocated by Piccolomini, of a pan-Christian polity under the authority of the emperor. Vitéz wanted none of it. Bending Horace to his purpose, Vitéz

⁹¹ RTA 19/3, no. 35, p. 548: “Subegit orientale imperium, quod olim tuis precessoribus collaterale fuit; occidentale tuum petit.” The sense of *collaterale* here must be both spatial (i.e., the eastern empire once bordered the western), as well as affective (i.e., the eastern empire was once a *socius* to the western); see Charles Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis* (Frankfurt, 1681), s.v., *collateralis*.

⁹² RTA 19/3, no. 35, p. 547: “Bellum grave illatum est non vectigalibus tuis, magnifice imperator, sed fidei consortibus, qui tibi cultura veri dei socii sunt, vera religione comites ac veri regni expectatione coheredes.”

declared that after avarice had stolen the crown of the eastern empire, “the legitimate kingdoms there in the east (*ibi iusta et legitima imperia*) also fell.”⁹³ Hungary and the other “empires” of central and eastern Europe remained legitimately independent from the Holy Roman Empire.

Pulsatis merore represented Vitéz’s most extended engagement with the category of eastern empire, but it was not the only speech in which he employed this idea. In his orations to Castiglione, and the imperial diet, Vitéz’s used the category of eastern empire, again more as an antiquarian flourish than part of a broader advocacy of the Roman Empire, as Piccolomini had envisioned it. But the context of the appearance confirmed the one singular aspect of this rhetoric of the eastern empire. It needed the rich soil of imperial failure to bloom. Only in crusade oratory *after* the fall of Constantinople did Vitéz and Piccolomini truly commit to this rhetorical device.

Piccolomini’s emphasis on Constantinople’s special position in the universal Roman Empire served the imperial agenda well, even if the desired crusade failed to materialize. It is more surprising that he did not abandon this language even after his election as Pope Pius II in 1458. After all, the papacy had since the thirteenth century fashioned a robust ideology of papal monarchy over all Christendom and the administrative machinery to match; the Roman Empire and its monarch were subject to the pope’s examination and approval.⁹⁴ Yet in both of Pius II’s long papal bulls imploring all Christians to take the cross, he continued to draw upon Constantinople’s imperial status, either to rhetorically heighten the magnitude of the loss, as he had in his diet orations, or to emphasize Mehmed’s ambitions and their threat to Europe. Pius

⁹³ RTA 19/3, no. 35, p. 547: “apicem orientalis imperii hostilis rapacitas sustuli, cum quo simul ibi iusta et legitima imperia occiderunt.”

⁹⁴ See John A. Watt, *The Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Thirteenth Century: The Contribution of the Canonists* (London, 1965); Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford, 1989), esp. 568–75.

II's second bull, *Ezechielis Prophete* (October 23, 1463) ominously declared: "There is no doubt that with the eastern empire conquered, he [Mehmed] now looks to the western," echoing Vitéz's domino-theory of imperial conquest.⁹⁵ The most widely circulated oration of his corpus, *Cum bellum hodie*, which he delivered at the Congress of Mantua in the summer of 1459, reworked the imperial themes from his letters and orations, while preserving Constantinople as the seat of eastern empire, the backbone of Greece.⁹⁶ Therefore, throughout his papacy, Pius II persisted in making the re-Romanized Constantinople central to his arguments about necessity of crusade.

Yet, in spite of all his attempts to elevate the imperial status of Constantinople, from "that royal city" (*illa regia urbs*) to something more majestic, more Roman, Piccolomini persisted in applying medieval ethnographic prejudice to the Byzantines themselves. They were schismatic and heterodox, their emperor too inconstant in his fidelity to Catholic faith even after the union professed in Florence.⁹⁷ They lacked the proper martial spirit, and were thus incapable of

⁹⁵ His two most extensive crusade bulls were *Vocavit nos pius* (13 October 1458), which is preserved in registers in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, but recorded in full in Lodrisio Crivelli's unfinished work *De expeditione Pii Papae II contra Turcos*, ed. Giulio C. Zimolo, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. 23 pt. 5 (Bologna, 1950), 91–96. The second was *Ezechielis Prophete* (October 23, 1463), now available in a critical edition with the facing French translation made by the Burgundian ambassador, is published in *Guillaume Fillastre D.J. Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Malte Prietzel (Ostfildern, 2003), 158–204, here 158: "Nec dubium, quin orientali subacto imperio, ad occidentale aspiraret." This "domino-theory" had been used before by Piccolomini, first in his oration *Quamvis omnibus*, where he advanced the idea that the conquest of Constantinople would only sharpen Mehmed's desire for the rest of Europe. But the frame for these predictions remained Christian, rather than imperial, as Mehmed desired to expunge the Christian name: *Quamvis omnibus*, in *Wolkan IV*, 541–42; RTA 19/1, no. 34, 1, p. 267. This idea echoed in other contemporary testimonies as well; for examples see Pertusi, "Le epistole storiche di Lauro Quirini," 183–84, esp. n. 72. The idea was given an imperial, as opposed to religious, inflection for the first time, however, by Vitéz's oration *Pulsatis merore*, in Vitéz, *Opera*, pt. 4, no. 7, p. 258.

⁹⁶ *Cum bellum hodie* is published in *Mansi II*, 9–30; a recent edition, provisional yet based on a far more thorough collation of a selection of the extant 120 manuscripts is in *Cotta-Schönberg VIII*, 49–191.

⁹⁷ *Quamvis omnibus*, in *Wolkan IV*, 539: "Quiescebat Graecorum imperator domi suae apud Constantinopolim, quamvis in fide nostra orthodoxa non satis instructus atque satis fixus, Christianus tamen, Dei ac domini nostri Jesu pro captu cultor, sanguine nobilis, et virtute clarus. Nulla ei cum Turcis lis erat." This passage was excised in later recensions, such as the edition printed in the RTA 19/1, no. 34, 1, pp. 266–70, but it was apparently reiterated in Nicholas of Cusa's unpreserved oration which followed Piccolomini. According to his epistolary report on the diet to Vitéz, Nicholas of Cusa emphasized that even though the Greeks had refused to abide by the union, which they had agreed to "fraudulently" (*cum fraude*), nevertheless they were still Christians. See *Wolkan IV*, 547.

defending themselves against Ottoman aggression.⁹⁸ And while he hardly espoused the view, current among some humanists, that the Greeks had deserved their misfortune, it was only ever the city of Constantinople and its imperial territory that merited rhetorical reincorporation into the Roman Empire. The people were perpetually *Graeci*.⁹⁹ Such a refrain allowed him to articulate a second argument, a cultural one, in his assertions of the justice of a war against such an enemy. In *Constantinopolitana clades*, Piccolomini made this case at length. Constantinople, though it had on occasion been pillaged by Christians, had remained a beacon of wisdom, a new Athens. In contrast, the Turks were barbaric, inimical to literature and learning, so much so that Piccolomini feared that the age of Greek letters had ended.¹⁰⁰

This desire to invest Constantinople with a geo-ideological connection to the Roman Empire came not from any love for the Byzantines themselves, in spite of their preservation of classical literature and philosophy. Rather it was a rhetorical move to sanction the Roman Empire as the normative political community in Europe, a call to princes to invest in a category larger than their own polities and for which it would be worth setting aside their petty, or at least local, disputes. This appeal to the universality of the Roman Empire remained only implicit in many of his invocations of a supra-regnal polity, pragmatically concealed behind the *Christiana*

⁹⁸ *Cum bellum hodie*, in Mansi II, 17: “Graeci quoque, illustres quondam animae, haudquaquam vigorem antiquum retinent.”

⁹⁹ For an excellent example of the disdain of some humanists for the misfortunes of the Byzantines, see the dialogue conversation imagined between Matteo Palmieri and Cosimo de’ Medici in Poggio Bracciolini’s *On the Misery of the Human Condition*, in which the Byzantines are blamed for their own misfortunes: quoted in Hankins, “Renaissance Crusaders,” 131–32.

¹⁰⁰ RTA 19/2, no. 16, pp. 511–15; this was by no means a unique complaint—see for instance Cardinal Bessarion’s letter to Michael Apostoles (Ep. 30), in which he bemoans the loss of the city for its literary treasures and describes his library as a project of cultural preservation: Mohler III, 478–79. Nevertheless, as Hankins points out, knowledge of Greek was rare enough that the view that the Byzantines had performed some service in the preservation of ancient Greek literature and learning, “was a sophisticated attitude that emerged mostly among the humanist elite.” Hankins, “Renaissance Crusaders,” 131.

respublica, the “Christian commonwealth,” to which all princes and peoples in Europe belonged.¹⁰¹ The concept of Christendom as a principle of unity was well established in the lexicon of medieval political thought, though it generally excluded Byzantium.¹⁰² But occasionally Piccolomini expressed himself as an ardent imperialist as well. In *Quamvis omnibus* Piccolomini declared the emperor protector of the church and the faith, and affirmed his readiness to strain every sinew “for the security of the Christian name, for the increase of the Catholic faith, for the honor of the Roman Empire, and for the glory of the German nation.”¹⁰³ And in explaining the emperor’s convocation of the diet, Piccolomini argued that the irresistible and “conjoined” (*concors*) might of the Roman Empire, Christendom and Germany would overwhelm Mehmed, no matter how implacable he seemed as a foe.¹⁰⁴ In these passages Piccolomini oriented the Roman Empire between the universal appeal to Christendom, and the

¹⁰¹ RTA 19/1, no. 34, 1, p. 266.10–13: “utile videtur reverendissimis ac magnificis dominis et collegis meis, imperatorie maiestatis oratoribus, causam ipsam convocacionis amplius explicare, et quod sit imperatorie maiestatis intentum ad consulendum reipublicae Christiane, in hoc amplissimo auditorio exponere.” A passage later excised from the final version (Wolkan IV, 546): “convenientes in hoc loco ad consulendum reipublice Christiane”

¹⁰² For Gregory the Great, the *respublica* was coterminous with Christendom: see *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum*, ed. Dag Norberg, CCSL 140–140A, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 1982) 1:73.8–11: “Ubi enim meritorum uestrorum loquax non discurrit opinio, quae et bella uos frequenter appetere non desiderio fundendi sanguinis sed dilatandae causa rei publicae, in qua deum coli conspiciamus, loqueretur . . .” The concept of the *respublica* thrived especially in the age of Louis the Pious; see Wolfgang Wehlen, *Geschichtsschreibung und Staatsauffassung im Zeitalter Ludwigs des Frommen* (Lübeck, 1970).

¹⁰³ *Quamvis omnibus*, in Wolkan IV, 543: “Ipse autem divus Fridericus, tamquam Romanorum imperator, tamquam advocatus et protector ecclesiae, tamquam princeps religiosissimus, cui cordi est catholica et orthodoxa fides Christiana, suam operam suasque vires et omne patrimonium suum in medium offert. Voluntarium quoque et promptum paratumque se dicit, quantum in ejus potestate fuerit, cuncta executioni mandare, quae in hac conventionem pro tutela Christiani nominis, pro augmento fidei Catholicae, pro honore Romani imperii, pro gloria Germanicae nationis quoquomodo deliberata conclusaque fuerint.” The passage in the intermediate version (RTA 19/1, no. 34, 1, p. 268), is almost identical.

¹⁰⁴ *Quamvis omnibus*, in RTA 19/1, no. 34, 1, pp. 268.1–5: “Etenim quamvis est ille, ut ante dixi, ferocissimus et potentissimus hostis, nihil erit inde sua potentia, si Christianorum vires coeant, si Romani potestas imperii concors arma capessat, si nobilissimi Germanorum proceres, potentissimae communitates unanimes cum gloriosissimo principe duce Burgundiae, qui adest, ad defensionem fidei consurrexerint.” See Wolkan IV, 545, for the similar passage, slightly differently in expression.

more local interests of the German princes and people. Indeed, he made the Roman Empire the conceptual bridge between the two.

The Imperium Orientale and Piccolomini's Concept of Empire

Piccolomini's repeated invocation of Constantinople as the locus of eastern empire raises the question of whether this idea challenged the concept of empire he had previously expressed in previous writings. By the 1450s, Piccolomini had authored treatises, orations, and dialogues that expressed a traditional view of the role of empire. In these works, he repeated conventional elements of western medieval imperial ideology, like the translation of empire to the Germans, in defense of the empire's universal sovereignty and the emperor's duty to protect the church and unify Christendom. Could such a stalwart imperial conservative make room for the *imperium orientale* with any ideological consistency?

Piccolomini was actually not as strait-laced as his conservatism might suggest. Despite his evident fidelity to some core tenets of medieval imperial ideology, Piccolomini manifested a willingness, startling in a cleric, to scorn certain precepts axiomatic to the church. In his *Pentalogus*—a five-way dialogue between Frederick III, Piccolomini and several of his councilors—the dialogue-character Piccolomini insisted that the emperor's mandate to defend the church validated his right to call a council. When one of his interlocutors (not the emperor) objected that those called to the council would dispute the emperor's authority for such an action, Piccolomini responded in an almost proto-Lutheran pique, "That's why I said that orators, not asses, should be dispatched." It would be easy enough for capable men to show that the pope's claim that he alone could convoke a council was nonsense, nothing more than an innovation of canon law with no basis in scripture. In antiquity nearly all councils had emerged

from imperial edict, dialogue-Piccolomini argued.¹⁰⁵ In Piccolomini's *Dialogue on the Donation of Constantine*, Bernardino of Siena—the Italian preacher canonized by Nicholas V in 1450—cast as Piccolomini's dream guide like Dante's Virgil, casually dismissed the veracity of Silvester's baptism of Constantine. This apocryphal moment justified Constantine's donation and foundation of the papacy's claim to temporal authority in Italy—but Bernardino expressed his doubt, “though the *oraria* of the Roman church is full of it.”¹⁰⁶ Of course in each case Piccolomini cleverly exploited the mask of the dialogic form to obscure his own views.

Nevertheless, the fact that these irreverent positions emerged from figures of authority in each text—Piccolomini himself in the *Pentalogus*; Bernardino of Siena, Piccolomini's guide, in the *Dialogue*—suggests that may have been his. They in no way contradicted his greatest ideological commitment, ever to the universal authority of the Roman Empire. Though he occasionally acknowledged that imperial power had declined in reality, he never wavered from the assertion that in principle it remained undiminished. This emphasis on the universality of imperial monarchy, its claim to political authority over every prince and inhabitant on earth, appeared in both his orations and his theoretical works. In an early speech to Albrecht V, Duke of Austria and King of Hungary, prevailing upon him to accept his election as emperor in 1438, Piccolomini insisted that “each man is bound to the empire, which not only embraces one city or province, but the whole world.”¹⁰⁷ This oration, and others like it, treated only superficially the ideas he had developed two years earlier in his most well-known work of imperial theorizing, *On*

¹⁰⁵ Enea Silvio Piccolomini. *Pentalogus*, ed. Christoph Schingnitz, MGH Staatsschriften 8 (Hanover, 2009), 132.10–34.6.

¹⁰⁶ Enea Sylvio Piccolomini. *Dialogus de Donatione Constantini*, ed. Duane R. Henderson, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch. 27 (Hanover, 2011), 68.

¹⁰⁷ *Quid est*, in Cotta-Schönberg II, no. 3, p. 257: “Hoc autem ideo dico, ut intelligas, quantum imperio quisque teneatur, quod non solum unam civitatem aut provinciam sed totum complectitur orbem.”

the Origin and Authority of the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁸ This epistolary treatise, addressed to Frederick III, advanced an argument based chiefly on natural law for the validity of the Roman Empire, asserting that human nature requires a single ruler to subsume the individual regimes that had developed throughout history. Just as men required a king, so kings themselves required an emperor, without whom universal peace would be unattainable.¹⁰⁹ Tracing the series of empires familiar from patristic and medieval interpretations of Daniel—Assyrians, Medes, Greeks, and Romans—Piccolomini demonstrated that the supreme authority of the Roman Empire represented the culmination of natural law and divine providence.¹¹⁰ These multiple layers of sanction made the universality of the empire’s claim indisputable, not matter how attenuated its authority happened to be at the moment.

This firm conviction in the universal authority of the emperor did not, however, preclude Piccolomini from strategically diverging from these beliefs when useful. Oratory in particular required persuasion and impelled Piccolomini to pragmatically deploy variations on the imperial ideology he had espoused in *On the Origin and Authority of the Roman Empire*. An oration addressed to Nicholas V in 1450 in an effort to negotiate Frederick’s imperial coronation flattered the Holy Father by celebrating the pope as the agent of imperial translation, parroting the papacy’s own ideology of supremacy back to it.¹¹¹ He also spun a different tale regarding the Byzantines in this oration. The pope had deprived these emperors of the imperial office on account of “arrogance,

¹⁰⁸ See Wolkan II, 6–24; it is also available in an English translation in Thomas M. Izbicki and Cary J. Nederman, trans., *Three Tracts on Empire* (Bristol, 2000), 95–112.

¹⁰⁹ Wolkan II, 9.

¹¹⁰ Wolkan II, 13.

¹¹¹ See Mansi I, 140–41: “postquam sancta Sedes Apostolica imperatoriam dignitatem ex Graecorum gente in persona magnifici Caroli M. transtulit ad Germanos.”

and idleness, and perhaps heresy.”¹¹² Piccolomini, like many other late medieval writers, constantly referenced the translation of empire from the Greeks to the Germans in Charlemagne, an axiomatic element of western medieval imperial thought for both papal and imperial partisans. But the central elements of that story, the pope’s coronation of Charles, admitted multiple interpretations that could either flatter the pope or the emperor. If there is one point where consistency cannot be discerned, it is in Piccolomini’s repetition of the *translatio imperii*, which necessarily denied Byzantine imperial claims.

It can be an error to seek to impose consistency on the pragmatic political expressions of a figure like Piccolomini. Even so, the rhetoric of the *imperium orientale* did not contravene so much as nuance his commitment to the universal Roman Empire. After all, the *imperium orientale* derived its rhetorical momentum from the associations formed with the Roman Empire of late antiquity, a period—at least in the fifteenth-century memory—when the empire bound the Mediterranean world into a coherent whole. Still, it is significant that his emphasis was on the imperial city, not its previous rulers. Like Vitéz, Piccolomini was chiefly interested in the city and its symbolism, not the emperors who had previously ruled it. His eastern empire reimagined Constantinople as a part of a bipartite Roman Empire, a vision at odds with the Byzantines’ view of their own imperial role. Piccolomini, as others after him, found he needed Byzantium without the Byzantines. Prior to 1454, Piccolomini had never asserted, had never needed to assert, that the Byzantines had continued to rule half of a unified imperial state. The only divisions over which he fretted then were those between pope and council, or between rival imperial candidates, not

¹¹² Mansi I, 143: “quam Graeci superbia et ignavia, ac forsitan haeresi perdiderunt . . .”

between Greek and Latin, and certainly not between eastern and western empire.¹¹³ His concern for the unity of Christendom and the empire had always been western-facing.¹¹⁴ The East had signified for Piccolomini not the imperial geography of the late antique Roman Empire, but a purely religious geography, a synonym for Asia, a land in which many Christians still dwelled and suffered under the Turkish yoke.¹¹⁵

Ultimately Piccolomini's eastern empire was a gambit of persuasion, an attempt to amplify the stakes of collective action for a group of recalcitrant princes. Piccolomini employed this historical category, but in an ahistorical way. That is, he aimed not to illustrate, like Flavio Biondo, the historicity of the Roman Empire through its medieval decline; rather he flattened the historical space between the fifth and the fifteenth century to serve the ends of political urgency. Throughout his extensive works on empire—chiefly, *Pentalogus*, *Dialogue on the Donation of Constantine*, *On the Origin and Authority of the Roman Empire*—Piccolomini viewed empire as a sempiternal category: universal, unchanging, even if in need of urgent political action for renewal. Nevertheless, his conception was that of a politician, not a theorist or a historian.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ As in his oration to convince Albrecht Duke of Austria to accept imperial election in 1438, *Quid est*, in Cotta-Schönberg II, no. 3, p. 269; see also Piccolomini, *Pentalogus*, 106, where the concern is over the rival popes, Eugenius IV and Felix V, and the empire's commitment to neutrality in the matter.

¹¹⁴ See Piccolomini's advice for Frederick's orators (*Pentalogus*, 174–76), whom the bishop advises should be dispatched to Milan to gain the duke's permission for the emperor to make his *Romzug*: “Dolere te [i.e., Frederick], quod subditi imperii sub tyrannide teneantur nimiumque vexentur. Ideoque duas tibi maximas curas esse, alteram, ut pacare ecclesiam possis, que nimis afflicta est, alteram vero, ut Italiam regnumque tuum visites. Dicet aliqua de rebus ecclesie et aliqua de imperio.”

¹¹⁵ As in *Et breviter me hodie*, edited and translated for the first time in Cotta-Schönberg III, pp. 336–58, here at 353: “Multi sunt animi [perditi], postquam fides catholica in subjectis deficere cepit. Asia quondam Christum credebatur crucifixum et una cum occidentalibus in arca fidei morabatur. Id quoque Africa fecit. At hodie, pro dolor, totus Oriens a nobis divisus est. Nihil Libya nobiscum habet commune.”

¹¹⁶ J.B. Toews, “The View of Empire in Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II),” *Traditio* 24, no. 1 (1968): 471–487, esp. 477.

Thus Piccolomini used the *imperium orientale*, a historically laden phrase, only to give a new depth to this dehistoricized idea of the universal Roman empire.

Conclusion: The Shadow of the Eastern Empire

By way of conclusion, it will be useful to sketch out the way this concept, first expressed by Vitéz but developed and circulated by Piccolomini, ramified through crusading discourse of the late fifteenth century. Much like gruesome tales of relics destroyed and virgins defiled, it became part of the lexicon of anti-Turkish orations and other exhortations to crusade, like papal bulls, which circulated widely from the 1450s onward. Pius II's successor Sixtus IV used his predecessor's language in his bull authorizing preachers to distribute plenary indulgences to those willing to contribute to a crusade. In *Ad apicem apostolatus*, issued in both 1471 and 1472, Sixtus enumerated the territories conquered by the Ottomans: "he violently seized the most brilliant city Constantinople, the eastern head, and other territories, cities and places of the eastern empire."¹¹⁷

Other humanists echoed this same formulation before Pius II himself. Francesco Filelfo used it in his oration before the pope at the Congress of Mantua in 1459, which recounted the ever-more audacious assaults of the Ottomans on the eastern frontier of *Christiana respublica*. Where they had first been content to launch secret raids against their enemies, against Alexios Komnenos they dared to make war openly "to contend with that eastern empire for its

¹¹⁷ The bull is published in *Annales Ecclesiastici*, vol. 19, ad an. 1471, nos. 72–73, here at p. 234: "Non modo Pamphiliam, Ciliciam, Liciam, Paphlagoniam, Thraciam, Epyrum, Peloponesum, Boetiam et ipsam preclarissimam urbem Constantinopolitam orientale caput ac alias terras, urbes, et loca orientalis imperii violatentes occupaverit"

kingship.”¹¹⁸ Giannantonio Campano, Piccolomini’s successor as unstinting advocate of the crusade, adopted a similar phrase in his oration to King Ferrante of Naples imploring the Aragonese monarch to support the crusade. “We concern ourselves with death, not wounds; the sword strikes to the heart. It is not now about the empire of the east; we have lost the north in great part; ruin threatens the west.”¹¹⁹ Once again, the demise of the eastern empire was cast as an augur for the western one.

The similarity in these expressions—Constantinople as the “seat” of empire, Mehmed’s ambitions for serial imperial conquest—disclose their roots in the language of Piccolomini and Vitéz. But Filelfo and Campano probably adopted this phrase in imitation of Piccolomini, rather than as an attempt to reshape the imperial geography of the Mediterranean. Piccolomini and Vitéz took advantage of a blank slate of sorts in reviving this imperial language. Its absence from imperial semantics in the Middle Ages meant that they could use it to consciously gesture to a late antique context, when the Roman Empire had been the supreme polity in the Mediterranean world. But the popularity of Piccolomini’s crusade orations like *Quamvis omnibus*,

¹¹⁸ Francesco Filelfo, *Oratio ad Pium secundum pontificem maximum habita Mantuae*, in *Orationes Francisci Philelfi cum quibusdam aliis eiusdem operibus ad oratoriam summopere conducentibus* (Paris, 1515), fols. 92v–95r, here at 93v: “ut iam auderent aperto etiam Marte cum imperio illo orientali de principatu contendere.” See also 94v, where he calls Constantinople “nobilissimum illud orientalis imperii Emporium,” a gesture to its role as both an economic center and a sea-port.

¹¹⁹ Giannantonio Campano, *De bello sociali Turcico ad Ferdinandum Regem Aragonum Oratio*, in Nicolaus Reusner, *Selectissimarum Orationum et Consultationum de bello Turcico . . . voluminis tertii, Pars altera* (Leipzig, [1595]), 98: “Perniciem curamus, non vulnera: ad cor ipsum penetravit ferrum. Non agitur iam de Orientis imperio: Septentrionem magna ex parte amisimus: imminet Occidenti ruina.” See also the language of Bernardo Giustiniani, a Venetian historian and orator, in his speech to Sixtus IV in 1471, in *Bernardi Iustiniani oratoris clarissimi Orationes. Eiusdem nonnullae Epistol[a]e. Eiusdem traductio in Isocratis libellum Ad Nicoclem Regem. Leonardi Iustiniani Epistolae* (Venice, 1492), fol. gii: “ipsa nunc Asia praeda facta est. Breuem enim nescio quem angulum circa helespontum occupaverere. prorogauere deinde sensim astu atque perfidia plusquam armis imperium, donec aperto Marte urbem nobilissimam, civitatum reginam, sedem imperii, dominam gentium, principem prouinciarum Constantinopolim sustulere. tantorum autem causa malorum afferri profecto alia non potest, nisi quam diffidentes inter se principes nostri . . .” Giustiniani espoused the idea—for reasons of Venetian political ideology—that the empire had been divided, rather than translated, under Charlemagne.

Constantinopolitana Clades, and *Cum bellum hodie* meant that these speeches soon became the sources to which later uses of the *imperium orientale* referred, interposing themselves between audiences and late antique historical context. That is, later orators like Campano and Filelfo were most likely aping Piccolomini's popular speeches, rather than making their own claims about the imperial paradigm of the mid-fifteenth century.

Piccolomini and Vitéz both found the category of eastern empire useful for crusade rhetoric, but while the Italian inserted it into the matrix of his long-standing commitment to universal empire, the Hungarian employed it in a much narrower political sense, one among the many *legittima imperia* of eastern Europe under the Sultan's yoke. This usage retained the term's historical reference to late antiquity, but stripped away the ideological associations of the Roman Empire, its universal sovereignty and providential end.

Piccolomini's conception was more ambitious. The idea of Roman Empire had always been a rich vein of legitimacy, a unique claim to supreme political sovereignty in a complex and contested world. The idea of the *imperium orientale* drew strength from this enduring source of authority and complemented Piccolomini's vision of a universal Roman Empire. By reaching back to the geography of late antiquity, Piccolomini not only bolstered Frederick III's assertion of universal lordship, but he papered over the historical divisions between Byzantine East and Latin West with a claim to long-standing imperial unity. To reimagine Constantinople as the capital of the eastern empire was to implore his audience to envision a Christendom without dynastic disputes or territorial conflict, one where all Christians could array themselves behind the Roman Emperor, the Lord of the World, to defeat common foes. The impossibility of collective action had always been the greatest impediment to a crusade in the fifteenth century, and Piccolomini revived the eastern empire as a clever attempt to surmount this obstacle. But it was only one among several rhetorical gambits he employed to induce the uninterested princes to lay aside

more pressing disputes and turn their attention to the east. He variously portrayed Constantinople as the eastern empire, the second city of Christendom, and the font of Plato and Homer—appealing in turns to nostalgic universalists, Christian partisans, and cultural chauvanists, eager to paint the Ottomans as unlettered barbarians.

But for all the value Piccolomini perceived in Constantinople's relics, manuscripts, and imperial history, he did not find his voice to lament it until these treasures had been pillaged and burned. Before the Byzantine empire could be useful to Piccolomini's political agenda, it had to sublimate from a living state to a shade, an amalgam of memory, history, and fantasy. In short, he needed the idea of the empire without the fact of its emperor. When the Byzantines still possessed the city, their political identity and their self-defined connection to the Roman imperial legacy populated Constantinople's imperial space. But once the Byzantine state was gone, the grief felt in western circles was tempered by a new sense of possibility. The anti-Ottoman oratory of Vitéz and Piccolomini after the fall of Constantinople illustrates one key way in which humanists exploited that potential by manipulating the imperial affiliations of the Byzantine past. These intellectuals had no interest reestablishing a vibrant, Orthodox, imperial Byzantium. But they perceived that a new conception of European unity, one molded around the Christian Roman Empire, could be erected from its wreckage.

Piccolomini's reconfiguration of imperial memory created a new language useful to projects of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which incorporated Byzantium into a history of Europe's imperial past. In 1588, Franciscus Junius, a Reformed theologian in Leiden, edited a collection of late Byzantine ceremonial protocols. As a justification for his labor he explained that a "knowledge of the eastern empire (*imperium orientale*) and its structure cannot be useless to those who are engaged in the Holy Western Empire," a justification premised upon the relationship of

the two states in a single Roman Empire.¹²⁰ Much in the same vein, Anselmo Banduri (d. 1743), a Benedictine archaeologist, published one of the last volumes in the *Byzantine du Louvre* series—including Constantine VII’s *De thematibus*, *De administrando imperio*, and the anonymous *Patria* of Constantinople—under the title *Imperium Orientale*. His preface oriented these texts as literary products from a part of the Roman Empire.¹²¹ These views of Byzantine political culture and its texts would have been unimaginable before Vitéz and Piccolomini.

Vitéz and Piccolomini deployed this idea of the *imperium orientale* to immediate ends, as they sought allies against an existential threat. But if their innovation failed to raise money, provision soldiers, and launch campaigns, it yielded more enduring consequences. Their oratory represented an inflection point in the European engagement with the Byzantine past—the first glimmers of recognition that the Byzantine imperial legacy could be appropriated, rather than rejected. This ideological project—not completed nor fully imagined by Piccolomini—would eventually write a new history of the Roman Empire and the European past, where not just the Germans, but also the Byzantines found a place. Their illustration of the potency of the Byzantine imperial legacy led to a profound revision of Europe’s post-classical past as a story of the unified Roman Empire rather than Christendom divided against itself. Eventually these ideas even distorted Europe’s conceptual boundaries to accommodate a Byzantium that had always been liminal.

¹²⁰ Franciscus Junius, Τοῦ σοφωτάτου κουροπαλάτου περὶ τῶν ὀφφικιάλων τοῦ παλλατίου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ τῶν ὀφφικίων τῆς μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας — *Sapientissimi Curopalatae, De officialibus palatii Constantinopolitani et officiis magnae ecclesiae* . . . (Heidelberg, 1588), A4v: “deinde vero quia non potest inutilis esse Imperii Orientalis et formae illius cognitio apud eos qui in hoc S. Imperio Occidentali versantur, ubi florentissima haec vestra Respubl. iamdiu merito suo non infimum locum obtinet.” On Junius’s edition of Pseudo-Kodinos in the context of Byzantine Studies in early modern Europe, see Aschenbrenner, “Contesting Ceremony, Constructing Byzantium,” 202–8.

¹²¹ Anselmo Banduri, *Imperium Orientale, sive Antiquitates Constantinopolitanae* (Paris, 1711). See also the list of emperors recorded in the late-16th c. ms, Florence, BNCF, II, IV, 263, fol. 35ff, which presents parallel lists of emperors—one as “imperatores Occidentis”, the other as “imperatores Orientis”—down to Rudolf II (r. 1576–1612).

But all that was yet to come. In their own ways, Piccolomini and Vitéz were not much different from their followers like Filelfo or Campano. They too employed the *imperium orientale* more as rhetorical artifice than as an ideological concept. Even Piccolomini, though he put the rhetoric in service of broader arguments about universal empire, had little to say about the implications of overturning centuries of near-consensus on the status of Constantinople and reimagining it as an enduring part of the Roman Empire. His orations, dialogues, histories, and treatises make no attempt to wrestle with the ideological consequences of Constantinople-as-Roman-imperial-capital. That task was left to a more obscure pair, a Byzantine and a Spaniard, a decade later.

Chapter Five

Universal Monarchy Between Sultan and Pope:

George of Trebizond, Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, and Imperial Constantinople

Introduction

By the fall of 1464, much of the optimism and urgency that had pulsed through the veins of crusade advocates after the conquest of Constantinople had leached away. Pius II, the most eloquent and strident voice for military action against the ascendant Ottomans, had died in Ancona, waiting for a crusade that failed to materialize. His successor, Paul II, was neither the scholar that Pius had been, nor as fixated on the threat from the east. He ostensibly planned for a crusade, and even appointed a special commission of three powerful cardinals to manage the endeavor.¹ But then as now, committees signified demurral in preference to action. In fact, Paul II evinced none of the passion of Piccolomini and seemed chiefly concerned about the abridgements of papal authority foisted upon him by querulous cardinals.² Under these pressures—both from the east and within the curia itself—Paul II had a hand in advancing two scholars who broached the old frontiers in disputes over the imperial configuration of the Mediterranean: George of Trebizond and Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo.

In the previous chapter, we saw how two prominent advocates of crusade, Johannes Vitéz and Enea Sylvio Piccolomini, used classicizing rhetorical and historical language to gesture to

¹ On Paul II, Anna Modigliani, “Paolo II, papa,” in DBI, vol. 81 (Rome, 2014); on his efforts regarding the crusade, which only resulted in the kind of general summons, which Pius II had repeatedly issued, after the fall of Negroponte in 1470; see Setton II, 271–313; Benjamin Weber, *Lutter contre les turcs: les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XVe siècle* ([Rome], 2013).

² Exemplified, for instance, by the election capitulation to which nearly all the cardinals subscribed before Paul II’s election, binding the future pope to continue the crusade, call a general council within three years, and established a firm limit on both the number of cardinals (24) and the number who could be a relative of the pope (1); for the text, see *Annales Ecclesiastici*, vol. 19, ad an. 1464, no. 52, pp. 165–66

Constantinople's place in new European political geographies. But while Piccolomini and Vitéz revived a long-dormant imperial terminology to invest Constantinople with rhetorical and strategic value, they showed no interest in grappling with the implications of their designation of Constantinople as a Roman imperial capital. If, for instance, Constantinople was the “seat of eastern empire,” was the current inhabitant—Byzantine or Ottoman—then also a Roman emperor? Piccolomini and Vitéz evaded this question, among the most insistent ideological problems posed by the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople; George of Trebizond and Arévalo, in distinction, put this issue at the heart of their treatises. In doing so, they engaged in a debate, almost unknown today, over the imperial status of Constantinople and the future of the Christian polity.

This chapter will examine these two thinkers, George of Trebizond and Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, and their dueling visions of universal monarchy. George, in a series of letters and treatises to the Mehmed II, advanced a disquieting vision of a universal polity under a converted emperor-sultan. In response, Arévalo composed an extended refutation of George's conversion fantasy, a treatise that remains unpublished. I argue that by considering these texts and scholars in conjunction with one another, we can see how Constantinople's imperial status, popularized by Piccolomini, heightened the ideological stakes of its conquest by the Ottomans. Each of these figures considered the implications of Ottoman Constantinople for Europe's imperial paradigm, struggling to assimilate the Ottomans to fundamentally late ancient and medieval political geographies. But in doing so, they advance radical, and radically different, arguments. George of Trebizond, for all his passion for the Latin culture and the Catholic Church, emerged as a staunch advocate of the Byzantine imperial paradigm according to which Constantinople was the only legitimate seat of Roman Empire. Arévalo, in countering George's conversion fantasy, articulated a reactionary defense of papal monarchy; but he was compelled to confront and

refute ideological arguments about imperial Constantinople that his predecessors had ignored for centuries. Therefore, one of the critical outcomes of the debate was to bring Byzantium's Roman imperial status into a political discourse on papal monarchy that had always marginalized it.³

In order to understand this ideologically charged moment it is essential to read George's letters and Arévalo's treatise together in light of their familiarity with one another, a context missing from current analyses of these texts.⁴ The prison of the Castel Sant'Angelo stands at the center of this intellectual and personal confrontation. For not only were these two scholars both zealous advocates of opposed imperial visions, they confronted each other through the dynamic of prisoner and warden: George jailed for his tendentious views on the sultan; Arévalo appointed as overseer of the pope's prison on the Tiber and the prisoners within, including George. Thus, this chapter reads these texts not only in the context of their intellectual opposition, but their personal familiarity.

By examining these writings in concert, we see how the instability of the old order gave partisans of extreme positions like George's space to advance a radical challenge to conceptions of Europe's political community. Byzantium played a critical role in these reimaginings of the medieval world, where polemicists pondered the new contours of a post-Byzantine Mediterranean. An imperial Constantinople justified George's conviction that Mehmed was the new Roman emperor; but those arguments also galvanized Arévalo's defense of papal

³ This process bears some resemblance to the dynamic known as the "Overton Window of Political Possibility," developed by renowned scholar and policy analyst Joseph P. Overton, which argued that one of the roles of think tanks—and the advocacy of ideas more generally—was to "shift the Overton Window" so that once-politically inconceivable ideas become first possible, then palatable. See Nathan J. Russell, "An Introduction to the Overton Window of Political Possibilities," January 4, 2006, <https://www.mackinac.org/7504>.

⁴ On these letters, see Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 109–11; Giorgio Ravegnani, "Nota sul pensiero politico di Giorgio da Trebisonda," *Aevum* 49, no. 3/4 (1975): 323–28; Georgios T. Zoras, *Γεώργιος ὁ Τραπεζούντιος καὶ αἱ πρὸς ἑλληνοτουρκικὴν συνεννόησιν προσπάθειαι αὐτοῦ* (Athens, 1954), 79–85. On Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo's political thought, see especially Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire*, chap. 4; also Hubert Jedin, "Juan de Torquemada und das Imperium Romanum," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 12 (1942): 247–54, neither of put Trebizond and Arévalo together.

prerogatives. In addition to illustrating the imperial ideologies disputed between these two intellectuals, this debate also shows both George and Arévalo as important participants in a late medieval political discourse on universal monarchy, one in which imperial Byzantium played an unrecognized role.

George of Trebizond and the Imperial Sultan

Froward at best, violent and pugnacious at worst, George of Trebizond remains one of the most notable of the Byzantine scholars who emigrated to Italy in the generation before the end of the empire. Moving from Crete in 1416, George first taught Greek in different Italian cities, but soon turned to employment in Latin, working as a secretary in the papal curia from the 1440s onward, producing translations of ancient and patristic authors, and writing widely on rhetoric, logic, philosophy, and theology.⁵ He was prone to intellectual conflicts, as attested in his role in the bitter disputes over the relative merits of Plato and Aristotle that spilled over into the Latin intellectual scene in the 1460s.⁶ But he was also, unusually for a humanist and scholar, no stranger to physical confrontations. On one occasion, his enmity with a neighbor (and perhaps his son's leadership of a band of thugs) sparked a riot in the Piazza San Macuto in central Rome, just north of the Biblioteca Casanatense, that lasted for hours and claimed several lives.⁷

⁵ On George of Trebizond, who despite his name actually came from Crete, see ODB II, 839–40; PLP 4120. The indispensable study is Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*; and the accompanying volume: idem, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana: Texts, Documents, and Bibliographies of George of Trebizond* (Binghamton, NY, 1984), in which Monfasani has edited—often for the first time—almost all of his writings, including several I examine here.

⁶ For a thorough discussion of these arguments, see Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 201–29; James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1990) 1:193–263.

⁷ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 142–44.

Although George weathered the storm that followed that outburst of violence, on other occasions his famed combativeness had serious professional consequences. Most famously, George was briefly imprisoned by Pope Nicholas V in 1452 for engaging in a fistfight with Poggio Bracciolini in the papal chancery. George's colorful account of this fight, which shows his unrepentant pugnacity, describes how he civilly refrained from attacking Poggio's genitals, but did not scruple to threaten him with a sword.⁸ His violent conduct cost him several days in prison, Nicholas V's esteem, and his position in the papal curia.

However, the wheel of fortune eventually turned again, as it often did for George. Though he had regained his curial position under Calixtus III, he did not return to papal favor until the election in 1464 of Paul II, the wealthy Venetian merchant whom George had tutored as a boy. Under Paul II, George issued a stream of theological treatises and exegesis, and was eventually selected by Paul for a sensitive mission to Constantinople, where he was to attempt to convert the sultan to Christianity.⁹ Given the pope's sanction for this endeavor, George did not imagine that he would languish in a prison shortly after his return to Rome from his journey to Crete and Constantinople. Although Paul II had been George's student and was now his patron, and although the pope had been the animating spirit behind his embassy to Constantinople, George found himself in the summer of 1466 in real jeopardy. In his absence, several texts George had written to Mehmed II had been acquired and circulated by his fellow Byzantine

⁸ See the account in Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 109–11, esp. 110 where he quotes George's account: "Rightly I could have bitten off the fingers you [Poggio] stuck in my mouth; I did not. Since I was seated and you were standing, I thought of squeezing your testicles with both hands and thus to lay you out; I did not do it. I asked for a sword from the bystanders so that by fear of it I might drive you away. Nor was I mistaken. For like a Florentine woman, you took to flight."

⁹ On George's return to favor and Paul's initial support for his conversion escapade, see Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 178–85.

emigré, Cardinal Bessarion.¹⁰ In two prefatory letters, and two treatises, George expressed in the most unguarded language his fervor for the sultan's role as universal Roman emperor, which he would assume after his conversion.¹¹ These works crossed the frontier from anodyne panegyric into the articulation of an apocalyptic view of empire, which, by praising an enemy of the Christian faith as head of the providential Christian empire, struck at the ideological and metaphysical foundations of medieval Europe and the Christian Roman Empire.

George was not coy or circumspect in his declaration that Mehmed constituted the new Roman emperor. His first letter, ostensibly a dedication of his translation of Ptolemy's *Almagest* to Mehmed, shocked even with its address: "Discourse of George of Trebizond to the most excellent, famous, and greatest emperor of the Romans who obtained the throne of Constantine by his own virtue and through a victory granted to him by God, since he is by nature greater than all the other emperors who have lived."¹² In a stroke, George had killed several sacred cows, making Mehmed a Roman emperor, abounding in virtue, enjoying God-given success, and surpassing all his Christian imperial predecessors. Among the emperors, kings, and princes, none was greater than Mehmed, none more destined for rulership over the world than the sultan.

¹⁰ The incident is described in detail in Angelo Mercati, "Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II," *OCP* 9 (1943): 65–99, which also publishes the letters; see also Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 184–94.

¹¹ The two letters survive in a single copy, in BAV, Vat. lat. 971, fols. 2r–7v, 124v–26v, a manuscript owned by Bessarion, based the inscription on 1v; extensive passages are also quoted in Niccolò Perotti, *Refutatio Deliramentorum Georgii Trapezuntii*, in Mohler III, 341–75. Perotti's *Refutatio* covers a number of Trebizond's errors, including his denunciations of Plato; the passage on his letters are Chs. 64–84, pp. 360–69. Mercati records the deviations of Mohler's edition from Vat. lat. 971 in his apparatus. The two texts do not betray significant differences, but suggest that Perotti was not working from Bessarion's copy of the letters. The other two treatises will be discussed at length below.

¹² Mercati, "Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II," 85: "Ad excellentissimum, inclytum optimumque imperatorem Romanorum sedem Constantini virtute sua et victoria divinitus sibi concessa obtinentem Georgii Trapezuntii oratio, quod natura omnibus, qui fuerunt, imperatoribus praestantior est." Though this letter was intended to dedicate the Latin translation of Ptolemy to Mehmed, it was not a bespoke translation, but one George had actually completed much earlier, in 1451; see Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 73.

Cyrus, Alexander, and Caesar: each of these three Mehmed surpassed in his martial feats, defeating the serried peoples of the Balkans, capturing Constantinople, and doing it all with an army he had assembled and trained himself. So fawning was his tone, especially coming from a Christian and an emissary of the papacy, that George had to declare proleptically, “I speak not from fear, but from reason, moved not by false imagination, but driven by love of the truth.”¹³

But it was not only the panegyric tone that was arresting, but the apocalyptic frame. This prophetic strain elevated the discourse beyond mere *laudatio* to something graver—a prediction of epochal and providential kingship. George recognized Mehmed as a monarch without equal in the world, “so that at length through you, men are drawn from the filth and confusion of their rulers to a single monarchy.”¹⁴ In one cryptic phrase, George alluded to his own anticipation of the ascension of a prince “from your race” (*in tuo genere*) who would unite the world into a single empire. George declined at that point to elaborate further on this prediction, as “matters that are more secret and concealed should only be revealed in their proper time.”¹⁵ But the letter left no doubt that Mehmed was not only a virtuous prince, a skillful commander and conqueror, but also a monarch who would realize a providentially sanctioned world empire. This last assertion would have been most appalling to his contemporaries, since providential universal kingship had long been the exclusive preserve of the Christian Roman Empire in the Middle Ages. To cast an

¹³ Mercati, “Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II,” 87: “Non dico id temere, sed ratione certa, non imaginatione falsa commotus, sed veritatis amore impulsus . . .”

¹⁴ Mercati, “Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II,” 91: “Quasobres natura te principem, regem, imperatorem, quod nunquam aliis a Deo donatum est, his temporibus natum videmus, ut tandem erepti ex colluvie confusioneque regentium homines ad unam per te monarchiam contrahantur.”

¹⁵ Mercati, “Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II,” 87: “quamvis in genere tuo futurum aliquem multarum gentium principem insualrum que dominum et divisum orbem terrarum in unum imperium adducturum ab ineunte adolscencia scripturae auctoritate prospexi; quam rem latius hic aperire non arbitror oportere. Nam quae occultiora atque abdita sunt, non nisi in tempore suo aperienda sunt.”

infidel in the role of consummator of this political-apocalyptic fantasy, displacing the Holy Roman Emperor and pope, overthrew the political and metaphysical order of the medieval world.

George elaborated the purpose of this kingship in a second letter, again transgressing medieval political-religious norms by assigning a supreme role to the sultan in achieving transcendent political unity. Ostensibly a dedication of his treatise a *Comparison of Plato and Aristotle*, George elaborated on this prophetic theme and repeated his expectation that Mehmed would become the emperor of the world. “It greatly increased my desire to see you and discourse with you, that I hope, indeed I am quite sure, that you will be, if you live long enough, lord and emperor of the whole world.”¹⁶ Pitched in the key of zealotry, George’s letter returned to this theme again and again: no one in the past, present, or future has ever been so well-disposed to bringing all men to one faith, one church, under one empire as Mehmed. Grounding his unstinting praise of the sultan on scriptural authority, George explained that God had granted Constantinople to Mehmed for several reasons: not only did Mehmed imitate the virtue of Constantine, but the Greeks themselves had sinned in separating from the church. “That is why Constantinople was transferred to you, through whom God, as is manifest from these matters, will restore unity to the three greatest things: the faith, the church, and the empire.”¹⁷

Not only did George see Mehmed as the unifier of a divided Mediterranean world, his kingship would be the final stage before the end of the world, again usurping the exclusive role

¹⁶ Mercati, “Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II,” 93: “Quam meam vivendi tui atque alloquendi cupiditatem illud maxime auxit, quod sperem, imo certior sum, futurum te, modo vita supersit, totius terrarum orbis dominum atque imperatorem.”

¹⁷ Mercati, “Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II,” 94: “Quare tibi tradita Constantinopolin [*sic*] est, per quem Deus, ut ex rebus ipsis apparet, tria omnium rerum summa, fidem, ecclesiam, imperium, in unum singula reducturus est.” The lone scriptural passage adduced here by George is Psalm 71, where he reads “et vivet et dabitur ei de auro Arabiae” as a reference to Mehmed as the “gold of Arabia.”

apocalyptic schemes had reserved for the Roman empire. Indeed, this final form in the evolution of human political society had been granted to Mehmed because he was the Roman emperor. It has remained an unnoticed aspect of George's letters that his entire apocalyptic scheme depended upon a radical rejection of western imperial ideology.

No one would doubt that you are the emperor of the Romans by right. Indeed, he is the emperor who holds the imperial seat by right, but the seat of the Roman Empire is Constantinople. You inhabit this seat not from men but from God through your own sword. Therefore, you are by right the emperor of the Romans.¹⁸

Such a sentiment could have issued from the lips of John Chortasmenos or Demetrios Chrysoloras. But from George it authorized a new chronology and ideology of empire: the Roman Empire was a kingship granted by God from the sack of Troy and persisting for over twenty-five thousand years.¹⁹ Implicitly invoking the apocalyptic scheme of the Four Monarchies or the "Last World Emperor," George declared that since Mehmed was the legitimate Roman emperor, no one could doubt that this empire would persist among his descendants until the end of the world. The apocalyptic outline was familiar; George's interpretation, however, would have appalled Christians.²⁰

¹⁸ Mercati, "Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II," 96: "Ad haec, nemo dubitat quin iam iure Romanorum imperator sis. Is enim imperator est: qui ergo eam iure possidet, ipse imperator est. Sed tu non ab hominibus, sed a Deo per ensem tuum dictam possides sedem. Iure tu ergo Romanorum imperator es." George construes possession *iure* here as those things acquired in war, as "all kingdoms and empires are established by right of war."

¹⁹ Mercati, "Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II," 97. The text here (*ultra XXV annorum milia*) is accurate; as Mercati observes in his note, "non era certo questa la cronologia che correva al tempo del Trapesunzio." It is unclear what chronological scheme George referenced here.

²⁰ Mercati, "Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II," 97: "neminem mentis compotem dubitare posse in tuos rediturum imperium et usque ad ultima saecula duraturum." On these apocalyptic schemes and others in the Middle Ages, see A. A. Vasiliev, "Medieval Ideas of the End of the World: West and East," *Byzantion* 16 (1942): 462–502; Paul J. Alexander, "The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor and Its Messianic Origin," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 1–15; Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1979), 1–36; Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Notre Dame, IN, 1993).

As these passages illustrate, George's particular brand of lunacy was shocking in part because it deployed conventional political aspirations of the Middle Ages, like the ultimate unification of the church and empire and Roman Empire's role as earth's last monarchy in such unconventional expression. Here the Ottoman sultan, fifteenth-century Europe's most terrifying bogeyman, became the agent for the attainment of its most cherished religious-political fantasies.

The second letter, like the first, failed to secure a meeting with Mehmed in Constantinople and George's indigence impelled him to return to Rome. But at the end of this second letter, George referenced yet another work to be written for Mehmed: a Greek introduction to Ptolemy's *Almagest*. In this brief treatise, George claimed, he would expound the reasons by which he knew that the "supreme kingship would remain with your race."²¹ George did indeed write this introduction, *On the Eternal Glory of the Autocrat and His Worldly Dominion*, on his journey back to Rome in April 1466.²² The text encompassed an extended argument for the superiority of Christianity to the Islamic faith. As such, it was intended as the argumentative capstone of his ideological program: to convert Mehmed to Christianity antecedent to his

²¹ Mercati, "Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II," 99: "in qua plane tangitur summum in genere tuo futurum imperium." The text, which survives in a single autograph manuscript (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Ms. gr. 537, 67r–108v), is edited and translated as *On the Eternal Glory of the Autocrat and his Worldly Dominion*, in Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*, Text CXLIV, pp. 492–563. George of Trebizond apparently undertook this introduction at the suggestion of George Amiroutzes. Amiroutzes, who had served in the court of the emperor of Trebizond, had his own relationship with Mehmed, to whom he addressed several panegyric poems. These poems praised Mehmed as "chieftain and king of the Greeks," "greatest autocrator," the "scepter-wielding ruler of the inhabited world," a "most brilliant sun" whose justice and wisdom dazzled his subjects. On Amiroutzes, see PLP 784; ODB I, 77–78. For the date of his poems and the most recent edition, see Janssens and Peter van Deun, "George Amiroutzes and His Poetical Oeuvre." A report of Amiroutzes's reputation with the sultan is found in Kritoboulos, *Historiae*, ed. Diether Roderich Reinsch (Berlin, 1983), 4.9.2–3: "περὶ τοῦτου μαθὼν ὁ βασιλεὺς μετακαλεῖται τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ πείραν ἰκανὴν ἔκ τε τῆς συντυχίας καὶ ὁμιλίας λαβὼν τῆς τε παιδείας καὶ σοφίας αὐτοῦ θαυμάζει . . ."

²² In his first chapter, George claims that this text was appended to his aforementioned introduction to Ptolemy: *On the Eternal Glory*, 1.1: "Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν, ὦ βασιλεῦ βασιλέων καὶ αὐτοκράτορ αὐτοκρατόρων, εἰσαγωγικῶς πρὸς κατάληψιν τῆς τοῦ Πτολεμαίου Μεγάλης Συντάξεως εἰρήσθω." This introduction is also edited in Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*, Text LXXXII, pp. 281–84. The date and circumstances of the composition are attested in the colophon, Ch. 23.6, p. 560.

conquest—or as George would put it, “unification”—of the world. Perhaps, then, the work represented the arguments he had wished to present to the sultan in person, had he been granted an audience. George was hardly breaking new ground in his desire to convert the sultan. The conversion fantasy had other prominent proponents among churchmen, even in the fifteenth century with the renowned Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa.²³ Nevertheless, George’s arguments diverged from the familiar scripts in his construction of an apocalyptic frame for Mehmed’s conversion and in his non-conditional praise of Mehmed’s kingship, in which George often crossed the fine line between claiming Mehmed *would be* a great Roman emperor (should he convert) and asserting that he had already attained the dignity.

A key element of this praise of Mehmed’s kingship emerged in George’s comparison of the sultan to the first Christian emperor Constantine. God had granted to Mehmed, George declared, a greater opportunity for world dominion than any ruler in the history had enjoyed. This universal polity was the greatest end of human and royal endeavor, that all men—now and forever—be united in a single society.²⁴ Though George did not use the charged epithet, he styled Mehmed as a new Constantine: this emperor had first united the church and the empire to extend his rule over the whole world. Constantine’s empire had perdured for “over seven

²³ The peaceful unification of all religions under one faith (Christianity) was the subject of Nicholas of Cusa, *De pace fidei*, in *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia*, vol. VII, ed. Ramond Klibansky and Hildebrand Bascour (Hamburg, 1970); a useful genealogy on the background to Cusa and the conversion tradition is given in Meuthen, “Der Fall von Konstantinopel und der lateinische Westen.” Of course Pius II himself famously composed (though did not send) a letter to Mehmed promising him universal dominion if he should convert; see Pius II, *Epistola ad Mahometem II* (*Epistle to Mohammed II*), ed. and trans. Albert R. Baca (New York, 1990). As is to be expected with such a strange vestige of the past, its interpretation has been disputed. Recent contributions to the argument include Benjamin Weber, “Conversion, croisade, et œcuménisme à la fin du moyen âge. Encore sur la lettre de Pie II a Mehmed II,” *Crusades* 7 (2008): 181–97; Nancy Bisaha, “Pius II’s letter to Mehmed II. A reexamination,” *Crusades* 1 (2002): 183–200.

²⁴ *On the Eternal Glory*, 1.2–4: “Ἡ γὰρ μείζων εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους οὐ παρόντας μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ μέλλοντας εὐεργεσία οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλη παρὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν πάντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἰς ἓν.”

hundred years,” only destroyed by fractures within the church and the faith.²⁵ Muhammed and his followers had been raised by God to punish the schismatics, a chastisement only completed by Mehmed himself. Thus, George saw Mehmed’s conquest as a restitution of the world monarchy established first by Constantine. “For through such a victory, God has transferred to you the kingdom so that gathering together all the peoples into one faith and one church through your power, you might proclaim yourself as autocrator and king of all, not just of corruptible things but even of the heavens themselves.”²⁶ God’s bequest of Constantinople to Mehmed bore significant implications; for not only had the sultan taken control of the kingdom, but prophecies foretold that the conqueror of Constantinople would also capture Rome. If Mehmed seized this opportunity to unite the faith and the church with the kingdom, he would indeed subdue the whole world with God’s aid. But if he failed to heed George’s admonitions, the Ottomans would end up like the Goths, who sacked Rome in the fifth century CE and were exterminated soon after.²⁷

Though it hardly spared him in the eyes of his detractors, *On the Eternal Glory* represented an extended defense of Catholic doctrine in comparison to Islam, mobilizing much of the material he had previously included in his treatise *On the True Faith of Christians*.²⁸ The theological

²⁵ Interestingly, George laid this blame squarely at the feet of the Byzantines, who in his view had grown arrogant with the power of the imperial city and had insisted upon ecclesiastical parity with Rome. As overweening and impertinent as this demand was, it would have been better to demand primacy than parity for at least this would have preserved the principle of monarchy! See *On the Eternal Glory*, 1.6, 9.

²⁶ *On the Eternal Glory*, 1.11: “Εἰς σὲ γὰρ διὰ τῆς τοσαύτης καὶ τοιαύτης νίκης μετέθηκεν ὁ Θεὸς τὴν βασιλείαν δι’ οὐδὲν ἄλλο εἰ μὴ ἵνα εἰς μίαν πίστιν καὶ μίαν ἐκκλησίαν διὰ σοῦ συνάξας πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, αὐτοκράτορα τοῦ παντὸς καὶ βασιλέα σε ἀναδείξῃ οὐ τῶν φθειρομένων τούτων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν οὐρανῶν αὐτῶν.”

²⁷ *On the Eternal Glory*, 1.12.

²⁸ Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 190–91. For *On the True Faith of Christians*, see Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*, Text CXLIII, p. 491; the text, first edited by George Zoras in 1954, has been reprinted with a French translation in *De la vérité de la foi des chrétiens*, trans. Adel Théodore Khoury (Altenberge, 1987).

elements furnished proof of the superiority of Christianity to Islam, in the mode of late Byzantine anti-Islamic polemics, like those of Joseph Bryennios and Manuel II Palaiologos.²⁹ One of the greatest proofs of the superiority of Christianity to Islam was that Mehmed had assumed the mantle of kingship as once held by Constantine, and only by imitation of this emperor could the sultan realize George's dream of the united Christian society. By insisting Mehmed emulate Constantine, George proved his orthodox Catholic *bona fides*. But he again articulated a concept of imperial rule that was more Byzantine than western. For in claiming that Mehmed had restored Constantine's kingship, George envisioned a single Roman empire ruled by the monarch in Constantinople.

On the Eternal Glory had been known to the curia since the summer of 1466 and was investigated by a panel of cardinals, including Bessarion, as to its orthodoxy. But the discovery and circulation of the two letters he had written to Mehmed precipitated his swift seizure and incarceration in the Castel Sant' Angelo in October 1466.³⁰ Because *On the Eternal Glory* had been under investigation for several months, he must have understood the general reasons for his imprisonment, even if he believed himself to be blameless. But he still managed to write to his warden to ask, disingenuously, why he had been detained.³¹ In fact, a near contemporary letter to his old pupil Pope Paul II reveals that George knew well why he was being punished, offering excuses for his language and his conduct and a recantation of his most offensive assertion that

²⁹ Asteriou Argyriou, "Ἰωσήφ τοῦ Βρυεννίου μετὰ τινος Ἰσλαμλίτου διάλεξις," in *Ἐπετηρίς ἐταιρείας βυζαντινῶν σπουδῶν* 35 (1966–67): 141–95; *Manuel II Palaiologos. Dialoge mit einem "Perser,"* ed. Erich Trapp (Vienna, 1966). On the Byzantine tradition of such polemics, see Speros Vryonis, "Byzantine Attitudes toward Islam during the Late Middle Ages," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 12, no. 2 (1971): 263–86.

³⁰ Mercati, "Le due lettere di Giorgio da Trebisonda a Maometto II," 73; Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 193.

³¹ Cambridge, CCC, Ms. 166, fol. 75r: "Cogor letteris impudentius petere ut ea mihi significantur quibus pontifex summus imprudens offendi."

Mehmed was the Roman emperor.³² George's detention actually enrolled him in a long tradition of imprisoned scholars, but unlike later figures, he did not find confinement salutary to writing.³³ But neither did it serve as an impediment to further elaboration on his apocalyptic scheme.

Soon after his release from prison in 1467, George penned another brief treatise as something of a coda to his treatment of imperial ideology, *On the Divinity of Manuel*.³⁴ Unlike his previous works, however, George addressed this not to Mehmed himself, but to the "Greeks," since they "are much more likely to follow the truth than the Roman clergy and the Venetians."³⁵ Consonant with his audience, Christians who had shown themselves far more inclined to Ottoman rule than Catholic conversion, George abandoned the theological arguments on the superiority of the Christian faith. This would have been unnecessary for his audience, and instead he cut straight to the political-apocalyptic argument, the realization of a providential program. The propositions were direct:

1. First, that all peoples must turn to the truth, not at our instigation, but by their own will, before the coming of the Antichrist.
2. Then, that this divine and marvelous transformation will occur through a descendant of Ishmael.
3. Third, that it will occur now.

³² George wrote to Paul II in a letter from late 1466, stressing his dependence upon the pope's beneficence and his eternal gratitude and attempting to explain his treatise *On the Eternal Glory*. The letter has been edited in Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, Appendix IX, pp. 355–59. See also *ibid.*, 191–92 for the context of the letter.

³³ On early modern scholars in prison, see the stimulating articles of Kristine Louise Haugen, "Thomas Lydiat's Scholarship in Prison: Discovery and Disaster in the Seventeenth Century," *Bodleian Library Record* 25 (2012): 183–216; eadem, "Campanella and the Disciplines from Obscurity to Concealment," in *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in Honor of Anthony Grafton*, ed. Ann Blair and Anja-Silvia Goeing, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2016) 2:602–20, in which she has shown that imprisonment could be a time of great productivity.

³⁴ George copied the text into the same manuscript that preserves *On the Eternal Glory*, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Ms. gr. 537, 108v–112r, in 1469; it is edited and translated as *On the Divinity of Manuel*, in Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*, Text CXLV, pp. 564–74. Though copied in several years later, internal evidence from the treatise shows that it was actually written in 1467: see Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 223–25, for the argument.

³⁵ *On the Divinity of Manuel*, 570: "διὰ τοῦτο ἐβουλήθην καὶ ἐλληνιστὶ ἐν ὀλίγοις γράφαι, νομίζων τοὺς Γραικοὺς πολλῶ μᾶλλον τῶν τῆς Ῥώμης κληρικῶν καὶ τῶν Βενετικῶν συνακολουθεῖσαι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ."

4. Fourth, that the one ruling the Turks now is the descendant of Ishmael achieving these things.
5. Fifth, that he will rule the whole *oikoumene*.³⁶

George grounded his arguments for these propositions in readings of history and scripture that ranged from lucid to lunatic. For instance, his proof of the third proposition—that the realization of this apocalyptic moment was occurring at that very historical moment—relied on a single line of scripture, a passage from Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians regarding the lawless man, ὁ ἄνομος. As Paul wrote, lawlessness will be restrained until “the one who restrains it is removed from our midst. And then the lawless man will be revealed.”³⁷ George insisted that the restraint in Paul’s age had been the Roman Empire, which (according to George) had only recently come to an end in 1452. And at that same time, Cardinal Bessarion, George’s nemesis and the ἄνομος in this analogy, had led an apostasy in Rome from Christ to Plato. George’s somewhat strained alignment of these two events allowed him to assure his audience that the prophesied epoch had arrived.³⁸

Even more dubious was his argument for his final proposition—that Mehmed would be emperor of the whole world. Gone was the conditional tone of his treatise to the sultan himself, in which Mehmed’s eternal glory depended on his assumption of the duty of conversion. Here

³⁶ *On the Divinity of Manuel*, 570:

“α’. Πρῶτον μὲν, ὅτι πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐπιστραφῆναι εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν δεῖ, οὐκ ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, ἀλλ’ ὑφ’ ἑαυτῶν κινηθέντα, πρὸ τοῦ τὸν Ἀντίχριστον ἐλθεῖν.

β’. Ἐπειτα δέ, ὅτι διὰ τινὰ τοῦ Ἰσμαῖλ ἀπόγονον ἡ θεία καὶ θαυμαστὴ μεταβολὴ αὐτὴ γενήσεται.

γ’. Τρίτον, ὅτι κατὰ τοὺς νῦν χρόνους.

δ’. Τέταρτον, ὅτι ὁ νῦν βασιλεύων τῶν Τούρκων ἐστὶν ὁ ταῦτα πράζων τοῦ Ἰσμαῖλ ἀπόγονος.

ε’. Πέμπτον, ὅτι πάσης ἀπλῶς τῆς οἰκουμένης ἄρξει.”

³⁷ 2 Thess. 2:7–8: “μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται. καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος”

³⁸ *On the Divinity of Manuel*, 571. As noted in Monfasani, *George of Trebizond*, 225, George had previously identified this Pauline “holder” with Pope Eugenius IV rather than the Roman Empire, and the apostasy with the conciliarists and Hussites rather than Bessarion’s nefarious Platonists. Suffice it to say that his apocalyptic scheme was malleable.

George reported the sure implication of scriptural allegory with characteristic conviction: “Something is said in the Scripture which is perhaps ambiguous to some, but to me is altogether certain.”³⁹ He recalled passages in which God foretold that the Ishmaelites would be rulers of the “great islands.” These islands ought to be understood as Britain and Ceylon, the western and eastern ends of the earth. Thus, the prophecy that the descendants of Ishmael would rule these islands was a “clear” metonym for universal dominion.⁴⁰

The strained hermeneutic leaps in these arguments, the over-reading and scarcely plausible interpretations, are the familiar stock-in-trade of crackpot peddlers of prophecy and disaster. As such, they make it hard for modern readers to take them as serious announcements of an ideological program, which is no doubt part of the reason that modern scholarship has emphasized the apocalyptic nature of the texts over the imperial ideology. Moreover, it is hard to imagine these arguments would have convinced any of his readers, resounding as they did with the hollow-eyed conviction of a zealot. But we cannot overstate the alarm his texts, circulated among the curia and other humanists, aroused among his contemporaries. The emotion evoked by these statements stood out in the vehement denunciations of one of George’s fellow humanists, Niccolò Perotti. Perotti knew George and his eccentricities well, for they had both been members of Bessarion’s scholarly circle in Rome and Bologna in the 1440s and 1450s.⁴¹ Perotti’s 1470 treatise, *Refutation of the Errors of George of Trebizond*, constituted an extended invective that aggregated and denounced over seventy-five errors from George’s theological,

³⁹ *On the Divinity of Manuel*, 573: “φέρεται δέ τι καὶ τῆς γραφῆς ἴσως μὲν τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀμφίβολον, ἐμοὶ δὲ καὶ πάνυ βέβαιον.”

⁴⁰ *On the Divinity of Manuel*, 573–74.

⁴¹ On Perotti, see Jean-Louis Charlet, “Niccolò Perotti,” in *Centuria Latinae: Cent une figures humanistes de la Renaissance aux Lumières offertes à Jacques Chomarat*, ed. Colette Nativel, (Geneva, 1997) 601–05; Paolo D’Alessandro, “Niccolò Perotti,” in *DBI*, vol. 82 (Rome, 2015).

philosophical, and rhetorical works. “O wickedness unheard-of in all earlier ages! O heinous, shameful, execrable, pernicious crime!”⁴² Yet behind these histrionics lay real anxiety for the established order. Perotti cloaked his fears in irony, but the trepidation was evident:

We have fallen away from you now, Roman pontiff, and from you, most clement emperor Frederick Augustus . . . Now there is no longer among you any faith, any piety, any religion, any remnant of equality or justice, nor any laws, any courts, or any seat of judgment. All these have departed us and flowed to the Turk, to whom soon even your empires and kingdoms will depart. Now all matters to be established, judged, and enacted must be referred to him.⁴³

No longer would the monarch be a paragon of justice; no longer would the precepts of the Christian faith be the measure for moral society. In short, George’s ideas heralded the collapse of all social and political authority, the destruction of the Christian imperial world. Thus, for all that George’s claims appeared to his contemporaries as *deliramenta*, or absurdities, it was clear that they had to be confronted in deadly earnest.

Therefore, we should not measure the impact of George’s arguments in the converts they drew—none to our knowledge—but in the rebuttals they elicited. We have seen one such example in Perotti’s *Refutation*, a passionate repudiation of George’s manifold errors of theology, philosophy, and ideology, even if it touched only briefly on his letters to the sultan. But even before Perotti, George’s imperial vision drew another rebuttal, far longer but now little-known, from a scholar who knew George well: his jailer at the Castel Sant’ Angelo, Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo.

⁴² Perotti, *Refutatio*, cap. 65, p. 360: “O facinus inauditum omnibus ante saeculis! O facinus atrox, indignum, nefarium, perniciosum! O facinus audax et a fide ac religione nostra remotissimum!”

⁴³ Perotti, *Refutatio*, cap. 80, p. 367: “Desciscimus iam abs te, Romane pontifex, et abs te mitissime imperator Federice Auguste. A vobis quoque, christiani reges et principes, desciscimus: facessite, facessite omnes. Nulla apud vos fides amplius, nulla pietas, nulla religio, nullum aequitatis aut iustitiae vestigium, nullae praeterea leges, nulla iudicium subsellia, nullum tribunal. Haec omnia a vobis discesserunt et ad Turcum defluxere, ad quem mox etiam imperia et regna vestra deventura sunt. Ad illum iam de rebus constituendis, iudicandis, agendis referendum est.”

Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo and Imperial Polemics

Paul II was not only central to the career of the prisoner, returning George to favor, and dispatching him first to Constantinople and then to prison, but the Venetian pope also elevated the jailer as well: Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo—bishop, historian of Spain, and zealous defender of papal monarchy.⁴⁴ In the generations after the high tide of conciliarism at the councils of Constance and Basel, a circle of ardent papal monarchists emerged, among whom Arévalo distinguished himself. Trained in law at the famous University of Salamanca, whose theological faculty had been cultivated by popes in opposition to the more fractious conciliar and Gallican tendencies in Paris, he laid the foundation for his later ardent support for the papacy before serving as a diplomat in the court of Juan II of Castile and representing the king with the Castilian contingent at the Council of Basel from 1433 until 1439, when the king ordered his embassy to abandon the council.⁴⁵ In reward for his faithful service, Arévalo attained a canonry in the prominent cathedral chapter at Burgos and designation as royal chaplain, marking him as a favored cleric and diplomat under Juan II. His service to the crown of Castile would persist until the end of his life, even after his permanent move to Rome in 1460, after which he also

⁴⁴ On Arévalo, see Hubert Jedin, “Sanchez de Arevalo und die Konzilsfrage unter Paul II.,” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 73 (1954): 95–119; Richard H. Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, 1404–1470, Spanish Diplomat and Champion of the Papacy* (Washington, DC, 1958); R. B. Tate, “Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo (1404–1470) and His ‘Compendiosa Historia Hispanica,’” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 4 (1960): 58–80; Wolfram Benziger, *Zur Theorie von Krieg und Frieden in der italienischen Renaissance: die Disputatio de pace et bello zwischen Bartolomeo Platina und Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo und andere anlässlich der Pax Paolina (Rom 1468) entstandene Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 24–31.

⁴⁵ For a concise summary of his intellectual formation and early employment, see Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, 1–27. Though his conduct at the council, serving in increasingly prominent positions and even appearing to lend his assent to the conciliar propositions exalting the council over the pontiff advanced in 1439, seems difficult to reconcile with his later doctrinaire positions on papal authority, Trame attempts to acquit him by noting that he remained a faithful member of Juan II’s embassy and that “perhaps again he acted as an observer to keep his colleagues informed of the proceedings in the council as they awaited Juan’s instructions.” (p. 24)

championed the cause of the papacy against the persistent claims of those who sought to abridge its authority. In his final years, these two loyalties—to the Castilian crown and to the pope’s supreme spiritual *and* temporal authority—were central to his writings on empire and monarchy.

Both Pius II and Paul II showed significant favor to Arévalo, who demonstrated himself a ready warrior for the faith with both the pen and—more surprisingly for a cleric—the sword. The Spanish bishop had accompanied the aged Pius to Ancona for the departure of his crusade and had been selected to deliver the hortatory oration to celebrate the fleet’s departure. And if the text of the speech, never delivered, is to be believed, Arévalo intended not only to accompany Pius II, but to gird himself in armor and wield the literal sword of vengeance against the enemies of the faith.⁴⁶ After Pius’s death in Ancona, Paul II appointed Arévalo castellan of Castel Sant’ Angelo in August 1464, a post which took on additional responsibilities when the pope constructed a prison there in 1465.⁴⁷ As warden of this jail, Arévalo supervised prisoners remanded to his custody, including several prominent scholars. Among these were the members of the Roman Academy accused of plotting against Paul II, such as Pomponio Leto and

⁴⁶ His oration, preserved in Cambridge, CCC Ms. 166, fols. 70v–71r: “Sed iam videre videor quosdam susurrantes dicere: domum dei decet sanctitudo non sanguinis effusionem. item aiunt ministri ecclesie ornare faciem templi debere non quidem armis sed moribus et patientie exemplis, qui christi iussu in petri persona gladium reponere iubentur. Sed qui talia garriunt similes omnino ortolani canibus videntur. Hiis enim non satis est qui caules quidem ipsi non comedunt, sed ne alii capiant latrare aut mordere non cessant.” Arévalo’s willingness to shed blood as a prelate contrasts starkly with Pius II’s recent oration in Rome in the fall of 1463, *Sextus agitur annus*, where he declared: “I go not to fight, weak as I am in the body and as a priest, whose proper role is not to wield the sword.” The oration is preserved in both Pius II, *Commentarii rerum memorabilium que suis temporibus contigerunt*, ed. Adrian van Heck, 2 vols. (Vatican City, 1984), 2:764–775; and in Mansi II, 168–181, here 178–79. Both editions present the same text: “Nec nos pugnaturi pergitur corpore debiles et sacerdotio fungentes, cujus non est proprium versare ferrum. Moysen illum sanctum patrem imitabimur, qui pugnante adversus Amalechitas Israele orabat in monte. Stabimus in alta puppe aut in aliquo montis supercilio habentesque ante oculos divinam Eucharistiam, id est dominum nostrum Jesum Christum. Ab eo salutem et victoriam pugnantibus nostris militibus implorabimus.”

⁴⁷ Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, 122. On the history of the Castel Sant’ Angelo, see Mariano Borgatti, *Castel Sant’ Angelo in Roma* (Rome, 1931).

Bartolomeo Platina, his most famous wards.⁴⁸ By all accounts he was a humane and kind guardian, though not without an edge. When Leto, desperate for some reading material, asked Arévalo for copies of Lactantius and Macrobius, the warden gave him instead his own treatise on the errors of the council of Basel, a pointed reminder of Leto's alleged failures in orthodoxy.⁴⁹

But before his cells held these two famous humanists, Arévalo detained a humble papal secretary, George of Trebizond, from October 1466 to February 1467. Arévalo's Cambridge manuscript preserves a pair of letters exchanged by the two. George's epistle, written after he had been imprisoned for over a month (*iam ultra mensem*), recognized that he had been detained at the order of the pope, but claimed not to know the crime for which he was being punished.⁵⁰ Arévalo responded that members of the curia had learned that he had "slandered" various past pontiffs, no doubt referring to George's impetuous letters to Mehmed and the critique of previous popes and monarchs implicit in his praise.⁵¹ Arévalo's letter was a long, moralizing treatment of the problems with *detractio*, but the jailer's advice to his wretched prisoner was simple. George ought to write to the pope to explain himself and to beg for mercy.⁵² As Arévalo advised him, rather

⁴⁸ On Pomponio Leto, see Maria Accame, "Pomponio Leto, Giulio," DBI, vol. 84 (Rome, 2015); on Bartolomeo Platina, see Stephen Bauer, "Sacchi, Bartolomeo, detto il Platina," in DBI, vol. 89 (Rome, 2017). A number of letters between Sánchez de Arévalo and both Platina and Leto are preserved in the manuscript of the Spaniard's letters and orations, Cambridge, CCC, Ms. 166, fols. 79r–124r. On the alleged plot of the Academy, see John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore, 1983), 91–102; Concetta Bianca, "Riflessioni sulla 'congiura' degli Accademici," in *Congiure e conflitti: L'affermazione della signoria pontificia su Roma nel Rinascimento: politica, economia e cultura*, ed. M. Chiabò et al. (Rome, 2014), 195–201.

⁴⁹ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. Frederick I. Antrobus, vol. 4 (London, 1894), 56.

⁵⁰ Cambridge, CCC, Ms. 166, fol. 75r: "Cogor letteris impudentius petere ut ea mihi significantur quibus pontifex summus imprudens offendi."

⁵¹ Cambridge, CCC, Ms. 166, fol. 76v.

⁵² Cambridge, CCC, Ms. 166, fol. 78v: "Dic ergo quid sentis et errata litteris his ipsis emenda. ac que incolulte [*sic*] dixisti consultius corripge. Conare ut ostendas convitiandi alium defuisse tibi quo fiet ut eo facilius veniam assequeris. Sic age sic scribe ut ea ipsa maledicta quibus delatus es miseratione non poena dignissima ostendas."

esoterically, “Watch out George, lest your attitude be ascribed to you as a Cicero rather than as a Horace.” It would behoove George, that is, to make it clear he had addressed Mehmed in the poetic, rather than the political, mode—distinguishing between the tolerable obsequy of prefatory rhetoric and damnably authentic praise.⁵³

The Spanish bishop’s response to George was, considering the accusations, gracious and obliging. But behind George’s back, Arévalo was more venomous. In late 1468 or 1469, after George had already been released to the confinement of his home, the bishop composed a lengthy refutation of the twenty errors in George’s two letters to the sultan, *On the Sins and Misfortune of the Perfidious Turk*.⁵⁴ This treatise has received almost no attention from modern scholars, despite its forceful refutation of George’s vision of an imperial Mediterranean under Mehmed.⁵⁵

⁵³ Cambridge, CCC, Ms. 166, fol. 77v–78r: “Vide ergo Georgi charissime ne illud tui ciceroni pro flacco tibi ascribi possit.”

⁵⁴ The date is proposed by Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, 186, based on its absence from the author’s catalogue, its numerous citations of previous works like *De monarchia* (1467), as well as Arévalo’s status as bishop of Calahorra, which provides a *terminus ante quem* of October 1469, when he was transferred to the see of Palencia.

⁵⁵ The treatise, *Liber de sceleribus et infelicitate perfidi Turchi* survives in two manuscripts in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 971, fols. 6r–116r; Vat. lat. 972, fols. 1r–93r. Trame, in his monograph on Arévalo, touches only briefly on the treatise and cites the version in Vat. lat. 972. Yet he does not discuss the codicological difference between the copies, which give some crucial evidence regarding their original purpose. A comparison of the first page of the treatise in the two manuscripts reveals that Vat. lat. 972 was the dedication copy to Paul II, while Vat. lat. 971 was likely a copy for Arévalo’s own library. Both manuscripts bear the lengthy *argumentum* in rubricated paragraph before the dedicatory epistle to Paul II. But while the manuscripts share a similar border of interwoven vines against a background of green, red, and blue, the illumination in Vat. lat. 972 is more elaborate: the side border constituted of three vines as opposed to two in the other manuscript; the lower border embracing a wreathed seal bearing the heraldic insignia of Paul II, a papal tiara over a rampant lion. Moreover, the script itself is a more formal, a calligraphic hand, consonant with a high-status dedicatee. Meanwhile, the copy of the text in Vat. lat. 971 bears nearly identical initial decoration—two-vine border over green, red, and blue, ending in budding flowers and golden balls—to another manuscript preserving the letters and two orations of Arévalo: Cambridge, CCC, Ms. 166; this suggests that the treatise was prepared at Arévalo’s behest (like Cambridge, CCC, Ms. 166). The most important difference between 971 and 972 is that in the former, *Liber de sceleribus et infelicitate perfidi Turchi* is bound between the unique copies of Trebizond’s offending letters to Mehmed, annotated by Bessarion himself on fol. 1v. The letters themselves break across the treatise, with the second letter beginning at 4v, ending mid-sentence at the bottom of 5v for the beginning of the treatise at 6r. The letter picks up again at 124v, on the same folio as the last page of *Liber de sceleribus*. Lotte Labowsky, *Bessarion’s Library and the Biblioteca Marciana: Six Early Inventories* (Rome, 1979), 494, identifies this manuscript as an original part of his library, alienated between the inventories of 1543 (*D*) and 1545 (*E*); her research also shows that the letters and the treatise remained separate manuscripts in the 1543 inventory (=D 422

The catalyst for the treatise remains unclear; though it was dedicated to the pope we have no evidence that Paul II requested it, as he did with some of Arévalo's other writings. Perhaps its presence in a manuscript owned by Bessarion (BAV, Vat. lat. 971) and flanked by copies of George's letters suggests that Bessarion had a hand in its commission. Bessarion and Arévalo had known each other from Bessarion's time in Bologna, and Arévalo dedicated his last anti-conciliar treatise to the Byzantine cardinal in the summer of 1469, likely just after he finished *On the Sins*.⁵⁶ It is also possible that he was moved by his inner inclination to confrontation, to attacking those who opposed his vision of political ideology and ecclesiology, as he had done repeatedly in his career. In any case, whatever the goad, Arévalo approached his task with relish, as evidenced by his impassioned and extensive treatment of George's errors.

Arévalo's chief target—ostensibly, at least—remained George's assertion that Mehmed was the Roman Emperor and lord of the world by virtue of his conquest of Constantinople. His treatise was comprised of twenty chapters, many of which were repetitive and tedious, droning on for over one hundred folio pages. But a close reading reveals a tripartite argument: first, Arévalo argued that the sultan cannot be a legitimate monarch of any sort, nor can the Ottomans have real political communities. Next, he refuted George's implicit embrace of the Byzantine view of medieval empire, that Constantinople was the seat of empire and possession of it invested a ruler with imperial authority. But both of these points are subsidiary to a broader assault on imperial authority in general, for the ultimate thesis of his treatise corroborated his other works on empire and kingship, that the only true monarch in the world was the Roman pontiff.

and 435, pp. 305–06), so that they were probably bound together when they were removed and taken to the Vatican. Since this manuscript represents a material intersection between the three actors in this drama—Bessarion, George of Trebizond, and Arévalo—I will cite it in the analysis that follows.

⁵⁶ Mohler I, 265 n. 2; Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, 187; the treatise in question is *De remediis afflictæ ecclesiæ*.

While the final element of the argument, in defense of papal monarchy, was a conventional refrain in the late Middle Ages, the most arresting features of this extended treatise emerge from its participation in this argumentative dialogue. In responding to George's unorthodox arguments, Arévalo found himself compelled to advance refutations that had rarely, if ever, been proposed: first, his repudiations of Ottoman rulership and political society; second, his sustained rejection of the central tenets of Byzantine imperial ideology—that Constantinople was the sole Roman imperial seat—which George had smuggled into his letters. Therefore, in order to pursue his overarching thesis—the temporal supremacy of the papacy—he was forced to take “negative space” approach, defining at length what universal monarchy was *not*. The result was a singular, rich analysis of rulership and political authority in the late medieval Mediterranean.

On the Sins and Misfortune of the Perfidious Turk

Arévalo began his treatise with an assault on the legitimacy of political power among the Ottomans. The origin of such authority, he argued, stemmed from God. Therefore, no one could attain legitimate rule, much less command of the Roman Empire, without “true religion and worship of the one true God.”⁵⁷ Next, Arévalo set out the four ways that political authority, *principatus*, could be acquired: natural law, civil law, divine appointment, and ecclesiastical provision as the only sources of legitimate assumption of lordship. The first of these only obtained in territory with no inhabitants; the second required the consent of the people to their new ruler.

⁵⁷ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 8r: “non solum Romanum imperium set nec aliquem rectum principatum orbis iuste obtineri a quocunque posse sine vera religione et unius veri dei cultu.”

The third and fourth required sanction by God and the church, both of which Mehmed lacked. Therefore, the sultan could not have been instituted in legitimate *principatus*.⁵⁸ The two typologies would seem to contradict one another, for in cases of natural and civil law, Arévalo admitted that political authority might be legitimately established without Christianity. But those applied only before the advent of Christ; after that point the first requirement for true religion had attained validity, for then “all power and jurisdiction was transferred to the Christians, and indeed the kingdom was transferred from people to people on account of their injustices.”⁵⁹ This *translatio* further justified the conclusion that the Ottomans were by nature incapable of exercising any political rule, since no rule, dominion, or even honor could obtain among unbelievers, as God was the source of all these things.⁶⁰

Not only was Ottoman rulership illegitimate, they were incapable of any political communities. No Muslim prince could assume political power (*potestas principandi*) anywhere for infidels lacked the foundation for such authority, the existence of a political community itself. Since *imperium* and *principatus* only emerge from the people or the political community, without the latter Ottomans could not enjoy the former.⁶¹ Drawing on Cicero via Augustine, Arévalo proposed a definition of a people as a crowd drawn together by their “consent to law” (*consensu iuris*); without this justice as binding agent for a community, there could be no people and no

⁵⁸ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 9v–11v.

⁵⁹ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 12v: “Nam per adventum xristi translata est omnis potestas et iurisditio in xristianos. transfertur enim regnum de gente in gentem propter iniusticias suas.”

⁶⁰ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 11r–12v: “et oldra in consilio 195 hodie nullus principatus, nulla iurisditio aut dominium potestas aut honor potest esse penes infideles”; his authority here was a *consilium* of the fourteenth-century jurist Oldradus de Ponte.

⁶¹ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 54v.

respublica.⁶² This view of the Ottomans as a people without law represented them as barbarians. Of course, Augustine had used this definition to argue subversively that the Roman people and Roman state had never existed. But Arévalo, though in no way eager to defend the pre-Christian Romans, turned Augustine's argument about the Roman *respublica* against the Turks instead. Having argued that they lacked justice entirely, Arévalo invoked Augustine to demonstrate the consequent absence of political community or *respublica*.⁶³ So by virtue of the idolatry, their wicked habits, and even the very bonds of their community, the Ottomans were unworthy of the name of *imperium*.

After demonstrating the illegitimacy of Ottoman rulership and political society, Arévalo advanced a third argument to disqualify any Ottoman claims to Roman imperial status: lack of virtue. As he labored to demonstrate in his fifth chapter, Mehmed had *no* virtues—neither theological nor moral—and *only* vices. These depravities include both the religious, such as a single man taking many wives, as well as the personal, like Mehmed's personal penchant for perfidy, violence, and usurpation.⁶⁴ With such a vicious nature, the only way that Mehmed could be said to have “merited” empire, as George had claimed, was as another Nebuchadnezzar, “as a

⁶² Arévalo adduced Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 2:19.21, pp. 687–88, in which Augustine refers back to a previous chapter (1:2.21, p. 53); there, he quotes Cicero's discussion of the *respublica* in his *De re publica* (2.42). In a passage that is now *only* preserved by Augustine's testimony, Scipio discusses the indispensable nature of justice in political communities: “sic ex summis et infimis et mediis interiectis ordinibus ut sonis moderata ratione civitas consensu dissimillimorum concinit; et quae harmonia a musicis dicitur in cantu, ea est in civitate concordia, artissimum atque optimum omni in re publica vinculum incolumitatis, eaque sine iustitia nullo pacto esse potest.”

⁶³ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 54v. Of course, Arévalo conveniently ignored Augustine's subsequent passage which conceded that a people could be constituted by consent to something other than justice, such as objects of love, in which case the Romans were a people and a polity; see Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 2:19.24, pp. 695–96.

⁶⁴ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 38v–40v.

minister of God and instrument of divine justice.”⁶⁵ This role, Arévalo observed, was precisely the sort of retributionary kingship which had been granted to the Romans according to Augustine.⁶⁶ This explanation, Ottoman ascendance as a evidence of divine chastisement had long been advanced in Byzantium and beyond.⁶⁷ Arévalo, though, used the comparison as proof of the invalid kingship of the Turk, rather than proof of the righteousness of punishment. Being instrumentalized by an irascible God did not make Mehmed the emperor of the world, only the weapon of divine retribution.

Thus, Arévalo countered George’s argument that the sultan had become the Roman Emperor in three ways: first, by arguing that lordship could only derive from God through the vector of true religion; second, by showing that only the possession of justice can instantiate political communities; third, by arguing that no prince so completely lacking virtues can be said to rule. Since the sultan and the Ottomans lacked these attributes, personally and constitutionally, they could not properly lay claim to the Roman Empire, or any legitimate political association. These arguments dovetailed into an innovative denunciation of Ottoman society, refuting their lordship, lord, and political community. But it also implicitly established, by negative definition, the essential elements of a universal polity, and suggested that the foundation for just monarchy, such as he ascribed to the papacy, was built of more than divine sanction: it

⁶⁵ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 40v: “Nemo igitur ut putamus recta fide asserere potest perfidum turchum ob eius merita illam urbem optinuisse, nisi dixerit eo sensu meruisse, quo nabuchodonosor ut dei minister et executor iusticie divine meruit afligere et captivare populum israel propter peccata eius usque addeum ut in odium illius populi.”

⁶⁶ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 41r: “Unde Augustinus v^o de civi dei Dat deus plerumque talibus imperia ad domandum gravia peccata multorum quemadmodum concessit romanis et aliis pluribus infidelibus.” This is not a direct quote, but references the discussion at Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1:5.19, pp. 155–56.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, Gautier, “Un récit,” 104.15–18; Doukas 15.3, 23.8, 33.5; George Scholarios, *Pastoral Letter on the Fall of Constantinople*, in Scholarios III, 220.33–22.11. Additional discussion in C. J. G. Turner, “Pages from Late Byzantine Philosophy of History,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 57 (1964): 346–73.

required virtuous leadership and communal consent to justice. This argument also gave the *populus* a greater role in constituting the empire than other papal partisans had previously allowed.⁶⁸

Arévalo's second target was George's claim that Constantinople was the sole seat of Roman Empire, whose possession imbued Mehmed with imperial dignity. In recognition of the foundation of Constantinople's imperial claims, and like previous discussions of the legitimacy of the eastern empire, Arévalo began with the Donation of Constantine. This famous eighth-century forgery purported to record Constantine I's cessation of the city of Rome and the western empire to Pope Sylvester I in gratitude for the emperor's baptism and recovery from leprosy, though by the late fifteenth century, its applicability, authority, and even authenticity had been widely criticized.⁶⁹ Arévalo, as a good papalist, followed the venerable precedent of late medieval jurists and interpreters like Innocent IV in arguing that the donation had been a *restitutio* rather than a *donatio* from Constantine. This reading insisted that the church had never truly relinquished its control over temporalities, and thus the empire was not Constantine's to distribute. Since the church was the sole legitimate monarchy in the world, the emperor had not granted Sylvester I anything the church had not previously controlled.⁷⁰ Next, in an innovative, if

⁶⁸ Especially since the language of popular sovereignty resounded echoed that of conciliarism; the papacy was only just recovering its equanimity after decades of bruising conflict with conciliarists: Antony Black, *Monarchy and Community: Political Ideas in the Later Conciliar Controversy 1430–1450* (Cambridge, 1970), 8–13; Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire*, 112–14.

⁶⁹ Although the Donation did not receive its authoritative dismantling on historical-philological grounds until the fifteenth century with Nicholas of Cusa and Lorenzo Valla, it had long been disputed, especially by the civilians. On the various traditions of interpretation in the high Middle Ages, see most thoroughly, Domenico Maffei, *La Donazione di Costantino nei giuristi medievali* (Milan, 1964); Johannes Fried, *Donation of Constantine and Constitutum Constantini: The Misinterpretation of a Fiction and Its Original Meaning* (Berlin, 2007), 11–35.

⁷⁰ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 22v–23r. On the assertion of canonists, prevalent from the thirteenth century onward, that the “donation” had really been a restitution, see Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power*, 2nd ed. (London, 1962), 417 n.1. As an example, see the polemical

somewhat strained, reading of Constantine's establishment of a new imperial capital on the Bosphorus after the donation, Arévalo insisted that this transfer hadn't constituted a translation of any part of the Roman Empire to the east. Rather, it merely demonstrated the emperor's unsurpassed reverence for the imperial authority of the pope, as he chose a new home in recognition that no emperor should again enter the city of Rome.⁷¹

Portraying Constantine's removal as a personal, rather than an institutional transfer, allowed Arévalo to argue that no imperial right (*nullum ius imperii*) had inhered in the city of Constantinople despite the emperor's residence there: either for Constantine's successors—or any later usurpers like Mehmed.⁷² That was not to say that there had been no *translatio imperii*; in fact, translations had transpired, on three separate occasions. As hierocrats had since Innocent III, Arévalo then retold the history of medieval empire to emphasize the essential role played by the papacy. First, from Greeks to the Franks at the time of Charlemagne; next, from the Franks to the Italians under Berengar; and finally, from the Italians to the Germans under Otto I.⁷³ His relation of the contexts surrounding these three translations corroborated his claim that the papacy, as the vicar of God on earth, wielded the divine power attested in the Hebrew Bible to transfer “kingdoms and empires from people to people,” the origin of the late antique and medieval theories of the *translatio imperii*.⁷⁴ In each case, the impiety of the holder of imperial

pamphlet that emerged from the court of Innocent IV, *Eger cui lenia*, in *Das Brief- und Memorialbuch des Albert Behaim*, ed. Thomas Frenz and Peter Herde, MGH Briefe d. spät. MA 1 (Munich, 2000), 102–10, esp. 105–6.

⁷¹ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 23v.

⁷² BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 25r.

⁷³ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 24r–v.

⁷⁴ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 23v: “Set ad summum pontificem qui illius vicarius est qui teste scriptura transfert regna et imperia de gente in gentem.” The language here unmistakably invokes the scriptural *loci* for God's power over politics, Daniel 2:21: “et ipse mutat tempora et aetates transfert regna atque constituit . . .”; Sirach 10:8: “regnum a

authority caused the pontiffs to intercede in order to settle the dignity on a new people. For instance, after the translation to Charlemagne, the Franks failed to show favor to the churches built by their ancestors (i.e., the Roman church), and were displaced for the Italians, who ruled for about fifty years. Then the third translation from the Italians to the Germans occurred. “On account of Berengar’s tyranny, the pope sent envoys to Otto I to ask him to be emperor.” After Otto’s arrival in Rome and his solemn reception by John XII, the Germans had ruled the empire ever since.⁷⁵

His argument at this point, however, began to betray the incoherence of anarchic composition. Immediately after insisting that the only translations were those detailed above, Arévalo declared that actually nothing had remained to transfer to the Franks.

Since long ago the emperor Constantine the Great, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had ceded the Roman Empire to the blessed Silvester and the Roman church, as we said previously, no right to the Roman Empire (*nullum ius imperii Romani*) remained in the walls and bulwarks of Constantinople, nor in any of those who would rule in it later, and far less to those who would seize and usurp it, especially since it was long before the Turk. If some remains of the Roman Empire had remained in the city, they were translated to the West by apostolic authority, as is held expressly in the decretal *Venerabilem*.⁷⁶

Arévalo apparently realized that his first assertion, that there was no imperial authority resident in Constantinople after the Constantine’s restitution, undermined the papacy’s original claim expressed in *Venerabilem* to have accomplished the translation from the Greeks to the Franks. For

gente in gentem transfertur propter iniustitias et iniurias et contumelias et diversos dolos . . .” On the biblical origins of the theory, see Goetz, *Translatio imperii*, 4–17.

⁷⁵ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 24v.

⁷⁶ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 25r: “Cum iam dudum autem imperator constantinus magnus spiritus sancti instintu romano imperio cesserat beato silvestro et romane ecclesie ut prediximus nullus ius imperii romani mansit in muris et menibus constantinopolitane urbis nec in quibusvis futuris in ea principantibus et longe minus eam vi occupantibus et usurpantibus: presertim quia longe ante turchum. Sique vestigia romani imperii in ea urbe manserant, apostolica autoritate translata sunt in occidentales ut in expresso habetur in dicto c. venerabillem ut supra tactum est.”

if, as Arévalo had insisted, Constantine had returned the imperial dignity to the Roman pontiff, and if no further imperial authority endured among the Greek emperors, then there could not have been a *translatio imperii* from the Greeks to the Franks. His coda therefore compensated, if somewhat inelegantly, for any existing loopholes.

Arévalo did not explicitly acknowledge George's identification of Constantinople as the locus of Roman Empire as characteristically Byzantine (or "Greek" as he would have called it). But his extensive assault on the implicit foundations for this ideology—like Constantine's establishment of New Rome—illustrates that he realized the argumentative peril Byzantine imperial ideology posed. This was a concept of empire that did not, could not, share anything with the Holy Roman Empire, and certainly not with the pope. Perhaps betraying his eagerness to have done with such challenges, he curtly rejected the idea. "I don't know whether he found this fantastical argument in earlier or later topics."⁷⁷ Despite this terse dismissal, however, Arévalo evidently took the argument seriously, for he devoted considerable space to refuting it, contriving a critical distinction that he implicitly applied to both the Ottomans and the Byzantines: that the *ius imperii*, the right to imperial authority, could not inhere in a city alone. It was, as Jerome had observed, a lordship over the world; therefore, it could not be obtained, even by the pontiff himself, *merely* through possession of the city of Rome.⁷⁸ Possession alone could not justify a claim to empire; it had to be corroborated by virtue.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 25v: "Hanc itaque fantasticam argumentationem nescio an in topicis aut prioribus vel posterioribus reperit."

⁷⁸ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 26r: "Preterea ius imperii non consistit in una urbe queque illa sit, cum sit ius universale sicut sedes apostolica et papatus non recipit ius dignitatis ex sola possessione urbis Rome cum sit universalis princeps orbis et ideo dicit ieronimus quasi pro eodem casu: Si dignitas et autoritas queritur, orbis maior est urbe." Cf. *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, ed. Isidore Hilberg, Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 54–56 (Vienna, 1996) 3:Ep. 146.7, p. 310.17; *Decreti Prima Pars*, D. 93 c. 24, in CIC I, col. 328.

⁷⁹ Such a position was calculated to mollify readers familiar with rhetoric that often used to conquest of Constantinople to demonstrate Mehmed's desire to subjugate the western empire or the rest of the world; for several

Arévalo's reluctance to address George's imperial arguments echoed the strategy of other late medieval thinkers, who evinced similar disinclination to rigorously confront this rival ideology. But his offhand rejection only seems to confirm the enduring power of this idea. Since the early thirteenth century, canonists had been arguing *an verum imperium sit Constantinopolitanum*, "whether the Constantinopolitan empire was the true empire." His training as a lawyer at Salamanca would have exposed him to the extensive glosses on papal decretals like *Venerabilem*. These glosses preserved ample evidence that this assertion, that Constantinople remained the *verum imperium*, remained persuasive enough to demand refutation in canonist commentaries.⁸⁰ Nor were canon lawyers alone at pains to reject this troubling idea. In the mid-fourteenth century, the imperial theorist Lupold von Bebenburg added to his treatise on the rights of the Roman Empire, written around 1340, these same arguments before citing the classic canonist refutations and declaring the matter settled.⁸¹ And Piccolomini had begun to circulate the idea that Constantinople had persisted as an imperial capital up to the very end of the Byzantine state in his widely read and copied orations. One of the outcomes of George's letters, then, was to compel a reactionary like Arévalo to confront and refute an argument that had lived long in

examples see Pertusi, "Le epistole storiche di Lauro Quirini," 186–87. See also my discussion of this topos as it appears in the orations of Johannes Vitéz and Enea Silvio Piccolomini in Chapter Four.

⁸⁰ For several examples, see Stickler, "Sacerdotium et regnum nei decretisti e primi decretalisti," 595; van den Baar, *Die kirchliche Lehre der Translatio Imperii Romani*, 129. I will explore this strand of late medieval jurisprudence in a subsequent publication.

⁸¹ Lupold of Bebenburg, *Tractatus de iuribus regni et imperii*, in *Politische Schriften des Lupold von Bebenburg*, ed. Jürgen Miethke and Christoph Flüeler, MGH Staatschriften 4 (Hanover, 2004), 274.17–75.7: "Circa hanc questionem est sciendum, quod opinio est quorundam, quod imperator Constantinopolis sit verus imperator et quod noster imperator sit procurator sive defensor ecclesie Romane, que opinio notatur XCVI di. *Si imperator*, et hanc opinionem tenet Bernhardus Hyspanus, ut ibi notat Archidiaconus. Et secundum hanc opinionem sequeretur, quod nulla de Grecis ad Germanos translatio imperii facta fuisset. Sed quia tam iura canonica, ut patet Extra de elect(tione) *Venerabilem* et de iureiur(ando) *Romani* in principio in Cle(mentinis), quam eciam cronice diverse asserunt de Grecis imperium fuisse translatum, idcirco reprobata ista opinione." This passage is in a *Nachtrag* which the editors speculate may have been added under the influence of William of Ockham's critique of certain passages (pp. 199–202). See the other evidence adduced in Chapter Four, n. 14.

medieval imperial discourse, even if only as a red herring. George's praise of the sultan elicited a richer and more sustained rejection of this stubbornly persistent idea that Constantinople remained the heart of the real Roman Empire.

Arévalo's ultimate target, however, was more ambitious than Mehmed, George, or imperial Byzantium: it was the pretensions of any polity to supremacy over the papacy, especially the Holy Roman Empire. Even these *moderni* emperors, whom he previously recognized as wielding imperial authority since the foundation of the Ottonian dynasty in the tenth century, enjoyed only the *title* of "Roman."

The emperor is called the king of the Romans not by reason of any right or jurisdiction, election or nation, but on account of the dignity by reason of derivation, since the empire is derived from the Roman city. In the same way, by reason of confirmation and coronation since the emperor ought to be confirmed and crowned in Rome and by the Roman pontiff.⁸²

In all matters then, spiritual *and* temporal, the Roman pontiff exercised supreme and monarchical authority throughout the world. His proof was the routine syllogism arguing that since all authority belonged to God, and since the pope was God's *vicarius*, all authority was delegated to the pontiff. "The Lord said, 'Mine are the justice and *imperium*.' Therefore, there is only one monarchy in the world, even in temporal affairs, the Roman pontificate. For even the Roman Empire depends on it, indeed is virtually inside the Roman church."⁸³ The idea that the empire depended upon the papacy was extreme hierocracy, but by no means uncommon in the fifteenth century and was frequently included as a subject of brief treatises in late medieval manuscript

⁸² BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 25r: "quod imperator dicitur rex romanorum non ratione alicuius iuris aut iurisdictionis vel electionis aut nationis. Set propter dignitatem ratione dirivationis quia ab urbe romana dirivatum est imperium. item ratione confirmationis et coronationis quia rome et a Romano pontifice debet confirmari et coronari."

⁸³ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 36v: "et specialiter de iurisdictione et imperio ait deus: mee sunt iusticie et imperium orbis ysaie X. ecce inquit iusticie et imperium. Constat ergo omni iure non esse alium verum et unicum monarcham in orbe ecciam in temporalibus nisi solum romanum pontificem. Nam et refatum imperium ab eo dependet ymo romanum imperium virtualiter est in ecclesia romana ut diximus supra in primo errore."

collections on ecclesiology or the subject of juristic *consilia*.⁸⁴ But Arévalo then rewrote the history of empire once again, claiming that the papacy had established the imperial office, and even the practice of elective kingship.⁸⁵ The authority of secular princes, Arévalo argued, was superfluous, necessary only where the spiritual cannot achieve its ends through doctrine; there the prince works through “fear of discipline,” a restatement of a famous Isidorean rubric from Gratian’s *Decretum*.⁸⁶

These contentions were not innovative, but drawn from the conventional papalist arsenal. Therefore, the arguments in *On the Sins* regarding the western empire were admittedly limited, and they must be read as a recapitulation of and complement to his previous works on imperial authority, especially *Defense of the Church* and *On the Monarchy of the World*, the latter which he wrote during the very months that George languished in his cell, early 1467.⁸⁷ These two treatises, cited not infrequently in *On the Sins*, fleshed out the international implications of his ideology of papal monarchy. The first of ten tractates of Arévalo’s *Defense of the Church* advanced his distinctive brand of reactionary hierocracy, anticipating the arguments he would advance against George

⁸⁴ See, for instance, BAV, Ott. lat. 2808, fols. 317ff; *Abbatis Panormitani Consilia Iurisque responsa, quaestiones ac tractatus* (Leiden, 1547), cons. 82.

⁸⁵ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 36v.

⁸⁶ BAV, Vat. lat. 971, f. 37r: “quod non prevalent sacerdos efficere per doctrine potestatem, princeps hoc agat per discipline terrorem”; *Decreti Secunda Pars* C. 23 q.5 c.20, in CIC II, col. 936.

⁸⁷ The full title is *Libellus de origine et differentia principatus regalis et imperialis*, dedicated to Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia; it is preserved in several manuscripts (BAV, Vat. lat. 4881, fols. 1–48; BAV, Barb. lat. 1589, fols. 1–46r; University of Salamanca, Cod. I 15522), and it was printed in 1521 under the title *Liber incipit de origine ac differentia principatus imperialis et regalis et de antiquitate et iusticia utriusque et in quo alter alterum excedat et a quo et quibus causis reges corrigi et deponi possint* (Rome, 1521); see Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, 151–56, esp. 152 n. 34 for the proposed date. Arévalo also wrote *Defensorium ecclesiae et status ecclesiastici* in 1466 under commission from Paul II, now preserved in BAV, Vat. lat. 4106; for a summary of the origin, structure, and argument, see Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, 144–51.

and Mehmed.⁸⁸ The pope, as head of the church, exercised unfettered and universal power over all kings, princes, and emperors, even in secular affairs.⁸⁹ *On the Monarchy of the World*, however, took aim explicitly at the Holy Roman Empire, arguing that its claim to universal monarchy was fundamentally illegitimate, and that the emperor only ruled those people who had elected him. In short, he was only a king, and less legitimate than those who succeeded hereditarily.⁹⁰

As he had been since his first employment at the council of Basel, Arévalo remained unshakably devoted to the Castilian monarchy, and *On the Monarchy of the World* seems to have been written both to defend the royal claims of Enrique IV (r. 1454–74), son of the bishop’s first patron Juan II, against the challenge of Infante Alfonso.⁹¹ Arévalo, advocating the interests of Enrique IV in Rome, rejected the claims of Alfonso’s partisans that they had the right to depose their monarch. On the contrary, the bishop argued, since the pope was the sole monarch to whom all rulers are subject, only he had the authority to make or unmake kings. In broad strokes, then, the treatise reiterated his view of papal imperial ideology advanced in both *Defense of the*

⁸⁸ BAV, Vat. lat. 4106, fols. 34v–79v; Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, 145–46, where Trame shows that the author hews closely to the arguments of previous late medieval papal monarchists like Augustinus Triumphus, Giles of Rome, and the canonist Johannes Andraeae.

⁸⁹ BAV, Vat. lat. 4106, fol. 35r: “quod romanus pontifex, sponsus, capud, et rector universalis ecclesie habet universalem et supremam potestatem ordinationem et dispositionem immediate adeo super omnem aliam potestatem non solum in spiritualibus, sed super omnes imperatores, reges, et principes seculares in cunctis temporalibus et terrenis.”

⁹⁰ Arévalo, *De origine ac differentia principatus imperialis et regalis*, 16: “Prima Romanus populus et eius principes et imperatores nullo iusto titulo, sed tyrannice et usurpative et per violentiam dominium et iurisdictionem ad regna et provincias orbis occuparunt et obtinuerunt. Secunda quod Reges et principes, quibus regna dantur, quia ex successione, voluntarie et sic naturaliter principantur, antiquiorem, iustiorum et approbatiorem titulum habent in eisdem regnis et provinciis quam imperator et alii, qui dantur regnis et provinciis veluti a iure civili assumpti. Tertia quod Predicti reges et principes ex successione naturaliter et voluntarie regnantes et eorum populi et provincie iuste et licite potuerunt etiam vi et armis recuperare regna et provincias huiusmodi ab imperatoribus seu populo Romano, qui illa predicta regna et provincias per violentiam occuparunt et iugum servitutis imperialis a se excutere. Quarta quod Imperatorem iuste, licite et recte non habere aliquod dominium sive iurisdictionem universalem ad orbem, sed solum in illa provincia imperii aut populo, in quo et ad quem electus est.”

⁹¹ On the political context, see Trame, *Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo*, 152–53; Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire*, 85–86.

Church and *On the Sins*. But the treatise also stood as a fairly open attack on the authority of the Holy Roman Empire, as Sánchez de Arévalo insisted that the Roman Empire exercised no legitimate jurisdiction in Iberia. This argument anticipated many of the points he later marshalled against Mehmed, that Spanish territories were subject only to the papacy and were exempt from the overlordship of the Roman Emperor. The Romans had been violent and unlawful conquerors, and Charlemagne had failed to defend the peninsula from the influx of infidels. Thus, the territory later reconquered from Muslim invaders was in no way subject to imperial suzerainty.⁹²

This argument was hardly novel. Indeed, it drew on a long tradition of Iberian self-professed independence from the normative imaginary community of the Middle Ages, the Roman Empire. Alfonso X of Castile and León, in his law code *Las Siete Partidas*, first issued around 1260, claimed for the king the same authority wielded by the emperor, a clear declaration of Spain's independence from imperial control.⁹³ Even before Alfonso X, the renowned Spanish canonist Vincentius Hispanus carved out an exception for Spain from the imperial overreach of a German canonist. Glossing Innocent III's decretal *Venerabilem*, which remained the *locus classicus* for late medieval discussions of imperial authority, Vincentius insisted that the Spanish were exempt from imperial lordship since they had barred the Franks from entering the peninsula and were constantly subjugating it by their own virtues, a reference to the

⁹² Arévalo, *De origine ac differentia principatus imperialis et regalis*, 16.

⁹³ Robert I. Burns, ed., *Las Siete Partidas*, trans. Samuel Parsons Scott, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, 2001), 2:2.1.8; see also Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *The Learned King: The Reign of Alfonso X of Castile* (Philadelphia, 1993), 22–24; on Alfonso's attempt to gain the imperial throne after the death of Frederick II, see idem, "Image and Reality: The King Creates His Kingdom," in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*, ed. Robert I. Burns (Philadelphia, 1990), 24–26.

ongoing recovery of Iberia from the Islamic polities there.⁹⁴ As Trame points out, both Arévalo and Vincentius Hispanus grounded their exemptions for Spanish monarchy in the *Reconquista*, though the former expressed it more negatively by observing that the independence of Spain derived from the failure of the Carolingians to protect the peninsula from Moorish conquest.

His imperial treatises show, however, just how *On the Sins* emerged from these previous works. The very arguments he had advanced against the Holy Roman Empire in *On the Monarchy of the World*—that violence and usurpation illegitimated possession—he then leveled against the Ottomans. His overarching defense of papal monarchy was expanded to counter George’s assertion of imperial legitimacy in Constantinople. While Trame is correct to a degree in observing that *On the Sins*, in its arguments about the western empire and papal authority, represented “hardly more than a restatement of all he had previously written,” his dim view of the treatise fails to acknowledge how it subjected Ottoman rule and Byzantine imperial ideology to sustained critique for the first time.

Broadly speaking, his ideological project remained much larger than the denunciation of the imperial pretensions of the Ottomans, the Byzantines, or even religious polemic. *On the Sins* defended a position of extreme hierocracy with the pontiff as the supreme monarch in the world. In this way he echoed other advocates of a supra-national order ruled by one supreme sovereign, such as Piccolomini advocated in his *On the Origin and Purpose of the Roman Empire*, and implicitly arrayed himself against those imperial theorists who attempted to preserve some measure of Gelasian independence for the *imperium* and *sacerdotium*, like Antonio de’ Roselli and Piero da

⁹⁴ Gaines Post, “‘Blessed Lady Spain’—Vincentius Hispanus and Spanish National Imperialism in the Thirteenth Century,” *Speculum* 29, no. 2 (1954): 198–209.

Monte.⁹⁵ The difference between Arévalo and another prominent advocate of a monist political theory like Peter von Andlau lay in Arévalo's simultaneous expansion of the pope's universal role and the limitation of the power of the emperors.⁹⁶

George risked his freedom and reputation by reimagining the medieval world as a universal polity led by the converted sultan. Arévalo, on the other hand, pursued a project of papal triumphalism in rejecting George's vision, insisting instead on a world united under the pope. This debate shows that intellectuals were still striving to assimilate the rapidly transforming Mediterranean world of the mid-fifteenth century to the old political paradigms of empire, but also that in doing so they each put the eastern empire at the center of these arguments.

Conclusion

These two polemicists, in their earnest engagement with the implications of an imperial Constantinople, surpassed the efforts of Vitéz and Piccolomini. For while those two prelates had first revived a language to reincorporate the imperial East into a unified Europe, they hardly looked beyond their immediate aspirations for a crusade to reckon with the political or ideological consequences of their idea. George of Trebizond and Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, on the other hand, made the imperial status of Constantinople a premiss in their arguments—

⁹⁵ For the most prominent advocate of imperial supra-nationalist sovereignty, see Piccolomini, *De ortu et auctoritate imperii romani*, in Wolkan II, 6–24. Among those who attempted to preserve Gelasian spheres of independence (while acknowledging ultimate papal superiority), see Antonio de' Roselli, *Monarchia: seu, Tractatus de potestate imperatoris et papae*, ed. Giacomo Perticone (Bologna, 1944); Piero da Monte, *Monarchia* (Lyons, 1512); and, somewhat surprisingly given his advocacy of extreme papalist ecclesiology, Juan de Torquemada, *Opusculum ad honorem Romani imperii et dominorum Romanorum*, edited in Hubert Jedin, "Juan de Torquemada und das Imperium Romanum," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 12 (1943): 247–78. On these in general, see Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, 85–116; Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire*, 97–123.

⁹⁶ Peter von Andlau, *De Imperio Romano-Germanico libri duo* (Strasburg, 1612).

George in the affirmative, Arévalo in the negative. Though arrayed against one another as implacable ideological foes, they actually shared significant commitments. Both agreed on the ideal of a single, unified polity under the leadership of a supreme monarch as the normative community for humanity. And both drew on Roman models of Mediterranean unity and political authority. But while George refashioned the Byzantine imperial order—with Constantinople as the eye of the inhabited world, the imperial seat from which all other territory was ruled—to fit new Ottoman supremacy, Arévalo refuted both the Byzantine foundation and the Ottoman innovation with an ideal of the imperial pontiff, an ideology that explicitly displaced the Roman Empire as the supreme form of kingship. These monistic Mediterraneans represented attempts to understand a complex new world through the categories and norms of the old one.

The visions of these two imperialists are also fascinating insofar as they complicate modern historical narratives about imperial thought and programs in the fifteenth century. George implicitly rejected the categories of late medieval imperial discourse that we chiefly encounter in historiography, the dyad of the *imperium-sacerdotium*, instead making his foundation a Byzantine Mediterranean. From this vantage point, Constantinople was the *only* imperial seat of the Roman Empire. George was a unique proponent of this view outside the Byzantine Empire, for other Byzantine emigrés generally eschewed an explicit position on contentious issues of imperial primacy and ideology.⁹⁷ To my knowledge, George was the only Byzantine scholar who both converted to Catholicism *and* still advocated the old Byzantine view of the imperial Mediterranean.

⁹⁷ One striking exception would be Michael Apostoles's imperial oration to Frederick III, composed between 1465 and 1470. A fascinating text, it is unclear if it was ever delivered before the emperor, who would have required in any case a translation to understand it. In it, Apostoles beseeched Frederick III to install his son "Maximianos" (i.e., Maximilian) as "emperor of Byzantion." See Apostoles, "Die Ansprache," 382.155–57: "δεῖζον ἡμῖν βασιλέα τοῦ βυζαντίου Μαξιμιανὸν τὸν πανευτυχέστατον, ὃς σου τὴν βασιλείαν ἐπὶ γῆρα βαθεῖ διαδέξεται."

Arévalo already had a reputation as a papal pugilist in disputes over conciliarism and ecclesiology, but in *On the Sins* he strikingly cast the pontificate as a chiefly political institution, with the pope exercising more the functions of a king than a priest. And while he decisively rejected George's Byzantine imperial paradigm in favor of a more conventional model of the Roman pontiff and German emperor, his treatise—and George's for that matter—nonetheless showed that the Ottomans were perceived not only as a military, political, and economic threat to the states of Europe, but as an ideological one as well.

These two thinkers, as Piccolomini and Vitéz had to a lesser extent, recognized the possibilities inherent in the destabilized Mediterranean. As the familiar political geometries of their world collapsed, Trebizond and Arévalo discerned the opportunity to use the imperial debris in the Constantinople to articulate ambitious new visions of the Mediterranean world. George hoped to coopt, through conversion, the martial success of the Ottomans to realize a peaceful and unified human polity. Arévalo fought in the ranks of the reformers—or reactionaries, depending on perspective—Paul II's partisans who sought to revivify papal authority after the debilitating blows of councils, schisms, anti-popes, and failed crusades. Each found that to articulate his vision, he had to confront an imperial Constantinople.

Chapter Six

An Imperial Europe: Reframing Byzantium in the Age of Maximilian I

Introduction

When Maximilian was born in 1459, his parents faced an age-old dilemma: what to name their son. His father, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, fancied the name George, in a nod to Saint George's veneration by the crusaders of the high Middle Ages. His mother, Eleanor of Portugal, on the other hand, inclined toward Constantine, a name to presage her son's destiny as the "recoverer of the Constantinopolitan kingdom."¹ At an impasse, they settled on Maximilian: another saint, but still a warrior. His namesake's martial nature was emphasized in Albrecht Dürer's marginal drawings for Maximilian's prayer book around 1515. There Saint Maximilian stands crozier in one hand, sword in the other, just as ready to fight the heathen as to shepherd the flock.² George, Constantine, Maximilian—the emperor's fate had been that of a warrior for the faith, no matter the name. But the options themselves bent his arc toward Constantinople,

¹ For the anecdote, see Maximilian's fragmentary Latin autobiography, published in Alwin Schultz, ed., "*Weisskunig*. Nach Dictaten und eigenhändigen Aufzeichnungen Kaiser Maximilians I. zusammengestellt von Marx Treitzsauerwein von Ehrentreitz," *JKSAG* 6 (1888): 421–46, here at 423; Wiesflecker I, 66. His mother's fixation on the recovery of Constantinople in 1459 reveals how the city's conquest and the subsequent failure to launch a crusade still raised the choler in many Christians. For another version of his onomastic origins, see Joseph Grünpeck, *Historia Friderici III et Maximiliani*, in *Der österreichische Geschichtsforscher* 1 (1838): 64–97, here at 79, where Maximilian, soon after having been cleansed of the residual gore from his birth, stood erect in the bath without bawling. His parents took this a sign of his fortitude and robust spirit and chose for him the name Maximilian. On St. George, see *Lexikon für Kirche und Theologie*, ed. Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Freiburg, 1960), cols. 690–93; on his association with crusaders specifically, see LdM 4, col. 1274.

² On Maximilian of Lorch, see *Lexikon für Kirche und Theologie*, vol. 7 (Freiburg, 1962), col. 204. The prayer book is a fragment now in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek; see Stephan Füssel, *The Theuerdank of 1517: Emperor Maximilian and the Media of His Day* (Cologne, 2003), 54 for a reproduction of the image. His namesake is not to be confused with another Saint Maximilian (d. 295), who was, somewhat ironically given Maximilian's fixation on warfare, martyred for conscientiously refusing to enroll in the Roman army. See Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Paris, 1921), 104–10.

where he could realize his destiny by both recovering the lost Christian citadel and defeating the Ottomans at one stroke.

This episode has the echo of literary fantasy. Like the hagiographic trope of the infant who discloses his saintly nature by reading from the Gospel or exhibiting Christ-like virtues, this episode marked Maximilian's destiny like a zodiacal sign, predicting a future of crusading in the imperial east. Yet despite the prominence of Constantinople in Maximilian's origin story, its significance in his political and ideological ambitions has evaded scrutiny. This chapter examines the role of eastern empire in Maximilian's imperial representation and ideology, from his early political failures to the projects of artistic representation and scholarly research he marshaled and directed.

I argue that Maximilian I, in distinction from his imperial predecessors, looked upon Constantinople as the eastern part of the Roman Empire, and consequently conceived of the city's recovery as a project of imperial renewal. But his failure to achieve this goal in reality turned him to the field of imperial representation. Here one of his court historians, Johannes Cuspinianus, realized Maximilian's political aspirations in the form of a new history of the Roman Empire. Cuspinianus's history defended Maximilian's vision of a divided Roman Empire needing reunion for revival. Maximilian's vision and Cuspinianus's history inaugurated a new era in the appropriation of the symbolic and ideological capital of Byzantium, a dynamic which would regulate the study and reception of Byzantium throughout early modern Europe. But their reframing of Byzantium also redefined the nature of the Roman Empire and Europe, unifying the two into a chronological, territorial, and ideological concept. Not only did this project align the previously discrete categories of Roman Empire and Europe, it articulated a unique European claim to the ancient past and hardened the cultural frontiers around exclusive markers of identity like Christianity.

Historians have long associated Maximilian with a watershed in the history of the Holy Roman Empire, as a harbinger of decline rather than an agent of renewal. Consensus held that the emperor had fatally weakened the imperial state and prevented its sublimation to full nationhood. Maximilian reigned over a sustained movement of constitutional and administrative reform in the empire, reforms which he occasionally adopted, but often impeded. In the nineteenth century, historians traced the Holy Roman Empire's evident failure to coalesce into a centralized nation-state along the lines of France or Britain back to Maximilian and his opposition to reforms intended to strengthen the empire's central administrative organs. If he had embraced the imperial reform movement wholeheartedly, the Empire would have laid the foundation for successful, rather than aborted, national development.³ Exacerbating this approach to his reign and the pejorative evaluations of his historical role in the development of the empire-as-protostate was the growing schism between advocates of *kleindeutsch* and *großdeutsch* views of empire, especially after middle of the nineteenth century. The former, often Protestants and advocates of the robust Prussian state, saw the empire as a particularly German (thus, Prussian) concern; attempts in the past, whether by the Salian, Staufer, or Habsburg emperors, to establish the empire on a broader geographical and ethnic basis had fatally impeded the empire's development as a centralized state. The *großdeutsch* historians defended the empire as state with a remit over all German-speaking peoples. These historians were often Catholic and Austrian, and defended the foundation of Austria's most famous dynasty with vigor.⁴ The *kleindeutsch*

³ Useful reference entries on Maximilian include Hermann Wiesflecker, "Maximilian I." in NDB 16 (1990), 458–71; Gordon Campbell, "Maximilian I," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2003), 514–15; and "Maximilian I., Ks., dt. Kg." in LdM 6, cols. 420–24. Cuspinianus included his own biography of Maximilian at the end of *De caesaribus*, 724–39, though it inclines toward panegyric. Modern historical treatments of Maximilian begin with the sketch in Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535* (Reimer, 1824), 84–99.

⁴ The most famous exchange in this historical-political feud was sparked by Wilhelm von Giesebrecht's *Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit*, the first volume of which was published in 1855, but most vehemently argued by the Westphalian

historiography, especially the two-volume biography of Heinrich Ulmann, canonized the view of Maximilian as a purely Austrian dynast, a dilettante more interested in securing prosperity for his own house and lands than in promoting the viability of the empire.⁵ This interpretation emphasized Maximilian's long-standing opposition to efforts of imperial reform promoted by princes like Berthold of Henneberg, the archbishop-elect of Mainz, and the subsequent price paid by the empire in its failure to develop as a *Machtstaat*, a centralized state of enduring political power in early modern Europe.⁶

Two-fold revision has rehabilitated Maximilian. First, historiography on the Holy Roman Empire has sought to evaluate the empire as a paradigm of a decentralized and flexible state, rather than a failed attempt to create a nation-state.⁷ Second, this re-evaluation of the imperial project made space for a new history of Maximilian, one grounded on a complete evaluation of the contemporary archival sources, especially in Vienna and Innsbruck. The exhaustive examination of these documents and their synthesis into a revisionist study of Maximilian were both achieved by Hermann Wiesflecker: the former as a leader of a multi-decade collaborative

historian Heinrich von Sybel, a student of Savigny and Ranke and a vociferous critic of the Italian policy of the medieval emperors, and Julius von Ficker, professor at Innsbruck. On their debate and its significance, see Friedrich Schneider, ed., *Universalstaat oder Nationalstaat, Macht und Ende des Ersten deutschen Reiches*, 2nd ed. (Innsbruck, 1943); for twentieth-century implications of these arguments on German medieval historiography, see Martin A. Ruehl, "In This Time without Emperors': The Politics of Ernst Kantorowicz's *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* Reconsidered," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 63 (2000): 187–242, esp. 205–220 where he points out that Kantorowicz and others cut across the *klein-* and *großdeutsch* categories in embracing the anti-Catholicism of the former and the universal *Reichsidee* of the latter, a position Ruehl called "Ghibellinism."

⁵ Heinrich Ulmann, *Kaiser Maximilian I. Auf urkundlicher Grundlage dargestellt*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1884–91).

⁶ These statist prejudices permeate the older study on Maximilian: T. F. Tout, "Germany and the Empire," in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. A. W. Ward, G. W. Prothero, Stanley Leathes, vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1906), 287–328, which offers an excellent summary of the constitutional and administrative reforms attempted, even if it is marred by its dated interpretations.

⁷ Important contributions to this revisionist historiography include Karl Otmar von Aretin, *Das alte Reich 1648–1806*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1993–97); Michael Hughes, *Early Modern Germany 1477–1806* (Basingstoke, 1992); Peter H. Wilson, *The Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2016).

project, editing Maximilian's *Regesta Imperii*; the latter in his massive synthesis of this material, a five-volume biography of Maximilian and his age completed in 1986.⁸

One of Wiesflecker's central contentions has attracted little attention in Anglophone scholarship on empire—that Maximilian was the architect for the revitalized claims to universal Christian kingship circulated by Charles V.⁹ Yet Maximilian's foundational role has been accorded little to no import in studies of the imperial ideologies and projects in Europe's triumphant "Age of Empire."¹⁰ That is, scholars have recognized his efforts for their dynastic and political, rather than their ideological, import. Among the linkages overlooked, then, are the ways that Maximilian used the symbols and history of Byzantium to legitimate his efforts at imperial consolidation and renewal.

Maximilian's singular penchant for self-representation, his patronage of important humanists and artisans, and his keen sense for mobilizing scholars and scholarship for political advantage have garnered extensive attention.¹¹ From the early studies in the *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* on his genealogical and artistic projects, to

⁸ J. F. Böhmer, *Regesta Imperii XIV* (= RI XIV); Wiesflecker I–V; see also his abridgement, idem, *Maximilian I.: die Fundamente des habsburgischen Weltreiches* (Vienna, 1991). For a concise survey of both the development of Maximilian scholarship and his own editorial contributions, see Wiesflecker I, 1–20.

⁹ Wiesflecker I, 13.

¹⁰ See for instance Yates, *Astraea*; Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire*; Pagden, *Lords of All the World*; Muldoon, *Empire and Order*. An exception is the little-noticed study of Harald Kleinschmidt, *Ruling the Waves: Emperor Maximilian I, the Search for Islands and the Transformation of the European World Picture c. 1500* (Utrecht, 2008).

¹¹ Not least have scholars focused on the trio of bizarre allegorical histories that Maximilian commissioned: *Der Weisskunic*, an account of Maximilian's youth and upbringing, was only printed for the first time in 1775; see Schultz, "Weisskunic"; *Der Theuerdank* (Augsburg, 1517), tells the story of Maximilian's courtship of Mary of Burgundy and his departure on a crusade against the Turk; a high-quality facsimile of the work including woodcuts was published in the late-nineteenth century: Simon Laschitzer, ed., "Der Theuerdank. Durch photolithographische hochätzung hergestellte facsimile-reproduction nach der ersten auflage vom jahre 1517," *Jksak* 8 (1888); a third work, *Freydal*, celebrating the emperor's chivalric pursuits at jousts and tourneys, though it was never printed: Quirin von Leitner, ed., *Freydal des Kaisers Maximilian I. Turniere und Mummereien* (Vienna, 1882).

more recent work on a broad range of visual projections of authority, scholars have examined in detail the political, dynastic, and personal dimensions of his patronage.¹² Similarly, recent work has also showed how the emperor not only leveraged the visual arts, but also the material object and the written word to project an image of himself uniting the virtues of German and Roman antiquity.¹³

Yet despite the extensive scholarship on Maximilian's imperial image, artistic and scholarly patronage, and political ambitions, this literature has almost entirely ignored the way he and certain scholars in his circle revised their sense of the historical frontiers of the Roman Empire. Blinded by the glittering sufficiency of the *translatio imperii*, scholars (both medieval and modern, as it happens) have largely told the imperial history of the Middle Ages as one of a binary ideological contest over universal authority between the western emperors and the popes, rather than the more complex multi-polar melee over legitimate claims to the Roman past. As Chapters 4 and 5 have shown, this characterization of medieval imperial politics and thought is insufficient and reductive. Many late medieval scholars and emperors were keenly aware of the adjacent and ambiguous imperial legacy of Byzantium. In the fifteenth century alone, princes in the Ile-de-France and Castile gazed covetously at the porphyry columns and dazzling mosaics of

¹² See Franz Schestag, "Kaiser Maximilian I. Triumph," *JKSAK* 1 (1883): 154–81; Eduard Chmelarz, "Die Ehrenpforte des Kaisers Maximilian I.," *JKSAK* 4 (1886): 289–319; Simon Laschitzer, "Die Heiligen aus der 'Sipp-, Mag- und Schwägerschaft' des Kaisers Maximilian I.," *JKSAK* 5 (1887): 117–262; Simon Laschitzer, "Die Genealogie des Kaisers Maximilian I.," *JKSAK* 7 (1888): 1–200; Marie Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Habsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven, 1993); Füßel, *The Theuerdank of 1517*; Larry Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008).

¹³ See Dieter Mertens, "Maximilians gekrönte Dichter über Krieg und Frieden," in *Krieg und Frieden im Horizont des Renaissancehumanismus*, ed. Franz Josef Worstbrock (Weinheim, 1986), 105–123; Stephan Füßel, "Dichtung und Politik um 1500. Das 'Haus Österreich' in Selbstdarstellung, Volkslied und panegyrischen Carmina," in *Die Österreichische Literatur. Ihr Profil von den Anfängen im Mittelalter bis ins 18. Jahrhundert (1050–1750)*, ed. Fritz Peter Knapp and Herbert Zeman, 2 vols., (Graz, 1986), 2: 803–31; Christopher S. Wood, "Maximilian I as Archeologist," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2005): 1128–74; William McDonald, "Maximilian I of Habsburg and the Veneration of Hercules: On the Revival of Myth and the German Renaissance," *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6, no. 1 (1976): 139–71.

Constantinople.¹⁴ Maximilian, however, was the first prince to harness Byzantium's ideological potential.

At the heart of the intellectual and ideological developments explored in Chapters 4 and 5 lay the idea that Byzantium—or at least Constantinople—had retained some connection to the Roman Empire, either as the eastern empire of late antiquity or even as the sole seat of imperial legitimacy. These positions marked a dramatic shift in the way people imagined the imperial Mediterranean and its history. They insisted that Byzantium no longer signified the hulk of a heterodox Greek state, but rather had always been a participant in the Roman Empire, either as a partner or a rival to the Holy Roman Empire. Such ideas began on the fringes of real political authority—espoused by prelates and scholars who sat beside, not upon, the thrones of power, be they regal, pontifical, or imperial. But in this chapter, I show how such revisionist views of imperial ideology came to be championed by the Holy Roman Emperor himself for the first time. This represented a seismic shift away from the universalist and exclusive imperial claims of the medieval western empire, which had long maintained its sole claim to Roman imperial legitimacy and descent through the theory of the *translatio imperii*. Giorgio Falco once observed that the idea of the *translatio imperii* created a sense among late medieval intellectuals that the history of the western empire was separate from that of the east.¹⁵ Maximilian's vision and Cuspinianus's achievement repaired that breach; they imagined a new history of the ancient and

¹⁴ On the French, see Robert W. Scheller, "Imperial Themes in Art and Literature of the Early French Renaissance: The Period of Charles VIII," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 12, no. 1 (1981): 5–69; on the Spanish, see Andrew Devereux, "The Other Side of Empire: The Mediterranean and the Origins of a Spanish Imperial Ideology, 1479–1516" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2011).

¹⁵ Giorgio Falco, *La polemica sul medioevo* (Turin, 1933), 24.

medieval empire: one that was collaborative instead of competitive; ecumenical instead of exclusive; one in which the Byzantine emperors were no less Roman than the German ones.

Beginning with the early challenges to his rule and legitimacy posed by Charles VIII of France's invasion of Italy, this chapter explores how Maximilian increasingly appropriated Byzantine imperial history, memory and symbolism in the conscious and elaborate projection of his imperial image. Maximilian's desire to root his claim to imperial authority in the widest range of historical, biblical and mythic figures is well-attested in his artistic patronage and well-known to scholars. In this program, the imagery and symbolism of the eastern empire became an important part of his imperial ideology, diligently represented by artists, historians and genealogists in elaborate projects especially in the last decade of his reign. This chapter continues by fleshing out the courtly and historiographical context for the scholarship sponsored by Maximilian, where his historians recovered and sometimes invented Habsburg claims to imperial descent. The chapter ends with the figure of Johannes Cuspinianus, a Viennese humanist who shouldered the burden of rewriting the history of Europe's imperial Middle Ages in a massive chronology requested by and dedicated to Maximilian.¹⁶ Using serialized biography of Roman emperors, from Julius Caesar to Maximilian, Cuspinianus set for the first time the Byzantine emperors of the Middle Ages alongside their Frankish and German counterparts. Following the red, or perhaps, the purple thread of the eastern empire through Maximilian's life, we can see how imperial ideas shaped his politics and his patronage; why he diverged from centuries of medieval imperial ideology in his fixation on recovering the eastern empire; and how this obsession led Cuspinianus to envision the history of the Roman Empire in a new way, including rather than displacing the Byzantine emperors.

¹⁶ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*.

Therefore, this chapter complements Wiesflecker's contention that Maximilian restored vitality to universal, imperial Christian monarchy, by illustrating how his incorporation of the symbolism and history of the eastern empire became a crucial, and still unrecognized, part of that project. Not only did his appropriation of the Byzantine imperial legacy give his claims to universal kingship a broader geographical import than his predecessors, it created a more robust historical foundation for those claims by assimilating instead of denying the history of the Byzantine Middle Ages. In return, we see not only that Maximilian's final vision of the late medieval empire was richer and more ambitious than perhaps any of his predecessors from Charlemagne on. But we also comprehend how Byzantium was indispensable to Maximilian's attempts to revitalize a fairly anemic ideological project, Roman Empire. This recovery of Byzantium gave Europeans in the sixteenth century a much richer arsenal of symbols, histories and narratives from which to articulate new programs of reform, conquest, and state-building.

Maximilian's Imperial Ambition in Politics

Maximilian evinced this fixation on recovering Constantinople as a form of imperial magnification even before his ascendance to sole rule of the Holy Roman Empire in 1493.¹⁷ In 1490 Pope Innocent VIII convened a congress of principal European polities in Rome, intending to unleash against the Ottomans his masterstroke: the son of Mehmed II, Çem Sultan, who had been residing at the papal court, as an "anti-sultan" to challenge Bayezid II.¹⁸ In preparation for

¹⁷ Wiesflecker asserts that as a child Maximilian had often spoken of his desire to reconquer Constantinople, and recover the eastern empire: Wiesflecker I, 345; I have not been able to consult Ägidius Leipold, *Die Ostpolitik König Maximilians I. in den Jahren 1490–1506* (Graz, 1966).

¹⁸ On the strange story of Çem Sultan, Mehmed's son and pretender to the Ottoman throne, see Setton II, 381–416; Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, 13–14, 83. For a reconstruction of his life based on Ottoman and French

this campaign, the papal legates had been traveling throughout Europe, especially Germany, selling indulgences to raise money. However, the congress in Rome was no more successful than the assemblies in Regensburg and Frankfurt, where Piccolomini delivered his forceful orations, had been. Though Wiesflecker claimed that Maximilian was appointed to exercise supreme command over a three-headed coalition of armies—one from the papal and Italian states; one from the empire; and one from France, England, and Spain—numbering nearly a hundred thousand men, no force materialized; other scholars suspect it was never anything more than aspirational fantasy on Maximilian's part based on the discussions at the papal congress.¹⁹

The clearest sign of Maximilian's fixation on Constantinople and its significance for his imperial ideology emerges not from plans for a crusade, but from a row with the French king Charles VIII over the title the Byzantine Empire. When Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494 in order to resolve the long-standing Angevin claim to the Kingdom of Naples, his campaign triggered more than twenty years of brutal and unrelenting warfare. Princes, communes, and popes all jockeyed for advantage in a treacherous landscape of dizzying alliances and betrayals. The invasion also brought to the surface Maximilian's deep insecurities about his imperial legitimacy and standing in Europe's political hierarchy. Maximilian had not yet been crowned by the pope, and he feared that without this affirmation of his imperial status a rival (like Charles VIII) might displace him. In this venue, the *claim* to the Byzantine Empire, represented by its title (whose existence was an utter legal fiction) became a proxy battle in a struggle for western imperial legitimacy. This struggle had nothing to do with the actual city of Constantinople, or the

sources, see Nicolas Vatin, *Sultan Djem: un prince ottoman dans l'Europe du XVe siècle d'après deux sources contemporaines: Vâkî'ât-ı Sultân Cem, Œuvres de Guillaume Caoursin* (Ankara, 1997).

¹⁹ Wiesflecker I, 346–47; see Setton II, 414–16.

former territories of the Byzantine Empire. Piccolomini had transformed Constantinople from a real city—full of Christians and Muslims, merchants, soldiers, students, and courtiers—into empty imperial space waiting to be claimed by the western emperor as a symbol of Roman imperial reunification. As such, the city and the imperial title it represented had become a token in a kind of imperial game of thrones. Acquired by Maximilian, the eastern imperial title would inoculate him against challenges to his imperial legitimacy. But if seized by another, the title could embolden an imperial rival.

Even without appearing to covet the eastern empire, Charles VIII adopted imperial overtones in his march through Italy that made it look like a *Romzug*, the traditional procession of the prospective emperor to his papal coronation in Rome. As the French king entered city after city on his march southward, Charles received the adulatory obeisance of territories that Maximilian felt were his own.²⁰ Upon the French king's triumphant arrival in Florence, Marsilio Ficino delivered an oration comparing Charles to Christ, Charlemagne, and Julius Caesar, a triumvirate with deep imperial resonance. Ficino claimed that Charles had already surpassed Caesar's famous dictum *Veni, vidi, vici*, so that the king could rightly say, "I have not yet come, nor seen, but I have already conquered."²¹ No less menacing was the decree issued by Charles from Florence. It declared the French king's intention to vindicate the French claim to Naples. But it also arrogated to the king the duty to protect the church and its subjects, a customary duty

²⁰ On the imperially themed receptions in Italian cities, see Scheller, "Imperial Themes in Art and Literature of the Early French Renaissance," 33–34.

²¹ For the oration, see *Marsilii Ficini . . . Opera*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1576) 1:960–61, here at 961: "Totus autem mundus omnium communis historia, quae mox dicam, (ut arbitror) recensebit, Carolus Gallorum rex invictus Caesarianum illud, dictu magnum, factu maximum. Veni, Vidi, Vici, adeo superavit, ut dicere iam iure possit, nondum veni, nec dum vidi, iam vici."

of the emperors.²² The clarity of such signals gripped Maximilian with anxiety, but also affected other distant observers. In Salzburg, a bishop reported to his diocesan neighbor a “winged rumor” (*volucris fama fertur*) that the French king had already subjugated most of Italy and intended to wrest from the Germans the empire, “which was delivered to us on account of the idleness of the French.”²³

In addition to these ominous whispers, Maximilian received word that Charles had purchased the title to the Byzantine empire, and his response illustrates the significance of the eastern empire to his political ambitions and imperial self-conception. Though the precise origin of the rumor remains unclear, Maximilian (and others) heard that Andreas Palaiologos, nephew of the last Byzantine emperor Constantine XI, had sold the French king his claim to the empires of Constantinople and Trebizond, enabling the French monarch to style himself as “imperator graecorum.”²⁴ This report, coming to Maximilian as Charles approached Rome, only stoked emperor’s smoldering fear that Charles aimed to force the pope to crown him Roman emperor as well. Maximilian responded to news of this transaction not by questioning the legality of such a

²² RI XIV 1 n. 3181; the decree is published in Johann Christian Lünig, *Codex Italiae Diplomaticus*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1726), cols. 1301–04.

²³ RI XIV 1 n. 3203; Joseph von Zahn, ed., “Über ein Admonter Formelbuch des 15. Jahrhunderts,” *Beiträge zur Kunde steiermärkischer Geschichtsquellen* 17 (1880): 33–80, here no. 13, p. 80: “Volucris fama fertur, regem Francorum magnam Italie partem sibi subegisse, mollisque continuo nobis Germanis decus et ornamentum imperii quod ob ignaviam Gallorum et virtutes ac prestantiam Almanorum ad nos iure optimo delatum est e faucibus nostris eripere.” For other examples of these anxieties, see Scheller, “Imperial Themes in Art and Literature of the Early French Renaissance,” 41 n. 148. On Maximilian’s fear that Charles VIII’s expedition had ulterior, imperial motives, see also Wiesflecker II, 44.

²⁴ RI XIV 1 n. 3126; Johannes Burchard, *Diarium sive rerum urbanarum commentarii*, ed. L. Thuasne, 3 vols., (Paris, 1883–85), 3:468, Anm. 1; on this transaction, see M. de Foncemagne, “Eclaircissements Historiques sur quelques circonstances du voyage de Charles VIII. en Italie; et particulièrement sur la cession que lui fit André Paléologue, du droit qu’il avoit à l’Empire de Constantinople,” *Mémoires de Littérature Tirés des Registres de l’Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 28 (1769): 1–73, which includes the text of the instrument of cession to Charles VIII on pp. 60–73, though incorrectly dated to 1474 instead of 1494; see also Yvonne Labande-Mailfert, *Charles VIII et son milieu: 1470–1498: la jeunesse au pouvoir* (Paris, 1975), 271–72, who argues that the recompense requested by Andreas was too steep and that the plan had been concocted or at least encouraged by Pope Alexander VI; most recently, Jonathan Harris, “A Worthless Prince? Andreas Palaeologus in Rome, 1464–1502,” *OCP* 61, no. 2 (1995): 551–54.

transfer, contestable on both canonistic and civilian grounds.²⁵ Instead he relayed to his papal legate, Cardinal Peraudi who was then in Rome, that Charles should desist from calling himself “emperor of the Greeks.”

Another thing has been announced to us from many places, that many are advising the king of the Franks that he should assume the title of emperor of the Greeks. If this were to happen, it would be averse to our design. That’s why you’ll exhort the king not to ascribe the title to himself. Otherwise, it would undoubtedly bring enormous harm upon him and the whole Christian religion, if there not be one Christian emperor. All the more since the empire of the Greeks has passed to the Roman Empire.²⁶

Using Peraudi, a member of the papal curia, to transmit the message no doubt doubled as an admonition to the pope that he should refrain from crowning Charles as emperor. But it also reveals the inherent linkage Maximilian perceived between his own imperial office, the eastern empire and the Christian community. They were all indivisibly united, so that for another to claim to be “emperor of the Greeks” would diminish preeminence of his own title, tantamount to an assault on the unity of Christendom.

In the realm of diplomacy, Maximilian never came any closer to asserting his claim to the

²⁵ Andreas Palaiologos’s instrument would seem to have violated the doctrine of inalienability of sovereignty that, though slow to develop, was firmly ensconced in the late Middle Ages. The basis for this principle among the canonists was Honorius III’s 1220 decretal *Intellecto* (*Decretales Gregorii XI* II.24 [*de iureiurando*], 33, in CIC II, col. 373), which admonished the king of Hungary that he could not make alienations prejudicial to “iura regni sui et honorem coronae.” *Intellecto* built upon even earlier assertions of inalienability: James Ross Sweeney, “The Problem of Inalienability in Innocent III’s Correspondence with Hungary: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Genesis of *Intellecto*,” *Mediaeval Studies* 37 (1975): 235–51; see also Ernst H. Kantorowicz, “Inalienability: A Note on Canonical Practice and the English Coronation Oath in the Thirteenth Century,” *Speculum* 29, no. 3 (1954): 488–502, which traces the migration into ecclesiastical inalienability; Peter N. Riesenbergh, *Inalienability of Sovereignty in Medieval Political Thought* (New York, 1956), 113–44. A nearly contemporary argument for inalienability cut the other direction: a gloss (c. 1220) by the thirteenth-century civilian Accursius (author of the Ordinary Gloss on the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* c. 1230) used Roman law (Dig. 4, 8, 4; Dig. 36, 1, 13, 14) to argue that the Donation of Constantine was legally invalid, since the emperor could neither impose his will on his successors, nor damage their rights of inheritance. For the gloss and discussion, see Maffei, *La Donazione di Costantino*, 65–69.

²⁶ RI XIV 1 n. 1273; Vienna, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Reichskanzlei, Reichsregister II, fol. 154v: “Ceterum a pluribus locis nobis nunciatum fuit quod multi consulunt ipsi francorum Regi quod titulum Imperatoris Grecorum sibi assumit. hoc si fueret esset a proposito nostro alienum. quare ipsum Regem hortabitis ut dictum titulum sibi non inscribat. quod si aliter fuerit sine dubio sibi et toti christiane religioni maximum damnum afferet. nam nisi unus Imperator christianus esse potest: eo magis quod Imperium grecorum ad Romanum devolutum est.”

eastern empire than denouncing the encroachment of others. This he did continuously, despite abundant evidence that Charles had no interest in such empty adornments.²⁷ Nevertheless, his allies, those who shared an enmity to the French, inflamed his suspicions. Although Charles himself wrote a letter to Maximilian in September 1495 to protest that he had never intended any harm to the empire, Aragonese and Venetian sources continued to deplore French imperial aspirations even after Charles's retreat from Italy.²⁸ The papal legate to Maximilian's court recounted a long conversation with the emperor on the French threat to imperial sovereignty. According to the legate's report, everyone knew that Charles VIII desired the imperial crown and planned to move beyond the boundaries of Italy, a plan laid bare by his purchase of the title to the eastern empire (*ius ad Imperium Constantinopolitanum*) from a Byzantine refugee.²⁹ Even the death of Charles VIII did not quell Maximilian's tremulous anxiety. In the spring of 1501, Maximilian responded to the Reichsregiment—a short-lived executive imperial council—that he was loath to accede to a peace with the new king of France, Louis XII. The emperor feared the French bearing gifts, assuming the treaty was a ruse to allow Louis to assert his claim to Italy and

²⁷ Charles VIII ultimately made nothing of the rights of succession that he had supposedly purchased from Andreas Palaiologos. Indeed, Palaiologos himself eventually concluded that the contract was void, for his testament ceded the same imperial succession to Ferdinand II of Aragon, an act recorded with compensatory magnificence on a massive parchment instrument, elaborately decorated in blue, gold and green, still visible in the Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv in Vienna. See RI XIV 4,2 n. 19660; Vienna, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Urkundenreihen, Familienurkunden, urkunden 881; for the edition of the text, see P. K. Enepekides, "Das Wiener Testament des Andreas Palaiologos vom 7 April 1502," in *Akten des XI Internationalen Byzantinistenkongresses, München 1958*, ed. Franz Joseph Dölger and Hans-Georg Beck (Munich, 1960), 138–43.

²⁸ For Charles's letter, see RI XIV 1 n. 3551; *Lettres de Charles VIII, roi de France, vol. 4, 1494–1495*, ed. M. Pélicier (Paris, 1903), no. 918, pp. 279–84, here at 283; for the Spanish reports, see RI XIV 1 n. 3266; for the Venetians, see RI XIV 1 n. 2152, a report from their embassy to the diet at Worms.

²⁹ RI XIV 2 n. 5205; Venice, BNM, MSS Latini, Classe XIV/No 99, coll. 4278, fol. 74r: "nec solum Romanorum Imperatoris appellationem verum etiam dominatum sibi usurparet nec contentus esset Italie terminis sed ulterius progrediretur. Et hunc Imperii ambitum ipsius animo evidentissimum argumentum erat quod ius ad Imperium Constantinopolitanum a profugo illius herede coemisset."

the imperial office itself through his connection to Charlemagne.³⁰

Maximilian never abandoned this desire to lay hold of the eastern empire through Constantinople, although a crusade appeared increasingly unlikely. Even in the last years of his life, he expressed an enduring obsession with the reconquest. In 1514 he wrote to the Bavarian humanist Willibald Pirckheimer to ask that he translate a recently discovered Greek manuscript. “From my youth I have desired and I have always attended with all my spirit to nothing more than the recovery of that [Byzantine] empire, for which I have offered my strength and very being.”³¹ A few years later, in the spring of 1517, the English king Henry VIII’s emissary to the imperial court reported that he had had a private conversation with the emperor. In it Maximilian had confided to him a bizarre scheme to cede to Henry (Maximilian’s nephew through marriage) either the title of emperor or of King of the Romans. When the ambassador objected that surely Maximilian had to pass those on to his own heirs, the emperor reportedly waved him off, insisting that he had always intended to take the title of “emperor of

³⁰ RI XIV 3,1 n. 11634; Vienna, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Reichskanzlei, Reichsregister MM, fol. 57v–59v. On the French kings’ attempts to gain the imperial throne, see Gaston Zeller, “Les rois de France candidats à l’empire. Essai sur l’idéologie impériale en France,” *Revue Historique* 173, no. 2 (1934): 273–311, 497–534.

³¹ See *Willibald Pirckheimers Briefwechsel*, ed. Emil Reicke, vol. 2 (Munich, 1956), no. 328, pp. 454–56, here at 455.8–11: “Et quum Nos ab ineunte aetate nostra nihil magis desideraverimus et semper omni studio procuraverimus, quam recuperationem illius imperii, pro qua re vires et personam nostram obtulimus. . .” On Pirckheimer, see Bernhard Ebner, “Pirckheimer, Willibald,” in NDB 20 (2001), 475; András Németh, “Willibald Pirckheimer and His Greek Codices from Buda,” *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 86 (2011): 175–98; on his work for Maximilian, see Niklas Holzberg, *Willibald Pirckheimer: griechischer Humanismus in Deutschland* (Munich, 1981), 172–79; Pirckheimer did not seem to share the same intimate relationship with Maximilian as other scholars, which suggests the emperor turned to him because he thought Pirckheimer one of the few Germans capable of translating the text, though his other translations from the same time were of *much* shorter texts (Holzberg, *Willibald Pirckheimer*, 175–76), so Pirckheimer may have demurred because he knew the task was beyond him. Even though Pirckheimer had worked for Maximilian over the course of nearly twenty years, the emperor could not even manage to get his name right: see the letter above where he describes him as “Pyrckamayr” and another letter from Johannes Stabius to Pirckheimer in 1517, where Stabius relates that the emperor called him “Perkingier” (cited in Silver, *Marketing Maximilian*, 26–27). Silver argues Pirckheimer remained on the periphery of Maximilian’s artistic entourage.

Constantinople, of which he is the rightful heir.”³² For Maximilian, Constantinople and the empire in the east remained a source of imperial legitimacy tantalizingly close but perpetually out of reach. Lacking the material power to recover this empire, the emperor turned to the tools of representation instead: the brush, the pen, and the book.

Imperial Ideology in Maximilian's Images of Power

Maximilian's imperial position by 1500 was marked by impotence, frustration, and failure: trapped north of the Alps; impeded by Venetian intransigence from leading a triumphant army southward to Rome like Charles VIII had; blocked from receiving the imperial crown from the pope as his father Frederick III had. Nonetheless, Maximilian continued to fixate on the expulsion of the Turks from Europe and the reconquest of Constantinople. These tasks were inseparable from the re-unification of the eastern and western empires under his universal lordship, a reunion which would consummate a *renovatio* or *restitutio* of the Roman Empire.³³

The first step in this revival of the Roman Empire was to be Maximilian's coronation in Rome. In preparation for this ceremonial recognition of his imperial sovereignty, Maximilian commissioned a set of legends for a *Wappenbuch*, a series of heraldic symbols to be executed in woodcut or ink that would illustrate all the kingdoms subordinate to his imperial authority.³⁴ Notable among the first entries is Constantinople—an empire “divided from the Roman Empire

³² J. S. Brewer, ed., *Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII: preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum and elsewhere*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (London, 1864), no. 3174, pp. 1022–23.

³³ *Willibald Pirckheimers Briefwechsel*, no. 328, p. 455.20–22; Wiesflecker V, 445–46.

³⁴ See the edition and brief introduction in Anna Coreth, “Ein Wappenbuch Kaiser Maximilians I,” *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchiv* 2 (1949): 291–303, esp. 294 on the “kaysserthumb Constantinopel.”

by the arrogance of the church, for which God has punished it and subjugated it to the heathens, and which king Max or his successors hope to acquire shortly.”³⁵ The *Wappenbuch* symbolizes his approach to the eastern empire in general—the unrealized nature of this conquest did not prevent him from including it in his catalogue of sigils.

The king ultimately failed to reach Rome for his coronation, as he had in so many other ventures. Stranded in 1508 in the south Tyrolean city of Trento, he petitioned Pope Julius II for permission to call himself “elected emperor” in lieu of receiving his crown in St. Peter’s basilica, and this innovative appellation had to suffice for the rest of his life.³⁶ Thus deprived of the journey and ceremony which would have been visible recognitions of his imperial authority, Maximilian found innovative ways to communicate his imperial pretensions, especially through his extensive artistic patronage. These he found cheaper and easier to accomplish than mounting an expedition to Rome or a crusade to Constantinople.³⁷ Yet the conception of empire and Maximilian’s relationship to the imperial past exhibited in these projects illustrated their fundamental conservatism. Adhering closely to axiomatic tenets of western imperial ideology, they failed to legitimize Maximilian’s enduring fixation on the eastern empire. Understanding the loyalty to western medieval concepts of the Roman empire prevalent among his scholars highlights Maximilian’s divergent inclinations: the desire to include Byzantium’s legacy in his

³⁵ Coreth, “Ein Wappenbuch Kaiser Maximilians I,” 297: “Constantinopel: Das ist ein kayserthumb, getaylt von dem Ro(mischen) reich durch übermut der Kirchen, dardurch sy got gestrafft hatt unnd den hayden unnderworffen unnd umb das, das künig Max oder sein nachkomen hofft, das in kurtzer zeit zuerlanngen, darumb so furt künig Max disen schild gar.”

³⁶ Wiesflecker IV, 6–15. The coronation was symbolically important, but it did not affect his constitutional status within the empire. The Golden Bull of 1356 had legalized and formalized the status quo since 1338 which had regarded election, rather than coronation, as constitutive of imperial authority; see Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Origins of Modern Germany*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1984), 316–19.

³⁷ A great deal has been written about his elaborate imperial representation. See the bibliography above in notes 12 and 13.

imperial ideology, and his later sponsorship of a scholar who would do so.

A famous passage from Maximilian's allegorical autobiography *Der Weisskunig* declared: "He who fails to erect a memorial in his lifetime, has none after his death and men will forget him with the ringing of the bell."³⁸ After his assumption of the title "elected emperor" after 1508, Maximilian heeded this warning and began crafting his own memorial. He dictated literary portraits of his life and ambitions with accompanying images in woodcut—*Der Weisskunig*, *Der Theuerdank*, *Freydal*—allegorical histories that valorized his youth, his courtship of Mary of Burgundy, his chivalric ideals, and his dedication to religious warfare. Maximilian also commissioned enormous visual projects which conveyed a meticulously curated monarchical image. In 1512 he dictated to his secretary a plan for an imperial triumph executed in woodcuts, similar to those celebrated by commanders and emperors in antiquity. Surpassing in grandeur Andrea Mantegna's recent nine-cycle painting *Triumphs of Caesar*, Maximilian's *Triumphal Procession* depicted in well over one hundred woodcuts a long procession of hunters, courtiers, musicians, subject princes, banners and cars that symbolized his *res gestae*, or imperial achievements. Like his *Wappenbuch*, these achievements included the actual alongside the aspirational. The plan even showed at the end of the procession the "people of Calicut."³⁹ Though they were styled more like Native Americans than inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent, Maximilian chose this processional coda to communicate the global horizon of his

³⁸ Schultz, "*Weisskunig*," 66.33–34: "Wer ime in seinem leben kain gedachtnus macht, der hat nach seinem todt kein gedächtnus und dessenlben menschen wirdt mit dem glockendon vergessen."

³⁹ The *Triumphzug* was intended to be painted on vellum for the emperor and was executed in one hundred and thirty-seven woodcuts by Hans Burgkmair and others for printing and circulation. The emperor died before the plan was finished and it was printed for the first time in 1526; thereafter, two additional editions were printed in the late eighteenth century, 1777 and 1796. For Maximilian's text for the *Triumphzug*, see Franz Schestag, "Kaiser Maximilian I. Triumph," *Jksak* 1 (1883): 154–81; for bibliography, translation, and high-quality reproduction of all 137 woodcuts with commentary, see Stanley Appelbaum, *The Triumph of Maximilian I* (New York, 1964).

empire, and perhaps even to fashion an implicit comparison of his own exploits, wholly imaginary, to those of Alexander the Great.⁴⁰ The *Triumphal Procession* made its imperial argument more by analogy, miming the grandeur and ritual of a Roman procession, than by history. Its claims on the past came through a series of funerary statues on woodcuts 106–110, images that marshalled the emperor’s dynastic associations: John of Portugal, Charles of Burgundy, Ferdinand of Spain, Ladislaus of Hungary—all figures from the last century—alongside a number of Habsburg ancestors. The only distant historical figures depicted were King Arthur, Clovis I, and, naturally, Charlemagne.⁴¹

Other projects, though, brought imperial ancestry to the fore and made Maximilian’s historical association with past emperors more explicit and visible than in the *Triumphal Procession*. These laid special emphasis on Maximilian’s ancient and late antique imperial ancestors, as well as the translation of empire from the Byzantines to the Franks under Charlemagne. Among such projects was Maximilian’s extravagant funerary monument, whose key elements were planned, like the other literary and monumental projects, by Maximilian himself. This tomb complex—a “dynastic and imperial pantheon,” as one scholar called it—included life-sized bronze statues of real and fanciful ancestors (40 planned, 28 executed), statuettes of Habsburg saints (100 planned, 23 executed), busts of Roman emperors (34 planned, 22 executed), and a massive stone cenotaph carved with scenes from the emperor’s life.⁴² The Roman imperial busts began with Julius

⁴⁰ See Appelbaum, *The Triumph of Maximilian I*, woodcut 134; for his notes on the “people of Calicut,” see pp. 18–19.

⁴¹ Appelbaum, *The Triumph of Maximilian I*, woodcuts 106–110, pp. 14–15.

⁴² On the tomb’s design and execution, see Vinzenz Oberhammer, *Die Bronzestandbilder des Maximiliangrabmales in der Hofkirche zu Innsbruck* (Innsbruck, 1935), who suggested that the emperor drew his inspiration from Cassius Dio’s description of Augustus’s funeral; Elisabeth Scheicher, “Kaiser Maximilian plant sein Grabmal,” *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 93 (1999), 81–118; Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance c. 1520–1580* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 185–92, who emphasizes the influence of the Burgundian funerary monument tradition (quote at 189); Silver, *Marketing Maximilian*, 14–15, 68–76. Originally planned for St. George’s Chapel in Wiener Neustadt—a site reminiscent of his father’s naming preference—the tomb was eventually installed in the

Caesar, depicted with a narrow, serious mouth and the muscular neck of a wrestler, followed by a curated series that excised the notable brutes like Caligula and Domitian and granted Charlemagne a place of honor.⁴³

A similar canon of emperors also appeared in the famous *Arch of Honor*, a breathtakingly detailed series of one-hundred-and-ninety-two woodcuts designed by Albrecht Dürer, standing over ten feet high when fully assembled.⁴⁴ Dürer's *Arch of Honor* also depicted a gallery of virtuous imperial ancestors, from Julius Caesar through Constantine I, Justinian, Heraclius and on to Charlemagne. Charlemagne's prominent inclusion in all three of these representations of imperial majesty—the *Triumphal Procession*, the tomb, and the *Arch of Honor*—signified his unparalleled importance in Maximilian's imperial imagination as the founder of the Holy Roman Empire.

Alongside monumental depictions of a select number of imperial ancestors, Maximilian wanted to visualize an imperial family tree with more branches, a broader canopy, and roots that stretched even deeper in the historical soil. By 1508 the emperor's craving for antiquarian scholarship—that is, research aiming to simply clarify the ramification of the House of Austria—had expanded. The emperor desired genealogical research would reflect greater glories upon his family and uncover ancestors more illustrious than the dukes of Austria. In short, he wanted novel exhibitions and demonstrations of his imperial authority, ones that he could afford on his

Hofkirche in Innsbruck by Emperor Ferdinand I, Maximilian's grandson, beginning in 1553. The original plan to install the tomb at St. George's was not coincidence; it was the church dedicated to the St. Georgs-Orden, a chivalric order founded by Frederick III in 1469 dedicated to fighting the Ottomans.

⁴³ Silver, *Marketing Maximilian*, 72.

⁴⁴ On the triumphal arch, see Eduard Chmelar, "Die Ehrenpforte des Kaisers Maximilian I.," *JKSAK* 4 (1886), 289–319; Thomas Schauerte, *Die Ehrenpforte für Kaiser Maximilian I.: Dürer und Altdorfer im Dienst des Herrschers* (Munich, 2001); Larry Silver, "Power of the Press: Dürer's Arch of Honour," in *Albrecht Dürer in the Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria*, ed. Irena Zdanowicz (Melbourne, 1994), 45–62.

meager budget.⁴⁵ For this task he needed not only scholars, but willing fabulists.

Perhaps none of Maximilian's artisans or scholars embodied this combination as thoroughly as Jakob Mennel. Mennel created for Maximilian a series of historical-genealogical works that uncovered the emperor's descent from the Trojans and the Merovingians, and that celebrated the *translatio imperii* from the Greeks to the Germans. Maximilian's chief genealogist and dynastic propagandist, Jakob Mennel had originally trained under the historian Johannes Nauclerus at Tübingen and wrote works on subjects as varied as epistolary style and chess before becoming a lawyer and an advisor to Maximilian around 1505.⁴⁶ After 1505 he became engaged as court historian in the emperor's historical-genealogical projects, and from 1512–17 he produced his extensive *Princely Chronicle* in five volumes across six massive folio manuscripts.⁴⁷ In response to Maximilian's desire for something grander than the dusty contents of parochial Austrian chronicles, Mennel wrote genealogical works to illustrate the emperor's distinguished historical pedigree.

Most famous for his *Princely Chronicle*, Mennel expressed his ideas of imperial succession in several earlier works as well. He published his first historical "treatise" in 1507, a negligible poem in rhyming German couplets, the *Chronicle of the Habsburgs*. Mennel's *Chronicle* traced the Habsburg

⁴⁵ On his financial constraints in the context of his artistic aspirations, Peter Kathol, "Haus Österreich: genealogische Konzeptionen Maximilians I. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Fürstlichen Chronik Jakob Mennels" (Ph.D. diss., Universität Klagenfurt, 1999), 40–41.

⁴⁶ On Mennel in general, see Karl-Heinz Burmeister, "Jakob Mennel," NDB 17 (1994), 83–85; Karl-Heinz Burmeister, G. F. Schmidt, "Jakob Mennel," *Verfasserslexikon* 6 (1987), 389–95; Karl-Heinz Burmeister, "Seine Karriere begann auf dem Freiburger Reichstag. Der Jurist und Historiker Dr. Jakob Mennel (1460–1526)," in *Der Kaiser in seiner Stadt, Maximilian I. und der Reichstag zu Freiburg 1498*, ed. Hans Schadek (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1998), 94–113.

⁴⁷ Mennel's *Fürstliche Chronik* remains unpublished in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, Cods. 3072*–75, 3077*–3077**. A diplomatic edition of the text was prepared by Kathol, "Haus Österreich: genealogische Konzeptionen Maximilians I." Unfortunately, Kathol's edition languishes heavily corrupted in an obsolete digital format in the ÖNB, where I consulted it alongside the manuscript.

line through the great houses and territories of western Europe, beginning with an unmistakably Trojan-ish name “Pryamuss,” born in 370 CE as the first duke of the house.⁴⁸ This assertion may have sprung from the chronicle of his teacher Nauclerus, who noted that a descendant of Priam—Macromirus—was the first to assume lordship among the Franks.⁴⁹ But Mennel’s early effort at genealogy constituted a ham-fisted attempt to illustrate the Trojan-Frankish origins of the Habsburgs, by simply importing a Trojan scion to late Roman Gaul.⁵⁰

But in the same year, Mennel was also sketching out other genealogical avenues. A collection, now catalogued as *Genealogical Writings*, contains unpublished drafts, the different layouts and arrangements Mennel explored in his exploration of the Habsburg past.⁵¹ The first emphasized the western imperial line of descent from Charlemagne, depicting the translation of empire from which the western emperors sprang. On the first folio, a forked branch descends from a single medallion in which Mennel wrote: “After the Roman Empire was transferred from

⁴⁸ Jakob Mennel, *Cronica Habsburgensis nuper Rigmatice edita*, ([Freiburg], [1507]), Aii:
 von Frankreich Burgund und Provantz
 Austrasy Aquitani ganntz
 Von Brabant und von Lottringen
 Diss Sippschafft thut nach eren ringen.

⁴⁹ See Johannes Nauclerus, *Chronica* (Cologne, 1614), 553.

⁵⁰ Peter Kathol, “Alles Erdreich Ist Habsburg Untertan. Studien zu genealogischen Konzepten Maximilians I. unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der ‘Fürstlichen Chronik’ Jakob Mennels,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 106, no. 1 (1998): 367–69. Mennel apparently used the swift production of these two works, both appearing in some form in 1507, to prove his worth as a speedy researcher and writer, thus displacing Ladislaus Sunthaym as the court historian in charge of Maximilian’s genealogical projects. But as Kathol reveals, Mennel achieved his quick results by drawing extensively on the work of the much earlier historians Leopold of Vienna and Heinrich of Klingenberg. This Trojan-Frankish genealogical origin would consume the later efforts of both Mennel and Johannes Trithemius, the famed scholar and librarian who served as the Abbot of Sponheim; on this fascinating figure and his method that ranged from assiduity to forgery to “angelic dictation,” see Anthony Grafton, “A Contemplative Scholar: Trithemius Conjures the Past,” in *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 56–78. It should be noted that “discovering” Trojan roots of political communities was something of a hobby in the Middle Ages: see Richard Waswo, “Our Ancestors, the Trojans: Inventing Cultural Identity in the Middle Ages,” *Exemplaria* 7 (1995): 269–90; Wolfram Keller, *Selves and Nations: The Troy Story from Sicily to England in the Middle Ages* (Heidelberg, 2008).

⁵¹ ÖNB, Cod. 2800*.

the Greeks to the Germans, Charles the Great was made the first emperor in 776 during the pontificate of Leo III.”⁵² The illustrations continue on the next several pages to tally the emperors down to Maximilian (no. 28). A second scheme began not with Charlemagne, but with the earliest Frankish kings. Dividing the page in three columns, he arranged on the left furling banners showing the year; in the middle, a single trunk beginning with Marcanicus and Pharanundus (the first two princes after Pryamuss in his *Chronicle of the Habsburgs*); on the right the Roman Emperors. In 771, the Byzantine emperors, who had been descending on the left down to Leo IV (r. 775–780), are suddenly displaced by the German emperors, another illustration of the translation of empire.⁵³ A third arrangement (fols. 23–34) begins in the year 2107 BC, claiming somewhat implausibly that then “the house of Austria arose, whose beginning was with a soldier named Abraham.”⁵⁴ He followed this with an imposing, branching tree hung with medallions, an “arbor” of pagan princes. At the back of the work, Mennel had drawn a figure, the Habsburg eagle with outstretched wings. Only the verso side of the page opening survives, so the figure’s body remains invisible. But on the extant wing, Mennel drew the heraldic devices and names of seven monarchies—the Roman Empire, Spain, Bohemia, Scotland, England, France, and Aragon—suggesting those kingdoms sheltered under the suzerainty of Maximilian as king of kings.⁵⁵ These drawings illustrate that though Mennel rooted the Habsburg dynasty in the

⁵² ÖNB, Cod. 2800*, fol. 1r: “Carolus magnus romano imperio de grecis in germanos translato: pontificatus leonis papae iii anno salutis septigentissimo septimagesimo sexto primus imperator creatus.”

⁵³ ÖNB, Cod. 2800*, fol. 19r.

⁵⁴ ÖNB, Cod. 2800*, fol. 23r: “Anno diluvii 850 hoc est duabus millibus annis centumque et septem ante navitatione cristi ortur domus austrie cuius initium fuit paganus miles Abraham nomine.” Kathol points out that the specificity of this date makes it certain that he lifted this from Leopold of Vienna’s *Österreichische Chronik von den 95 Herrschaften*; see Kathol, “Alles Erdreich Ist Habsburg Untertan,” 369.

⁵⁵ ÖNB, Cod. 2800*, fol. 48v.

ancient Romans, the Israelites, and the Merovingians, all these lines converged upon Charlemagne, squeezing out subsequent Byzantine emperors.

If Mennel's *Genealogical Writings* showed the manifold musings of a genealogist at work, his *Chronology of the Roman Emperors* simplified the competing lineages to stress imperial continuity with predictable results.⁵⁶ Dedicated in 1514 to Maximilian's grandson, the future Charles V (then Archduke of Austria), the booklet presented a table of every emperor from Julius Caesar to Maximilian, along with his date of ascension, years of his reign, cause of death, and "several noteworthy deeds." To each Mennel assigned a *Kajserzal*, an imperial number that ordered the list, from 1 for Julius Caesar to 118 for Maximilian. The number lent the series an admirable simplicity, as if each emperor had only taken his place when his predecessor relinquished the throne, dramatically reducing historical complexity of the imperial succession. Again, Mennel preserved a clean line of descent through the translation of empire from a Byzantine emperor to Charlemagne, though he mangled the chronology somewhat by moving Michael I (r. 811–13) to 800 as Charlemagne's predecessor.⁵⁷

The artistic and scholarly visions of Dürer and Mennel reveal the ideological chasm opening between a conservative imperial ideology—emphasizing the translation of empire—and the emperor's fervent desire to reconquer Constantinople as an endeavor of imperial renovation. The emperor's idea of imperial renewal relied upon Piccolomini's *imperium orientale*, a Constantinople that had persisted as a part of the Roman Empire even beyond the Ottoman conquest. But this idea could never be consistent with the *translatio imperii*, which derived its unique ideological power from transferring Roman imperial authority undivided to the Franks.

⁵⁶ Jakob Mennel, *Chronologia imperatorum Romanorum*, in ÖNB, Cod. 8786.

⁵⁷ ÖNB, Cod. 8786, fol. 24v.

Maximilian's imperial idea, then, constituted a paradox. On the one hand, he, like every other western emperor before him, celebrated the translation of empire from the Greeks to the Germans as the restoration of the Roman Empire in the west. But Maximilian broke with his predecessors in seeking at the same time to recover Constantinople as project of imperial renovation. Legitimizing this aim required a new approach to the history of the empire that would reframe Byzantium from an imperial rival to an imperial partner. The eastern empire had to be moved from the margins of imperial history to its core. Its development and decline had to be made an integral part of the history of Roman Empire. This new vision of empire needed a new history of empire—and a new historian.

A New Imperial Historian: Johannes Cuspinianus

The Viennese scholar, Johannes Cuspinianus, became the craftsman for this new imperial history, one that departed not only from the models of his fellow scholars in Vienna but also from the paradigmatic structure of late medieval imperial histories.⁵⁸ Not content with a life of quiet study, Cuspinianus was both a philologist and doctor, a diplomat and a historian, rector of the University of Vienna and a favored emissary of Maximilian I. Born in a small village in Bavaria outside of Schweinfurt to the family Spießheimer, Cuspinianus showed early promise as a scholar and Latinist and undertook his education at a *Hochschule* in Leipzig. Though he would end his life renowned as a historian, the young Bavarian launched his career as a poet. The first real mark of

⁵⁸ On Cuspinianus, see Hans Ankiewicz-Kleehoven, "Cuspinianus, Johannes," in NDB 3 (1957), 450–52, as well as the biography, emerging from a lifetime of scholarship on Cuspinianus, idem, *Der Wiener Humanist Johannes Cuspinian, Gelehrter und Diplomat zur Zeit Kaiser Maximilians I* (Graz, 1959). Ankiewicz-Kleehoven's study is the only modern treatment of the scholar and I rely on it heavily below.

distinction Cuspinianus earned was his coronation as *Dichterlorbeer* or poet laureate by Maximilian himself in 1493, probably just after the death of Frederick III.⁵⁹ By 1494 Cuspinianus had also earned a position lecturing at the university, showing impressive range in teaching courses on the poet and geographer Dionysius Periegetes, the fourth-century Christian poet Prudentius, and—a course that surely deadened his students with tedium—on the agricultural manual of Columella. Over the remaining years of the fifteenth century, Cuspinianus passed from triumph to triumph: master in the *Bürgerschule* of St. Stephen's; a doctorate in medicine; unanimously chosen by the medical faculty as their rector. By 1500, his meteoric rise had taken him from provincial rhymester to one of the most powerful men at Austria's premier university in less than a decade.⁶⁰

Cuspinianus had gained Maximilian's attention in 1493 as a poet, but his service as diplomat changed his life, transforming him from a sedentary scholar to a peripatetic diplomat. As university rector Cuspinianus became increasingly visible to the monarch, as he delivered several orations before Maximilian regarding university matters.⁶¹ The emperor in return honored the orator by participating in baptism of Cuspinianus's newborn daughter in 1506.⁶² Several years later, when the emperor's embassy to the king of Hungary over dynastic alliances required a steady hand and a silver tongue, the other members of the embassy turned to one of Maximilian's favorite Viennese scholars, Cuspinianus. This service to Maximilian would

⁵⁹ Ankiewicz-Kleehoven, *Der Wiener Humanist*, 11.

⁶⁰ Ankiewicz-Kleehoven, *Der Wiener Humanist*, 13–20.

⁶¹ Cuspinianus delivered one in 1500 asking Maximilian to intercede on behalf of the university's doctors by forbidding uncertified (i.e., those who had not trained at the university) medical practitioners (*empirici*) from offering healing services in Vienna. Ankiewicz-Kleehoven, *Der Wiener Humanist*, 21–22.

⁶² Noted with evident pride in his diary: Hans Ankiewicz-Kleehoven, "Das Tagebuch Cuspinians," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 30, no. 2 (1909): 296; idem, *Der Wiener Humanist*, 36.

consume much of the next decade, requiring numerous trips to Buda to confer with the Hungarian king and his court. In all Cuspinianus made eighteen trips from Vienna to Buda over eight years in Maximilian's service.⁶³ It was no easy journey, three days southeast along the Danube. Once there, the diplomat often spent days cooling his heels. Of a trip in October 1513, he recorded tersely in his diary that he spent over thirty days in Buda, during which he had two audiences.⁶⁴ But this schedule gave him abundant time to write and to root through the manuscripts collected by the former king of Hungary Matthias Corvinus (d. 1490), housed in a luxurious wing of the royal palace in Buda.⁶⁵

These journeys transformed Cuspinianus as a historian of empire because they led him to a resource notably absent in Vienna, which became indispensable to his new imperial history: Byzantine manuscripts. The most important manuscript Cuspinianus found in Buda was the twelfth-century Byzantine historian John Zonaras's *Epitome of Histories*, a universal historical chronicle from Creation to the death of Alexios I in 1118.⁶⁶ This manuscript fascinated Maximilian when he heard news of it and in February 1513, the emperor had his secretary send an insistent note to Cuspinianus enjoining him to not leave the city without the book. Zonaras recounted, the emperor noted with excitement, the "migrations of peoples," presumably meaning

⁶³ These are recorded in his diary; see Hans Ankwich-Kleehoven, "Das Tagebuch Cuspinians," 304–16.

⁶⁴ Ankwich-Kleehoven, "Das Tagebuch Cuspinians," 312.

⁶⁵ On Corvinus, renowned as both a military commander and an avid patron of learning, see *Matthias Corvinus und die Renaissance in Ungarn, 1458–1541* (Vienna, 1982); Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 298–322; on Corvinus's library, see Csaba Csapodi, "The History of the Bibliotheca Corviniana," in *Bibliotheca Corviniana: The Library of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary* (New York, [1969]), 11–34.

⁶⁶ This manuscript, an elegant if not luxurious manuscript copied in a highly legible fourteenth-century hand, is now in Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. hist. gr. 16: for a useful reconstruction of Cuspinianus's relationship to this manuscript based on his correspondence and paleographical evidence, see Christian Gastgeber, *Miscellanea Codicum Graecorum Vindobonensium* (Vienna, 2009), 161–65.

the early Germanic tribes into the Roman Empire.⁶⁷ Cuspinianus obliged and brought the manuscript back to Vienna. But once there, instead of dispatching it to the emperor as instructed, he himself began to read it closely. Over the next two years Maximilian and his diplomat engaged in a running epistolary gunfight over the manuscript. Maximilian proposed a special envoy who would pick it up and return it; Cuspinianus demurred, and suggested helpfully the emperor consult another book for information on the migration of early Germanic peoples like the Gepids.⁶⁸ Maximilian then announced confidently that Willibald Pirckheimer would translate it; Cuspinianus had only to ship it to Nuremberg “through merchants or however you can.”⁶⁹ But Pirckheimer himself wrote to Cuspinianus to inform him he could not take up the task; anyway, Cuspinianus still had no interest in packing the book up to send it nearly three hundred miles across Bavaria.⁷⁰ Though Cuspinianus repeatedly professed concern about the safety of the manuscript, even a cursory reading of *On the Caesars* reveals a more pressing reason he refused to yield the book to a translation project that could take years: it had become essential to his revision of imperial history.

⁶⁷ Hans Ankwich-Kleehoven, *Johann Cuspinians Briefwechsel* (Munich, 1933), no. 18 (5 February 1513), p. 40: “Et sicut relatum est nobis, est in bibliotheca castri Budensis unus auctor Graecus Joannes Monachus, qui scripsit de transmigratione gentium. Adhibe omne studium, ut comperietur, et roga serenissimum fratrem nostrum, ut sit contentus, quod tu eum ad nos deferas vel transmittas.” This must have been the letter that Cuspinianus recorded receiving in his diary, “Das Tagebuch Cuspinians,” 309: “Februarius 16: Nocte venit mihi nova posta a cesare maxime importancie.” However, the surviving copy is only an excerpt, copied later by Hans Dernschwam, so it is possible that the matter *maxime importancie* was something other than acquiring Zonaras. Note also that the letter’s phrasing (“relatum est nobis”) suggests that the emperor heard about this manuscript from someone else, not Cuspinianus.

⁶⁸ Ankwich-Kleehoven, *Briefwechsel*, no. 22 (end of April 1513), p. 45.

⁶⁹ Ankwich-Kleehoven, *Briefwechsel*, no. 29 (20 August 1514), p. 60.

⁷⁰ Ankwich-Kleehoven, *Briefwechsel*, no. 31 (16 May 1515), pp. 67–68; no. 33 (18 October 1515), pp. 71–72.

Cuspinianus's revisionist history of the empire took shape only slowly, emerging out of preexisting engagement with early Roman imperial history and adopting aspects of a contemporary Italian history of the Caesars. By the time Cuspinianus reached Buda for the first time in June 1510, he had already begun different and far less ambitious imperial history of sorts, a treatise *On the Consuls*.⁷¹ More a scholarly than a political project, Cuspinianus began the work as a series of scholia on Festus, a terse fourth-century historian.⁷² After the acquisition of an eleventh-century manuscript of Cassiodorus's chronicle of Roman consuls, Cuspinianus expanded his treatise into a general history of Rome from the first consuls to 519 CE. Compilatory in nature, *On the Consuls* remained a teaching text—learned excurses in scholia or commentary indexed to a late ancient text: first Festus's *Breviarium*, then Cassiodorus's *Chronica*.

From this pedagogical origin sprang a more ambitious ideological vision, one that would link the ancient emperors to the contemporary ones. As Cuspinianus admitted in his epilogue to *On the Consuls*, “May the greatest God extend my life long enough that I be able to lead these annals of Cassiodorus down to our own times.”⁷³ This task, as Cuspinianus soon realized, entailed abandoning the narrative armature of the consuls—an office that ceased to be vested in magistrates other than the emperor by the sixth century, and ceased altogether soon thereafter—

⁷¹ Johannes Cuspinianus, *De consulibus Romanorum Commentarii* (Basel, 1552), 185: “Quemadmodum noster Maximilianus Caesar, hoc anno quo haec scripsimus, cum bellum in Venetos acerrimum gereret, prope Vincentiam, in monte quodam excavato ac pervio, tria pene milia rusticorum, qui toties rebellabant, et iugum excusserant, fumo necavit, obdurato introitu igne ac sulphure.” (cf. Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 10.1) The campaign of Maximilian, referenced here, occurred in 1509; see Ankwicz von Kleehoven, *Der Wiener Humanist*, 296–97.

⁷² On Festus with a summary of the differing scholarship and arguments on this obscure writer, see Barry Baldwin, “Festus the Historian,” *Historia* 27 (1978): 197–217.

⁷³ Cuspinianus, *De consulibus*, 569: “Deus Optimus Maximus tam diu mihi vitam proroget, ut possim hos Annales Cassiodori ad nostra usque tempora deducere.”

and adopting that of the emperors instead, since they persisted to his own day. It also demanded a return to the roots of the empire with Julius Caesar in order to trace the imperial succession through the byways of antiquity and the Middle Ages. Festus and Cassiodorus would not suffice for this imposing undertaking; new historical sources were required, as Cuspinianus acknowledged in the same epilogue:

This is the task [imperial history up to Maximilian], which I contemplate carefully day and night, and to which end I direct all my efforts and for which I search through all the libraries, to rescue from destruction annals which have lain concealed for many centuries. So recently, when I was acting as ambassador (*oratorem*) for Emperor Maximilian to King Ladislaus of Hungary, I rescued from the shadows the histories of Diodorus Siculus, Procopius, and John the Monk [i.e., Zonaras]—works hitherto unavailable in Latin and unknown to us—so that they might be available to us Latin-speakers and they might teach us many things that have escaped our notice.⁷⁴

This description used the conventional touchstones of memory and oblivion to justify his historical project. But it was clear that his impetus had not only been extending his first treatise, or recovering unknown histories from dusty cellars, but—much like Mennel in his *Princely Chronicle*—bolstering Maximilian’s imperial legitimacy and splendor by showing him as a direct descendant of Julius Caesar and Augustus. It advanced the argument, common among imperial chronicles and chronologies in the Middle Ages, that the current emperors stood at the end of a continuous line that reached back to the temples and triumphs of ancient Rome.⁷⁵ But Cuspinianus stood apart from his forerunners and especially his peers, those scholars like Mennel and Dürer who were studiously tracing ancestors, collecting coins, and carving woodblocks. For

⁷⁴ Cuspinianus, *De consilibus*, 569: “id quod anxie dies noctesque meditor, illucque omnes meos conatus dirigo, ac omnes bibliothecas evolvere, ut annales ab interitu vindicem, qui multa secula latuerunt. Sic nuper cum oratorem agerem Caesaris Maximiliani ad Hungarie regem Vladislaum, Diodori Siculi, Procopii, et Ioannis Monachi historias, hactenus latinitate non donatas, et nostris incognitas, e tenebris erui, ut Latinos adirent, ac multa quae nos fugerunt, edocerent.”

⁷⁵ See Mierau, “Die Einheit des Imperium Romanum.”

Cuspinianus envisioned an imperial series that embraced the Byzantine emperors until the end of the eastern empire in 1453.

Incorporating the Byzantine emperors after Charlemagne marked the greatest divergence from the historiographical models of his medieval predecessors. Those histories had used their narrative focus to inscribe the translation of the empire from the Byzantines to the Franks, abandoning imperial affairs in Constantinople after the ninth century. The *Chronicle* by Sigebert of Gembloux (c. 1028–1112), *The Two Cities* by Otto of Freising (1114–1158), *Chronicle of Emperors and Popes* by Martin of Troppau (c. 1230–1278/9), and *Chronicle of the Kings of the Romans* by Thomas Ebendorfer (1388–1464)⁷⁶—all were influential models of imperial history that Cuspinianus used extensively in the western chapters of *On the Caesars*.⁷⁷ But Cuspinianus discarded their common historical framework in favor of a more ecumenical one that arranged the emperors in Constantinople alongside the Holy Roman Emperors.

Inserting the Byzantine emperors into his history of the empire did not just overturn the consensus of medieval Latin historiography; it also distinguished Cuspinianus even from the other scholars at Maximilian's court. These contemporaries were often more committed to demonstrating the orderly descent from Octavian to Maximilian than in exploring the complexities of fifteen hundred years of imperial governance and succession. Mennel had marked this succession numerically, by assigning each an imperial number or *Käyserzal*. Several others

⁷⁶ Sigebert of Gembloux, *Chronica*, ed. L.K. Bethmann, MGH SS 6 (Hanover, 1844), 300–74; edited in the same volume are the numerous continuations of Sigebert's chronicle. On the enormous popularity and circulation of this historical work, especially in north-eastern France, see the exceptionally thorough, if overlong, Mireille Chazan, *L'Empire et l'histoire universelle: de Sigebert de Gembloux à Jean de Saint-Victor, XIIe-XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1999). Otto of Freising, *Historia de duabus civitatibus*; Martin of Troppau, *Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum*; Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica regum Romanorum*.

⁷⁷ See Ankiewicz-Kleehoven, *Der Wiener Humanist*, 309–22, for a list of the Latin sources that Cuspinianus used, including Ebendorfer, Sigebert, Martin, and many others.

sought to join image and word in imperial portrait books that flattened out historical complexities in favor of a visual gallery. Conrad Peutinger, advisor to Maximilian and a collector of ancient inscriptions and coins who also edited Jordanes and Paul the Deacon, conceived of a *Kaiserbuch* which would pair woodcut portraits with brief biographical entries on each emperor.⁷⁸ A German humanist from Mainz, Johannes Huttich, printed a similar historical treatise after Maximilian's death, in 1525: a plain series of imperial portraits with trivial and superficial biographical entries. Maximilian's biography is nearly unique in running onto the subsequent page.⁷⁹ Huttich, though, followed the western medieval rubric in excluding the Byzantine emperors after Charlemagne.⁸⁰

Only one historical work in the early sixteenth century anticipated Cuspinianus's ecumenical history of emperors: *On the Caesars* by the Venetian humanist and historian Giovanni Battista Cipelli, better known as Egnazio Battista.⁸¹ A founding member of the Aldine Academy

⁷⁸ On Peutinger, see Hans-Jörg Künast, Jan-Dirk Müller, "Peutinger, Conrad," in NDB 20 (2001), 282–84; unfortunately, Peutinger's *Kaiserbuch* eventually languished and never made it to print. A lone copy exists in Augsburg, Stadt- und Staatsbibliothek, 2 Cod. 26, which I have not yet been able to consult; on the project, see also Paul Joachimsen, *Geschichtsauffassung und Geschichtsschreibung in Deutschland unter dem Einfluss des Humanismus* (Leipzig, 1910), 202–9; Inge Wiesflecker-Friedhuber, "Kaiser Maximilian I. und seine Hofhistoriographie," in *Viatori per urbes castraque: Festschrift für Herwig Ebner zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Bräuer, Gerhard Jaritz, and Käthe Sonnleitner (Graz, 2003), 709–10. An extensive description of the book can be found in Erich König, *Peutingerstudien* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1914), 43–60. Another scholar at Maximilian's court, Johannes Fuchsmagen, created a list of Roman, German, and Byzantine emperors on the basis of collected coins, which also remained unpublished. The manuscript, which I have not yet examined, is ÖNB, Cod. 8419. On Fuchsmagen, see Hans Ankiewicz-Kleehoven, "Fuchsmagen, Johannes," in NDB 5 (1961), 684; Wood, "Maximilian I as Archaeologist," 1130–31.

⁷⁹ On Huttich, see Heinrich Grimm, "Huttichius, Johannes," in NDB 10 (1974), 105; the first edition of the work is *Imperatorum Romanorum Libellus. Una cum imaginibus, ad vivam effigiem expressis* (Strasbourg, 1525); see fol. 87r–v on Maximilian.

⁸⁰ See Huttich, *Imperatorum Romanorum Libellus*, fol. 71r, for the entry on Michael I where Huttich unquestioningly acknowledges the division, rather than the transfer, of the empire: "Qui statim inito imperio, cum Carolo convenit ut ille occidentem, sibi vero retineret orientem." At the bottom of the page, a note reads "Sequuntur Imperatores occidentales."

⁸¹ Giovanni Battista Egnazio, *De caesaribus libri III a Dictatore Caesare ad Constantinum Palaeologum, hinc a Carolo Magno ad Maximilianum Caesarem* (Venice, 1516).

and a bitter rival of Venice's leading historical luminary, Marc Antonio Sabellico, Egnazio earned a reputation as a sharp editor of classical texts and eventually earned a position as a lecturer on ancient literature in the Republic.⁸² Perhaps influenced by his editorial efforts on imperial biographies like Suetonius and the *Historia Augusta*, Egnazio for the first time wrote Byzantine emperors after the ninth century in something approaching a single imperial chronology from the Roman cradle to the Viennese maturity.

Although Egnazio's work ostensibly represented all of the emperors—both eastern and western—as part of an imperial unity, his scheme presented significant problems in its execution and its underlying theory.⁸³ As Eric Cochrane has noted, Egnazio's biographical entries grossly distorted the historical import of almost every emperor.⁸⁴ A significant figure like Justinian had forty-one years of achievements shoehorned in to half a page, which covered wars against the Persians, Vandals and Goths, the codification of Roman Law and the establishment of silk cultivation. Meanwhile imperial plodders, villains, and mayflies—men like Galba or Tiberius II—garnered near equal billing.

More troubling, however, is the way the structure of Egnazio's material undermines his professed historical argument. Theoretically, by pairing the eastern and western emperors Egnazio alleged some measure of equality between them; but the structure and moralizing nature of the biographies only reinforced the conventional hierarchy of empires and emperors. Egnazio

⁸² On Egnazio, see Elpidio Mioni, "Cipelli, Giovanni Battista," in DBI, vol. 25 (1981); Joachimsen, *Geschichtsauffassung und Geschichtsschreibung*, 210; Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, 384–85, 397–98; Pertusi, *Storiografia umanistica e mondo bizantino*, 22–25; idem, "G. B. Egnazio (Cipelli) e L. Tuberone (Crijera) tra i primi storici del Popolo turco," in *Venezia e Ungheria nel Rinascimento*, ed. Vittorio Branca (Venice, 1973), 479–87.

⁸³ Egnazio broke the work into books: Book One ran from Julius Caesar to Arcadius and Honorius and the sack of Rome; Book Two from Theodosius II to the death of Constantine XI; Book Three, the work's climax, from Charlemagne to Maximilian I.

⁸⁴ Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, 384–85.

thought of his history in comparison to Flavio Biondo's *From the Decline of the Roman Empire*, which he mentioned with great reverence while also claiming to have superseded it in his aggregation of sources.⁸⁵ Egnazio's history was far inferior to Biondo's, but he did cull several unexploited texts for his otherwise perfunctory account, including Zonaras, Niketas Choniates, the commentaries of "Christodoulos" (i.e., the history of John VI Kantakouzenos), "the books of Gemistos, and even certain *schedia*."⁸⁶ The structure of his history paid homage to Biondo as well, for Egnazio ended his first book with Alaric's sack of Rome and began the second with a lament over the decline of Roman prestige, all but explicitly adopting Biondo's trajectory of decline.⁸⁷

This structure reflected the moral asymmetry Egnazio created between eastern and western emperors, a hierarchy familiar from medieval Latin literature of all kinds. All of Egnazio's imperial portraits remained vexingly two-dimensional, but the Byzantine emperors in particular served chiefly as foils for their counterparts, wicked where their contemporaries were virtuous, schismatic where they were pious. Egnazio's account of the Fourth Crusade gave him

⁸⁵ Flavio Biondo, *Historiarum ab inclinatione Romanorum Imperii decades* (Venice, 1483), though it was completed several decades earlier.

⁸⁶ Egnazio, *De caesaribus libri III*, preface [fol. HS5]: "Ego vero et praeter Zonarae graecam historiam, et Nicetae Choniatae, Christodulique commentarios, Gemistiquel libros, etiam schedia quaedam non indignum, quae excuterem, duxi . . ." Zonaras and Choniates were new additions to the historical canon, but were circulating in a significant number of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts. The works Egnazio meant by "Christodulique commentarios," Egnazio was almost certainly referring to the history of John VI Kantakouzenos (see Pertusi, *Storiografia*, 24 n. 52; Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, 2 vols. [Budapest, 1942–43], 1:321), for whom Christodoulos was a pseudonym. Pertusi speculates that the "books of Gemistos" indicate his memoranda to Theodore II and Manuel II, which are discussed at length in Chapters One–Three. I remain skeptical that these were the "libros Gemisti," since Egnazio shows no sign of having used either memorandum to inform his sketch of Manuel II, where Egnazio's only remark is the laconic observation (fol. Fg2r–v): "De hoc nihil aliud memorabile proditum, nisi quod septem filios mares reliquit, quorum Ioannes natu maximus morienti successit."

⁸⁷ Egnazio, *De caesaribus libri III*, fol. Cd4; see the opening passages of Flavio Biondo, *Historiarum ab inclinatione Romanorum Imperii* (Basel, 1559), 3, where he dates the decline from the *culmen* of the Roman Empire's power and authority to the tenth year of the reigns of Arcadius and Honorius, i.e., 405, though he notes it was after the defeat of Radagaisus, actually in August 406. Ironically, Bury reports that the Romans perceived this as the destruction of the Gothic nation forever and erected a triumphant arch in Rome to commemorate the victory: J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the death of Theodosius I to the death of Justinian*, 2 vols. (London, 1923), 1:168 n. 6.

an opportunity to contrast the upright and virtuous crusaders—both French and Italians—with the villainous Byzantines.⁸⁸ And in his concluding remarks in the second book, almost Gibbon-esque in their disdain if not their eloquence, he recapitulated the prejudices of medieval commentators on the eastern empire.

The emperors from Constantine I on ruled with differing fortunes, and while many presided over various advances in their affairs, nevertheless their greater part was striving, cruel, covetous, and most ignoble. The worst was that they either wavered from the orthodox [i.e., Catholic] faith or they were outright hostile to it.⁸⁹

In contrast, once Egnazio began the third book, covering Charlemagne to Maximilian, he wrote as if a noxious cloud had lifted. From the “continuous calamities of the empire” he was able to bend his history to those princes “whose deeds at home and abroad . . . were so great that no few of them equaled the glory of the ancient Romans.”⁹⁰ Egnazio’s meta-historical scheme of pan-imperial history through serialized biography aspired to posit equivalence between western and eastern emperors. But the organization of the work, which treated Byzantine and western emperors separately, and Egnazio’s rhetoric, which amplified the difference in virtue between the two imperial lineages, reinforced old hierarchies. Cuspinianus knew Egnazio’s history and used these same structural contours, but to a different end. Cuspinianus created not a summary of

⁸⁸ See Egnazio, *De caesaribus libri III*, fol. Ef7v, on Baldwin of Flanders: “Excellens Veneti sanguinis virtus adiuta Gallicis armis imperium, quod tot annos factiosissima et turbulentissima Graecorum natio possederat, latino nomini facile asservit.”

⁸⁹ Egnazio, *De caesaribus libri III*, fol. Fg4r–v: “Principes a Constantino cum diversa fortuna, tum rerum vario successu multi praeferre, magna tamen eorum pars ambitiosi, crudeles, avari, et obscurissimi. quodque gravissimum sit, ab orthodoxa fide aut abhorrentes, aut etiam infesti.”

⁹⁰ Egnazio, *De caesaribus libri III*, fol. Fg8r: “Ventum iam est mihi ad tertium, atque ultimum institutae commentationis librum. Quae mihi ut laboris et operae minus, ita certe multo plus voluptatis allatura sit. Nam et a continuis imperii cladibus tantisper avertitur animus, dum laetiora persequor, et hi mihi principes posthac erunt referendi, quorum res gestae et domi, forisque felicitas in plerisque tanta est, ut veterum Romanorum gloriam non pauci ex his aequent.”

medieval prejudices and pretensions, but a refutation of them: an imperial history that thoroughly integrated the eastern and western empires for the first time.⁹¹

Cuspinianus and his Imperial Ideology

From this innovation in form, Cuspinianus made two revisionist arguments about the nature of the Roman Empire, arguments that neither Egnazio, nor any other historian of empire in Latin had anticipated. First, Cuspinianus insisted that Byzantium had remained a legitimate part of the Roman Empire throughout its history. Second, he demonstrated how the unified Roman Empire—east and west together—had transformed from a tri-continental Mediterranean state to a strictly European entity, standing against Asia as resolutely as Christianity was pitted against Islam. Therefore, Cuspinianus aligned three unwieldy and heavily freighted medieval concepts—the Roman Empire, Europe, and Christianity—into a single idea whose alignments were mutually consolidating. The Roman Empire became coterminous with the Christian community, and encompassed all of Europe, from Britain to the Bosphorus. This Roman Christian Europe not only legitimated Maximilian's ambitions in the eastern Mediterranean—to reconquer Constantinople, reunite the Roman Empire, and defeat the Turk—but joined those ambitions with his desire to found lasting hegemony within Europe. As Paul Joachimsen put it, *On the Caesars* represented the “historical expression of Maximilian's political ideas,” ideas manifest in the emperor's long political and diplomatic career.⁹²

⁹¹ Cuspinianus owned a copy of Egnazio's *De caesaribus*, now ÖNB, Druck *28 A 2. He also cited Egnazio in his own *De caesaribus*, 350; see Ankwicz-Kleehoven, *Der Wiener Humanist*, 313.

⁹² Joachimsen, *Geschichtsauffassung und Geschichtsschreibung*, 217: “So darf man wohl sagen, daß Cuspinians Kaiserbuch der historische Ausdruck der politischen Ideen Maximilians geworden ist.”

Nevertheless, Cuspinianus faced daunting challenges in making this argument, not least of which was access to relevant Byzantine material. Egnazio, for instance, had worked in a Venice thronged with Greek manuscripts and Byzantine emigrés; Cuspinianus, on the other hand, embarked upon his history without any contemporary Greek sources for most of the Byzantine emperors, a challenge shared by all who worked in early sixteenth-century Austria.⁹³ One of Cuspinianus's friends in Vienna, the Bolognese scholar Angelo Cospi, lamented this dearth of historical sources in a prefatory letter to Maximilian that he appended to his translation of Books 16 and 17 of Diodorus Siculus's *The Library of History* (excerpts covering the lives of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great) and Zonaras's *Life of Alexander*.⁹⁴ Of the deeds from the centuries between Heraclius (d. 641) and Alexios Komnenos, anything worth knowing came from Zonaras, he claimed.⁹⁵ Cospi intended this remark as praise of Zonaras, but it also represents a grim account of the availability of Byzantine historians in Austria. A catalog of cited authorities appended to *On the Caesars* shows early Byzantine historians like Agathias, Procopius, as well as later authorities Skylitzes (11th c.) and Akropolites (13th c.)—but from the seventh century onward, Cuspinianus's own attestation affirms that his chief, and usually his only, source

⁹³ On the Greek sources he did use, see Christian Gastgeber, "Zu den griechischen Quellen Cuspinians," in *Iohannes Cuspinianus, 1473-1529: ein Wiener Humanist und sein Werk im Kontext*, ed. Christian Gastgeber and Elisabeth Klecker (Vienna, 2012), 135–69.

⁹⁴ On Cospi's translation as well as his relationship to Cuspinianus, see John Monfasani, "Diodorus Siculus," in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries. Annotated Lists and Guides*, ed. Greti Dinkova-Bruun, Julia Haig Gaisser, and James Hankins, vol. 11 (Toronto, 2016), 128–35. On Cospi, who has been lamentably overlooked by the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, see Giovanni Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, 9 vols., (Bologna, 1781–94), 3:217–20; Monfasani's excellent article also includes a brief biographical sketch of Cospi as well as a concise bibliography on p. 135.

⁹⁵ Angelo Cospi, *Diodori Siculi scriptoris graeci libri duo* (Vienna, 1516), fols. AAiir–v; Monfasani, "Diodorus Siculus," 132. It is worth noting that both Cospi and Cuspinianus fundamentally misconstrued Zonaras's date as mid-tenth century.

was Zonaras.⁹⁶ Under such constraints, we might wonder how Cuspinianus managed to write the draft of *On the Caesars* that he claimed he was close to finishing in 1512.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the discovery of Zonaras in late 1512 or early 1513 transformed his history.

In the catalog of Zonaras's virtues, Cuspinianus admired his expansive coverage, hailed as *latissime*, "most extensive." Even more, though, the humanist praised his ample treatment of both political and ecclesiastical affairs. His friend Cospi, to whom Cuspinianus had recommended Zonaras as a Greek source on Alexander the Great, shared this view. Cospi blamed the silence or mockery of "ancient authors" for the insufficient esteem in which the deeds of the saints, martyrs and councils were held. Zonaras, in contrast, treated these matters with such distinction and depth that the reader could not be sure whether his book was a history of the empire which touched on the church—or a history of the church which touched on the empire.⁹⁸ Cuspinianus shared this sentiment, praising Zonaras as an author who recounted ecclesiastical

⁹⁶ For the appendix of authors, see Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, Aiiiir–Aivv. Cuspinianus mentioned "Scilax" (i.e., Skylitzes) as a source a number of times, but read him incorrectly as a twelfth-century source, a misunderstanding that persisted well into the 17th c.: see Gerardus Johannes Vossius, *De historicis graecis libri III, editio altera* (Leiden, 1651), 523. He also cites Akropolites once (p. 624) as the source of passage on the marriage of Alexios V Mourtzouphlos's daughter to Theodore I Laskaris (see *Georgii Acropolitae opera*, ed. A Heisenberg, 2 vols. [Leipzig, 1903], 1:5.12–13). Whether he had actually read the source is unclear, since he made no use of it elsewhere. There is a 14th c. manuscript of Akropolites in Vienna (Cod. hist. gr. 68), but it was acquired by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (d. 1592) in Constantinople well after Cuspinianus's death: see Herbert Hunger, *Katalog der griechischen Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*. 4 vols., (Vienna, 1961), 1:77.

⁹⁷ Ankwicicz-Kleehoven, *Briefwechsel*, no. 14 (6 April 1512, to Johannes Reuchlin), p. 29; no. 16 (16 April 1512, to Jakob Bannissis), p. 35.

⁹⁸ Cospi, *Diodori Siculi scriptoris graeci libri duo*, fols. AAiiv; Monfasani, "Diodorus Siculus," 132: "Nescio quo casu sinistro factum videmus, ut veterum scriptorum perpauci honesta mentione christianam religionem prosequuti sint, sed aut silentio eam praetereant, aut elevandi studio Deum nostrum Christum Ononychitin, Christianos asinarios, semissios et sarmentarios probrosis appellationibus aliqui nuncuparint, quae res effecit, ut miraculorum, quae confirmandae fidei a viris sanctissimis quamplurima facta sunt, calamitatum et suppliciorum, quibus Illustres nostrae religionis Martyres ultro se obtulerunt, Haeresum, quae non paucae instar belli intestini multis modis Christianam rem publicam labefactarunt, ac Decretorum a sacrosanctis conciliis adversus pravarum opinionum Duces promulgatorum non digna satis extet memoria. Sed enim diligenter, distincte, graviterque adeo omnia haec a Monacho recensentur, ut ignoremus quid obiter, quid precipue, Romanorum principum res, an Christi ecclesiae multiforem statum sibi scribendum sumpserit."

affairs and the patriarchs of Constantinople, figures just as essential to a thorough eastern imperial chronology as the popes were to a western one.⁹⁹

Cuspinianus may have admired Zonaras as an ecclesiastical historian, but his own history could not be confused for “a history of the church which touched on the empire.” Indeed, Cuspinianus treated certain elements of the history of Christianity—especially conflict between the eastern and western empires—with a surprisingly light touch, effacing or minimizing the most censorious conflicts among Christians. He passed over major events in early church history like the ecumenical councils of Nicaea (325), and Chalcedon (451) with hardly a mention, though both of these synods are treated at length in Zonaras and other sources.¹⁰⁰ Cuspinianus’s passages on more recent councils, like those at Lyons in 1274 and at Ferrara-Florence in 1438–39, also remained curt. These last two, which were central to persistent efforts by Michael VIII (d. 1282) and John VIII (d. 1448) to achieve a reunion between the Latin and Greek churches, were part of a larger story of enduring enmity between Latin and Greek Christians, a story Cuspinianus effectively obscured. *On the Caesars* plastered over this widening rift between the two churches, omitting most mention of breaks or confrontations between the two churches, such as Pope Leo IX’s (d.1054) excommunication of Michael Keroularios, the Patriarch of Constantinople, in 1054; and the bitter disputes over dogmatic issues like procession of the Holy Spirit and

⁹⁹ For both praises, see Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 210: “Ioan. Monachus Grecus tradit latissime, que in ecclesia gesta sunt, et qui Patriarche Constantinopolitani fuerint, et admirandam de statua fortune aenea historiam quam apud ipsum invenies.” On Zonaras, see ODB III, 2229. Zonaras did indeed follow ecclesiastical and even theological developments. After all, Zonaras ended his life as a monk and, though he is best known for his *Epitome Historiarum*, he also wrote extensive commentaries on church canons, patristics, as well as hagiography and homiletics; see Hunger I, 416–19; Beck, *KiL*, 656–57.

¹⁰⁰ Zonaras discusses the synod at Nicaea at XIII.4.1–19 (=III.19–23).

patriarchal supremacy that crippled pragmatic attempts at union in the late Middle Ages.¹⁰¹ And while Cuspinianus occasionally denounced individual emperors as wicked, vicious, or impious, he praised others for their piety and devotion to Christianity. Leo VI (r. 886–912) he judged “most pious”; Isaac II Angelos (r. 1185–95, 1203–4), who resisted the tyrannical Andronikos I, Cuspinianus deemed “most friendly to Christianity.”¹⁰²

Occasionally, Cuspinianus even tacitly censored his historical sources to erase signs of conflict among Christians. His passages on the First Crusade, for instance, relied heavily on the twelfth-century chronicler Ekkehard of Aura’s *Universal Chronicle*. Himself a participant in the initial crusade, Ekkehard had passed severe judgment on Emperor Alexios I, whom he saw as having betrayed his oath to support and defend the crusaders, a common view in the west.¹⁰³ Ekkehard even claimed that Alexios “would have killed the crusaders with treachery,” had not the resourcefulness of Godfrey of Bouillon preserved them.¹⁰⁴ But Cuspinianus’s version of the First Crusade events omitted the chronicler’s condemnation.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 485, on doctrinal disputes over the procession of the Holy Spirit; 624, on the Council of Lyons, noting briefly Martin IV’s anathema against the Michael VIII for his failure to implement the union; 629, on the Council of Ferrara-Florence, which becomes a pretense to lionize Pope Eugenius IV.

¹⁰² Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 490, 327.

¹⁰³ See Matthew Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500* (Manchester, 2011), 238, where he notes that the *dolus* or “cunning” was a topos employed to describe Alexios I; the association mobilized the authority of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, among other ancient sources.

¹⁰⁴ See Ekkehard von Aura, *Chronicon universale*, 216: “Quapropter nos hinc iam pauca de pluribus assignamus, videlicet, quod fictis omnino beneficiis Alexius imperator tantos sibimet heroas amicaverit, postea vero sacramentis extortis, ne regno suo vim inferrent, constrinxerit; quamvis constet, quod, dum moram ibidem primae quaeque a cohortes alias adventantes expectando facerent, dolis eos interfecisset, nisi Gotefridi ducis sollertia super gregem Domini cautius vigilasset. Testantur seditionem ipsam suburbana quae tunc destruxit, pons quem expugnavit.”

¹⁰⁵ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 440.

Cuspinianus's Empire: Division and Unity

Cuspinianus's minimization or eradication of conflict between the churches encapsulated his approach to the history of the empire. By filling in the ruptures and filing down the sharp edges between the two, he tried to show that divergent developments in the east and west did not refute his fundamental argument of over-arching imperial unity. In this vein Cuspinianus took a clever and counter-intuitive approach; rather than hide the divisions that had developed between the eastern and western empires, he put those divisions at the center of its history. In this way, Cuspinianus made those divergent trajectories evince not political estrangement but enduring unity.

By demonstrating the divisions inherent in the empire from its inception, Cuspinianus reframed the empire's history as one of legitimately and persistently divided rule, rather than competition and rivalry, which upheld the fundamental equivalence of eastern and western empires. Cuspinianus emended conventional imperial history in three ways: first, through the organization of his historical material, which integrated the Byzantine and western emperors throughout; second, through his sustained emphasis on divided rule in the empire, which illustrated the valid, almost normative, nature of this political arrangement; third, through the rhetoric of empire he employed, adopting enthusiastically the innovations first circulated by Piccolomini and Vitéz.

Cuspinianus's organization of his material illustrates the distance between his own imperial history and that of his Venetian predecessor. Egnazio had partitioned his history into three books—ancient Roman emperors to Honorius; eastern and Byzantine emperors to Constantine XI; and Holy Roman emperors from Charlemagne to Maximilian. This organization, as well as his distinct emphasis on Biondian decline, only reinforced the hierarchy between the medieval western and eastern emperors. Despite his inclusion of the Byzantine

emperors, he reiterated, instead of refuted, the translation of empire and its vitiation of Byzantine imperial legitimacy. For Egnazio, the imperial state which began with Charlemagne was altogether different from the imperial enterprise in Constantinople. Cuspinianus, in contrast, wove the two imperial histories together. In the tumultuous years of the late eighth and early ninth centuries, when Cuspinianus had to follow two divergent imperial lines of succession, he jumped from Byzantine to Frank and back: from the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros I (r. 802–11); to Charlemagne (r. 800–14); back to Michael I Rangabe (r. 811–13) and Leo V (r. 813–20); then back to the Frankish Louis the Pious (r. 813–40).¹⁰⁶ By the early eleventh century, Cuspinianus had followed no more than three emperors in either series consecutively before hopping to the other.

This scheme had the advantage of rejecting the clear-cut hierarchy, eastern subordinate to western, that Egnazio had embraced. But it also posed Cuspinianus nearly insoluble problems with chronology. Not only did the Byzantines use a different *annus mundi*, reckoned from 5508 BC, Cuspinianus did not know how to convert it to the western standard. In a passage on the death of Alexios I tallying the years of his reign, Cuspinianus gave the year of his death in the Byzantine fashion, 6626. This he copied faithfully from Zonaras, since he was unable to render it in a form legible to his Latinate audience (i.e., 1117/8). Of course, had he been able to convert it, he would have realized his chronological error in making Alexios as a contemporary of Otto I (d. 973).¹⁰⁷ Cuspinianus's inability to resolve Byzantine chronology, alongside the fact that the regnal

¹⁰⁶ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 263–88.

¹⁰⁷ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 471; cf. Zonaras III, 764 (=XVIII 29, 12), where Zonaras spells out the date (“κατὰ τὸ ἑξακισχilioστὸν ἑξακοσιοστὸν εἰκοστὸν ἔκτον ἔτος”) as opposed to rendering it in Byzantine numbers, i.e., ςηκς. Cuspinianus related Alexios and Zonaras to Otto I in a letter to Maximilian: Ankwicz-Kleehoven, *Briefwechsel*, no. 22 (late April 1513), p. 45: “Transcurri enim his duobus mensibus totum librum et <nihil> aliud repperi, nisi historiam ab initio mundi usque ad sua tempora. Vixit autem sub imperatore Graeco Alexio Comneno, qui fuit temporibus Othonis primi.” This occasion, though, was the only one on which Cuspinianus betrayed his ignorance of Byzantine temporal reckoning, since it is the only precise date that Zonaras gives in the Byzantine section of his

dates of eastern and western emperors did not necessarily align, made it difficult to jump back and forth between them. No doubt this uncertainty contributed to Cuspinianus's decision to toggle between the two imperial series frequently, fearful as he was of getting too far out of sequence in either chronology. Cuspinianus also frequently appended a kind of chronological disclaimer in the transitional passages he appended when departing from the Byzantines to the Germans or back again. "The years of the empire do not correspond everywhere."¹⁰⁸ This scheme was more than simply chronologically cumbersome, however; it was also narratively disruptive. And from the eleventh century, Cuspinianus alternated longer series of either Byzantine or German emperors to build narrative momentum. After the recovery of Constantinople from Baldwin II in 1261, Cuspinianus follows the western emperors from Frederick II, born in 1194 to Frederick III, who died in 1493, before treating the Palaiologan dynasty together. Even so, the result was a thoroughly interwoven and seemingly coherent history of contemporaneous developments in the eastern and western empires.

Alongside this novel structure, Cuspinianus devised a new approach to the standard history of the early Roman Empire, especially in its first three centuries, which emphasized its continuous division among imperial co-rulers. Other medieval historians had identified a single division in the empire's history, usually after the death of either Constantine I in 336 or Theodosius I in 395. Cuspinianus, however, recounted a near constant state of divided rule.

work. Elsewhere his dates are all relative, reckoning only the years of an emperor's reign. See Zonaras III, 537–38 (=XVII, 4, 14–15): "οὕτως οὖν τῶν τῆδε μεταστάς ὁ Τζιμισκῆς Ἰωάννης καταλείπει τὴν βασιλείαν τοῖς κληρονόμοις αὐτῆς τῷ Βασιλείῳ δηλαδὴ καὶ τῷ Κωνσταντίνῳ τοῖς υἱέσι τοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ, βασιλεύσας ἕξ πρὸς τὸ ἥμισυ ἑνιαυτούς."

¹⁰⁸ See Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 274: "Subiungam itque nunc hos Grecos Imperatores, qui tempore Caroli fuerant . . . Nec enim anni imperii usquequaque respondent."

Indeed, the empire had even sprung from shared rulership, as Cuspinianus highlighted by appending the Latin poet Ausonius's quatrain verses at the end of his own biography of Caesar.

That command which once had been the yearly
privilege of consuls twain, Julius Caesar grasped.
But brief was his kingly sway, wielded for but three years: ruthless
conspiracy of citizens in arms struck it down.¹⁰⁹

Cuspinianus therefore reframed the history of the *imperium* in a profound way; having originated as shared political authority, it was only with difficulty united under a single monarch. These multiple divisions no longer constituted a single decisive shift in the history of the empire, but a motif detectable throughout. Even before Octavian became Augustus, the empire, or “the world,” had returned to its shared state, as the three members of the Second Triumvirate—Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus “divided the world among themselves by this agreement, so that Antony had the whole East up to the Euphrates, Caesar [i.e., Octavian] the West, and Lepidus Libya.”¹¹⁰ This division was more about mollifying rivals than making administration more effective. But as the empire grew ever larger in the third century, Cuspinianus recorded how emperors found collaborative imperial rule increasingly necessary. Carus (r. 282–83) transferred to his son Carinus “Gaul, Spain, Britain, and almost the whole west” to rule while he himself marched off to fight the Persians.¹¹¹ Only a few years later, Diocletian (r. 284–305), beset by uprisings and petty tyrants across the empire, decided he needed an “imperial partner (*consorte*

¹⁰⁹ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 7: Imperium binis fuerat solenne quod olim
Consulibus, Caesar Iulius obtinuit.
Sed breve ius regni, sola trieteride gesta,
Pertulit armatae factio saena togae.

Translation from Ausonius, *Volume I: Books 1–17*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, MA, 1919), 335.

¹¹⁰ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 9: “Tum orbem inter se hoc pacto divisere, ut Orientem omnem usque ad Eufratem fluvium Antonius, Occidentem Caesar, Lepidus Lybiam possideret.”

¹¹¹ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 129–30: “Gallias, Hispanias, Britannias, et totum fere occidentem regendum tradidit”

imperii), with whom he might stabilize the empire and restore peace everywhere.”¹¹² By the time Cuspinianus reached the customarily acknowledged division under the sons of Theodosius—Honorius and Arcadius—he had identified nearly a half dozen previous partitions.¹¹³

That said, Cuspinianus did mark a permanent division of the empire with the introduction of the geographical signifiers of *orientale* and *occidentale*, eastern and western, under Honorius and Arcadius, the heirs of Theodosius I (d. 395). From then on, Cuspinianus distinguished between the empire/emperors of the east and the empire/emperors of the west. Even so, this rhetorical signal only stressed the fundamental and enduring unity of the empire. In his joint biography of Theodosius II (r. 408–50) and Valentinian III (r. 425–55), he wrote, “But now let us describe Theodosius and Valentinian together in the same frame (*eodem contextu*), they who ruled the empire of the Romans at the same time, one as emperor of the East, one as emperor of the West.”¹¹⁴

His emphasis on these persistent divisions and partnerships in the late Roman period distinguish Cuspinianus from the throngs of other late medieval historians of empire. Those writing in the imperial chronicle tradition like Martin of Troppau preferred to reduce the history to a clean series of successions, one ruler to another, a trend echoed in the innumerable terse lists

¹¹² Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 131: “Diocletianus ceu vir prudentissimus animadvertit consorte imperii opus esse, quo et imperium firmaret et pacem ubique redderet.”

¹¹³ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*: 131, a division under Diocletian; 135, a division under Constantius Chlorus; 146, a division under Constantine’s sons; 158, a division under Valens and Valentinian; 180, a division under Arcadius and Honorius; 188, a division under Theodosius II and Valentinian.

¹¹⁴ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 188–89: “Nunc autem Theodosium simul et Valentinianum prosequamur eodem contextu qui sub idem tempus, Romanorum rexerunt imperium, alter Orientis, alter Occidentis.”

of emperors recorded in manuscript flyleaves and spare folios.¹¹⁵ Even Ebendorfer (d. 1464), who wrote a longer history of the emperors, *Chronicle of the Kings of the Romans*, recorded only the division of the empire under Constantius and Galerius after the abdication of Diocletian in 306.¹¹⁶ Cuspinianus's take on the later Roman emperors, however, had a larger purpose. The prominence he gave these divisions in his story of the development of the empire foreshadowed his presentation of the continued connection between the two halves of the empire that coordinated the second half of his imperial history from the ninth century onward. It legitimated his ultimate vision of the Byzantine and the Holy Roman Empires as part of a single political entity, even to the end of the fifteenth century.

In the context of his revisionist presentation of the empire as one of perpetually shared rule, Cuspinianus's account of Charlemagne became even more charged and revealed the depth of his commitment to an ecumenical history of the western and eastern halves of the empire. Charlemagne's coronation had always represented the junction in the road, the point at which historical focus turned from eastern Mediterranean to western and central Europe, a shift justified by the translation of the empire to the Franks. Cuspinianus too made use of this convenient and conventional theory, arguing that that Irene's womanly kingship in Constantinople had given the pope the pretense he needed to transfer the empire to Charlemagne.¹¹⁷ However, Cuspinianus quickly turned to the ethnic implications of the *translatio*—that is, whether Charlemagne (and therefore the first emperors) had been French or

¹¹⁵ Martin of Troppau, *Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum*; see also Florence, BML, Plut. 83. 2, fol. 41r-v; BNCF, II, II, 349, fols. 230r-31v; Milan, BA, B 24 inf., fol. 285v; Venice, BNM, Cod. Lat. XI 66 (3967), fols. 184r-87r; Vatican City, BAV, Pal. lat. 381, fols. 164v-66r; Vat.lat. 4792, fols. 213r-217r.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica Regum Romanorum*, 183.

¹¹⁷ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 267.

German. Unsurprising for a man from Bavaria, Cuspinianus regarded Charlemagne's birthplace and its language, Charlemagne's own preferred tongue preserved in the names of months and winds, as indisputable evidence of the first Frankish emperor's identity as a proud German.¹¹⁸ As for the legal and ecclesiological issues attendant on the supposed translation, Cuspinianus set them aside in a postscript ending the chapter.¹¹⁹ In dismissing the chief medieval source regarding the translation of empire—Innocent III's 1202 decretal *Venerabilem* and its numerous canonist glosses—Cuspinianus showed that he had introduced the *translatio imperii* only to settle the issue of Charlemagne's ethnic identity. Thereafter the translation of empire made no further appearance in his history.

Rather than see Charlemagne's coronation as a transfer of imperial authority, Cuspinianus opted instead to show it as a critical moment in the negotiation of imperial governance between two wary partners. Charlemagne and Nikephoros I settled on a territorial division of the empire through a treaty, whose terms specified that "they were both Augusti and they were called brothers, one of the East, the other of the West"; and in Italy at least, these conditions endured.¹²⁰ Even more, Charlemagne and the pope himself confirmed the terms of

¹¹⁸ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 267–68.

¹¹⁹ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 268: "Sciens obmitto quae Iureconsulti in c. Venerabilem de Electione. Et de Iureiurando Romani imp. in Cle. Et passim alibi lxiii. dist. ego Ludovicus. disputant et congerunt Nicolaus de Cusa Cardinalis lib. Tertio, de Concordantia catholica, cap. tertio, diligenter satis rem hanc examinant, quem omnino censemus studioso perlegendum."

¹²⁰ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 275: "Ne tamen vacui redirent legati Imperatoris Caroli, misit suos quoque Apocrisarios de renovando foedere, ut scilicet in has conditiones iretur: Ambo Augusti essent, fratresque dicerentur, Orientis alter, alter Occidentis. Circa Italiam, cui Pipinus Caroli filius Rex praeerat, Bernardusque successit, haec observantur."

this treaty under Michael I Rangabe, at which time, Cuspinianus claimed, part of the Iberian peninsula (*Hispaniarum pars*) was added to the eastern empire.¹²¹

The division of the empire remained at the core of his history until his final peroration to Charles V, buried deep in his last Byzantine chapter on Constantine XI. Even in the final pages on the Palaiologan emperors, who hardly ruled more than the western Aegean basin at that point, Cuspinianus maintained the coordinating structure of the whole work.

After I described the emperors of the West . . . I progressed to Frederick III, the most excellent duke of Austria and propagator of his house, leaving out the emperors of the East. Now I will recount the them up to the last, Constantine VIII [i.e., Constantine XI], under whom the whole empire of the East collapsed.¹²²

Each subsequent Byzantine emperor bore the title *Orientis Imperator*, echoing the imperial titles Cuspinianus had assigned to the late antique emperors, thus preserving the scheme of legitimately divided rule. Cuspinianus's liberal use of the term "eastern empire" (or, occasionally, "empire of the east"), shows at once the abiding influence of Piccolomini, but also how far the Viennese historian had advanced beyond the Italian's concept of the *imperium orientale*. Piccolomini had popularized the idea that the empire in Constantinople remained the eastern empire of late antiquity even up to the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans. But his orations had used rhetorical sleight-of-hand to flatten out the historical distance between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries. Cuspinianus, in contrast, wove this idea of the divided-yet-united empire through his entire history.

¹²¹ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 280, where he claims as his authority for this statement Paul the Deacon. However, Paul the Deacon's *Historia Romana* ended in 799.

¹²² Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 623: "Postquam enarravi Occidentis Imperatores . . . progressus sum ad Fridericum III. Austriae praestantissimum Ducem, et domus propagatorem, obmissis Orientis Imperatoribus. Quos nunc ad ultimum usque et VIII. Constantinum, sub quo totum corrui Orientis imperium, recensebo."

The disparities between the two empires were so evident that Cuspinianus's greatest challenge was not demonstrating the "divided" part of the formulation but the "yet-united": that is, illustrating that the two empires remained collaborators in the larger imperial project of the Roman Empire. Cuspinianus cast this spell through the clever deployment of geographical and ethnographical language, intentionally distorting the boundaries of the "Romans" and their territories. These techniques allowed him to represent parochial material, especially Zonaras's history of the Byzantine empire, as an element of a larger, unified Roman imperial history.

The first of these techniques I have already examined. Cuspinianus followed and then surpassed Piccolomini in applying the terminology of the late antique imperial partition into empires *occidentale* and *orientale* to the whole course of the empire. More than a rhetorical mannerism, this terminological move froze the two halves of the empire in the permanent condition of the late antique division. The western empire may have been a patchwork of fractious nobles scattered across Austria and Germany and the eastern empire only a few poor and unconnected territories huddled around the Aegean—but no matter how far away from the fifth-century political geography the empires drifted, those terms structured their relationship as though the Roman Empire still ruled the Mediterranean world.

Alongside this geographical device, Cuspinianus also used the ethnonym "Romans" in a deliberate way that confounded late medieval expectations. Medieval historians had ceased to refer to the inhabitants of the eastern empire as Romans around the ninth century, sometimes even earlier. After that point, these inhabitants became *Graeci* in Latin, a signifier that mobilized the cultural hierarchies of antiquity to subordinate these imperial subjects to those in the western empire. Having demoted the old Romans to Greeks, the new Romans—be they Franks or Germans—were liberated to appropriate title of the *imperium Romanorum*, "empire of the Romans."

Cuspinianus, however, rejected this ethnonymic tradition. In his passages on the Byzantine emperors, especially through the end of the twelfth century, he predominantly referred to them as *Romani* or “Romans.” His readers, primed to expect these people to be called *Graeci*, would have confronted instead an ethnonym marking these imperial subjects as no different from those under the Ottonian or Salian emperors: all were *Romani*. In Cuspinianus’s Byzantine chapters, especially in the biographies of the emperors from the ninth to the twelfth centuries—from Nikephoros I (d. 802) to Manuel I Komnenos (d. 1185)—these *Romani* appeared everywhere. The effect transmuted the history of these Byzantine emperors into a chapter of Roman imperial history, making the empire *look* like a companion to the west and a participant in a larger Roman Empire.

But a reader especially attentive to the territorial boundaries of the empire would notice something significant—the “Roman Empire” of Cuspinianus’s Byzantine chapters was not a universal Roman Empire that united both east and west, but rather a narrower one that reflected the boundaries described by Cuspinianus’s Byzantine source, Zonaras. His chapter on Michael VII (r. 1071–78) began with a sober assessment of this boy-emperor’s fixation on books and childish diversions. “So since the state (*Respublica*) was administered poorly, imperial affairs were handled badly in the East and the West.”¹²³ The first half of this description is a slavish translation of Zonaras (“Τὰ μὲν οὖν τῆς πολιτείας οὕτως εἶχον κακῶς”); the second half (“imperial affairs were handled badly”) was his own addition.¹²⁴ While this invocation of the

¹²³ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 458: “Prorsusque magna fiebat hominum conculcatio ac miseria, nemine ea cordi recipiente, cum Imperator puerilibus negociis esset intentus. Sic igitur Rep. perperam administrata, in Oriente ac Occidente res male tractabantur.”

¹²⁴ See Zonaras XVIII.16.10–11 (=III, 708–9): “Τὰ μὲν οὖν τῆς πολιτείας οὕτως εἶχον κακῶς, τὰ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἔω χειρὸν ἔσχον ἢ πρότερον.” Cuspinianus’s additional line (“in Oriente ac Occidente res male tractabantur”) is not attested in the text or in the Zonaras manuscript he used, ÖNB, Cod. hist. gr. 16, here at fol. 465v.

“east” and “west,” *Oriente* and *Occidente*, parallels his terminology of the divided empire, the point of reference was not Rome or some imaginary the center of the united Roman Empire. Instead, it was Constantinople. By the “East,” Cuspinianus meant affairs in Asia Minor, where Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068–71) had suffered disastrous defeat by the Seljuk Turks. Meanwhile, “in the West, a new revolt arose,” as Nikephoros Bryennios raised an army marched on Adrianople. But the “West” here did not signify the western empire, or western Europe, but rather the western Balkans. This disjunction becomes even clearer in a passage on the uprisings in Bulgaria during the reign of Basil II (r. 976–1025).

Kingship of the Bulgars was settled on Samuel, who, while the Roman troops (*Romanis copiis*) were distracted by civil discord, found an opportunity to march through all the western regions of the Roman Empire, not only bent on plundering, but also on subjugating the places and cities there.¹²⁵

Again, the “western regions” referred not to Gaul, Britain, or Spain; instead, they were the frontiers between the Byzantine and Bulgarian states. This then was a purely Byzantine geography, one which reckoned east and west from Constantinople as the meridian of political geography, often even the center of the world.¹²⁶ When Cuspinianus invoked the “boundaries of the Romans,” “lands of the Roman,” or “the Roman Empire,” his penchant for translating directly from Zonaras made it appear as though he meant the joint Roman Empire.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 399: “Qui Romanis copiis civili dissensione impeditis, occasionem nactus, Romani imperii Occidentales regiones omnes obivit; non solum praedandi studio, verum etiam loca civitatesque subigendi.” This passage is again a literal translation of Zonaras XVII, 6, 6–8 (=III, 548): “καὶ ἡ τῆς Βουλγαρίας ἀρχὴ εἰς μόνον περιέσται τὸν Σαμουήλ, ὃς τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν στρατευμάτων τοῖς ἐμφυλίοις ἀσχολουμένων ἄδειαν εὐρηκὼς τὰ τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἡγεμονίας ἐσπέρια ζύμπαντα περιῆει, οὐ ληϊζόμενος μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς χώρας ἅμα καὶ τὰς πόλεις περιποιούμενος ἑαυτῷ.”

¹²⁶ See Angelov, “‘Asia and Europe Commonly Called East and West’.”

¹²⁷ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 296, 382, 398, 458 (“fines Romanorum”); 360, 451 (“terras Romanorum”); 310, 328, 452 (“Romanum Imperium”).

Therefore by manipulating the assumptions of his audience—the rhetorical conventions of the age, which dictated *Graecorum* or *Romaeorum* instead of *Romanorum* to describe the Byzantines; the expectations of the Latin reader, that “Roman” meant the western empire; and the format of the book, which wove together two strands of the same story—Cuspinianus conjured before the eyes of his readers a vision of the united Roman Empire, turning Zonaras’s Byzantine-Roman into unified-Roman. This method allowed him to cleave closely to his source material, which was essential for the Byzantine chapters where he had no landmarks other than Zonaras.¹²⁸ But it also supported the ideological argument of the work, that the Greek and German emperors had been *consortes imperii*, imperial partners, no less than Honorius and Arcadius had been.

An Imperial Europe

Beyond assimilating the Byzantines to the Roman Empire, Cuspinianus’s imperial history had another profound consequence. The combination of manipulating the borders of the Roman Empire and reestablishing Byzantium’s relationship to it forged a new sense of what—and where—the Roman Empire was. Byzantium’s historical trajectory as the *imperium Orientis*, “empire of the East,” yielded a sense of the imperial “East” that no longer encompassed Asia or

¹²⁸ Many of his Byzantine chapters were hardly more than a translation and rearrangement of Zonaras’s material. The fidelity of his “excerpts” from Zonaras is somewhat ironic since he had snarked at Leonardo Bruni’s *De bello Gothorum* for almost precisely the same thing. Of that history, an unattributed paraphrase from Procopius for which Bruni was widely criticized, Cuspinianus wrote: “Cur autem Leonardus Aretinus quator libellos de bello Gothorum scribens, Procopii quem tamen simpliciter solum convertit nusquam meminerit, mirari satis non possum: nihil enim addit, quod non in Procopio inveniatur.” (216) Cuspinianus himself perhaps only just surmounted this very low bar, insofar as he generally attributed his material to Zonaras, while not quite claiming to have translated it wholesale.

Africa. Instead, Cuspinianus made the Roman Empire, both eastern and western, purely European entities.

This growing territorial alignment of the Roman Empire with Europe reveals itself in the way Cuspinianus used the concept *oriens-orientale* throughout his history. From the first pages of his history, Cuspinianus affirmed that: 1) the Roman Empire was a global state, at least in the ancient sense, meaning it covered the three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa; and 2) that the chief feature of the *Oriens*, the “East,” was being “not-Europe.” When Roman aristocrats regarded the savage nature of Caracalla (r. 211–17), they decided to divide the empire between him and his brother Geta, “so that all of Europe with the southern regions [i.e. Africa] submitted to Antony [i.e., Caracalla], while Asia and whatever inclined to the East (*in Orientem*) went to Geta.”¹²⁹ After the successful campaigns of Aurelian (r. 270–75) against Zenobia, an increasingly independent aristocrat consolidating power in Syria, Asia Minor and Egypt, Cuspinianus related that the emperor had “returned to Europe after the entire East (*omni oriente*) had been recovered.”¹³⁰ The East and Europe were alike in lacking sharp geographic or conceptual frontiers; but their opposition to one another remained quintessential. Even more, this confirmed the Roman Empire’s claim to not only Europe, but the whole inhabited world: Europe and the lands beyond.

These frontiers between Europe and the “East” began to collapse along with the Byzantine state. Even in the Byzantine chapters on the tenth and eleventh centuries, the eastern

¹²⁹ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 89: “ut Europa omnis Antonio cum partibus meridionalibus cederet, Asia vero et quicquid in Orientem vergit, Getae.”

¹³⁰ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 122: “Tandem superata Zenobia, et recepto omni oriente, Aurelianus in Europam reversus omnes illic qui vagabantur hostes, sua virtute contudit.” See also 133: “Oriente toto composito, Europam repetit Diocletianus”; 144: “Iam itaque Constantinus Italiam, Aphricam, et post Licinii bellum civile, Orientem possidebat, omnemque orbem gubernabat.”

empire continued to wield at least notional control over the non-European “East.” But the close association of Byzantium with the “East,” inscribed in its epithet as *imperium orientale* or *imperium Orientis* and which Cuspinianus wove into nearly every page of his history, meant that as Byzantium’s boundaries began to contract, so did the conceptual frontiers of this “East.” Under the Palaiologan emperors, the last dynasty to rule in Constantinople, the *Oriens* disappeared as a territorial designation for Asia Minor or Syria, just as Byzantine rule in these territories dissipated. Instead the “East” appeared only in the titles of the emperors: “Manuel Palaeologus Emperor of the East.”¹³¹ In place of the old signifiers of “West” and “East,” Cuspinianus increasingly used Europe and Asia. At the summons of John VI Kantakouzenos the Ottomans had crossed the Hellespont, “first bringing the arms of the Turks to Europe.”¹³² In a passage calling for an alliance between the Germans and Hungarians to facilitate a crusade—a testament to the enduring allure and futility of Piccolomini and Vitez’s attempts to forge such a union—Cuspinianus headily declared that such a union would not only drive the Turk “from the borders of our lands, but soon he would be dislodged from the Constantinopolitan empire, and he would retreat into some corner of Asia, whence he issued.”¹³³ Such passages highlighted Cuspinianus’s coherent vision of sixteenth-century Europe as a Roman imperial bastion, a normatively Christian community that had to be defended against the invasion of barbaric hordes from Asia.

¹³¹ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 627: “Manuel Palaeologus Orientis Imperator.”

¹³² Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 627: “Turcorum arma prius Europae inferens.” See also 652, where Cuspinianus similarly blames Kantakouzenos for the arrival of the Turks.

¹³³ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 634: “Tum Turcus non modo a limitibus nostrarum terrarum arcerent, sed mox e Constantinopolitano deturbaretur Imperio, atque in aliquem Asie angulum, unde prodiit, reiiceretur.”

Conclusion

Cuspinianus brought these disparate strands of historical and ideological argument together in his final chapter on the Byzantine empire. Ostensibly on the last Byzantine emperor Constantine XI—Constantine VIII, as Cuspinianus called him—the chapter quickly morphed into a crusade oration. Striking a tone familiar from over two generations of humanist *Türkenrede*, a genre ushered into the world by Piccolomini, Cuspinianus inveighed against the outrages of the conquest, and the lethargy of his fellow Christians. He echoed the stories first circulated by Leonard of Chios and adopted in countless orations thereafter of relics scattered on the ground before dogs and swine, sacred icons smeared with excrement (*luto*), and a crucifix paraded through the streets of the humbled city in mockery of Christ's own procession to Calvary.¹³⁴ To these, Cuspinianus added lurid accounts of Mehmed's cruelty. One story Cuspinianus claimed to have heard as boy at the dinner table—a detail marking the degree to which fear of the Turks and tales of their cruelty had seeped into even quiet Bavarian village life—recounted a greedy Constantinopolitan who had betrayed the city in return for enormous wealth and an Ottoman wife. After carrying out his promised treachery, he appeared before the sultan. Mehmed ordered him laden with gold—and then flayed in his presence, to make this Christian suitable for a Muslim wife.¹³⁵

But in spite of the alleged cruelty of the Ottomans, Cuspinianus reserved his greatest vituperation for the princes of Christendom. No one avoided his caustic rebukes: not the Germans, who were better drinkers than fighters; not the popes, whose envoys and indulgences

¹³⁴ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 631; cf. Leonard of Chios's letter is published as *Historia Cpolitanae Urbis a Mahumete II captae . . . ad Nicolaum V Rom. Pont.* (15 August 1453), in PG 159, cols. 923–44; the passage on desecration of the city is at col. 942B–C. On Leonard of Chios and the influence his account, see Philippides and Hanak, *The Siege and Fall of Constantinople*, 14–19.

¹³⁵ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 632–33.

only fed usurers; not the bishops and cardinals, who maintained prostitutes and catamites instead of soldiers.¹³⁶ As a result, every effort of the last century had ended in humiliating failure:

Nikopolis in 1396; Neszmély in 1439; Varna in 1444; Constantinople in 1453; all transpired through the “negligence and torpor” of the Christians. The solution, Cuspinianus insisted, was a new effort led by the new emperor, Charles V.

And you O great pontiff Leo, when will you don the nature of the boldest lion? When will you carry the cross of Christ aloft on a banner, having cast off your pontifical pride, with your own hands throughout the world, as Caesar Augustus Charles leads the way with his sword drawn, so that he might join and bind together both eagles at once . . . Rouse, O Caesar Charles, in imitation of your name, the ferocious arms of Germany which you command; the stout breasts of the English which you possess; the great forces of the French with which you wage war; the enormous estates of the Spanish which you rule, so that you might devour these beasts, and after Greece has been recovered, that you might ascend the other imperial throne, and that you might rule together the East and the West.¹³⁷

In his rousing conclusion Cuspinianus illustrated why he had gone to such pains to overturn the consensus of nearly seven centuries of Latin historiography. In order to make the recovery of Constantinople a part of Roman imperial renovation—as Maximilian had long desired—Cuspinianus had needed to rewrite the empire’s history to incorporate Byzantium.

Cuspinianus had given true historical depth to the rhetorical gambit employed by Piccolomini seventy years earlier. The language and the paradigm of Piccolomini—the

¹³⁶ This was among the passages that landed the book on the *Index prohibitorum librorum*, which I consulted in the Paris 1599 edition (p. 170); both the 1540 and the 1561 edition of *De caesaribus* bear numerous expurgations (not always the same), most heavily around the emperors Henry IV, Frederick I and Frederick II.

¹³⁷ Cuspinianus, *De caesaribus*, 636: “Et tu o magne Pontifex Leo, Leonis fortissimi naturam quando indues? Quando crucem Christi in vexillo erectam, abiecto Pontificali fastu, manibus per orbem circumduces, praeunte Carolo Caesare Augusto ense suo nudo, ut utramque aquilam simul iungat et connectat? Quando caeteros orbis Reges ac Principes gladiis accinges, ut hostem Christiani nominis trucident, pedibus conterant, a servitute captos liberent? Excita o Caesar Carole (vim nominis tui imitatus) saeva Germaniae arma quibus praees, fortia Anglorum pectora quod potes, magnas Francorum vires cum quibus bella geris, maximas Hispanorum census quibus imperas, ut has belvas consumas, et Graecia recuperata, imperialem sedem alteram ascendas, Orientique et Occidenti simul imperes.”

equivalence between a Christian *respublica* and the Roman Empire, and Constantinople's co-equal imperial status in that empire—were woven into a rich historical tapestry. But where Piccolomini had joined that idea to the dehistoricized language of the “eastern empire” for his orations, Cuspinianus made it central to the most thorough history of Roman Empire written to date, a historical demonstration of the equivalence between and essential unity of the eastern and western empires. In this way, Cuspinianus represented the apotheosis of this idea that began with Vitéz and Piccolomini.

But the passage also clarifies the second impact of Cuspinianus's argument: the Europeanization of the formerly universal Roman Empire. No longer did the empire stretch across the globe, embracing Europe, Asia, and Africa. Now the catalog of Charles's territories found expression in the peoples subject to him—the English, the French, the Spanish. Only Greece remained to be recovered. This reconquest did not set the stage for the revival of the Roman Empire; it completed that revival. Once Charles added Greece to his other territories, he would ascend the eastern imperial throne. The Roman Empire would rise again, reunited and restored. But if Cuspinianus had grafted late antique imperial geography onto the sixteenth century empire, the terms “East” and “West” no longer encompassed the whole inhabited world. The Roman Empire now only stretched from Greece to Britain. Asia was Roman no more.

Of the geographies Cuspinianus proposed, this last one—the “Europe-as-cosmos” containing both East and West—did not take root. The medieval and Renaissance momentum behind a sense of the “West” that cohered around Christianity and civilization were too strong. But his other geographical concepts, a contemporary Europe that included Greece, a historical Europe that included Byzantium, and a Roman Empire that notionally stretched to boundaries of both, those geographies found new advocates in early modern Europe. Maximilian did not live to see *On the Caesars* emerge from the Strasburg printing house in its first edition. But he would

have been gratified to see that his dream of recovering the eastern empire had been achieved at last, in history if not in reality.

Conclusion

This dissertation has followed the halting and contested efforts of intellectuals in Byzantium and the west to grapple with the nature of empire and to use it to define their communities in the rapidly changing world of the fifteenth century. From Isidore's imperial oration commemorating Manuel II's return from his western sojourn in 1403, to Cuspinianus's climactic conclusion to his new history of the Roman emperors, the ways people conceptualized Byzantium as an empire transformed not only their politics and polities, but the concept of the European community between c. 1400–1520.

In Byzantium, these changes emerged in the politics of imperial thought more than the elements of imperial ideology. The earliest speeches, those of Makres, Isidore, Demetrios Chrysoloras, and Chortasmenos, revived the practice of imperial oratory in fifteenth-century Byzantium and combined the celebration of traditional elements of Byzantine imperial identity and ideology with support for the emperor's program of political and territorial revival. Manuel II had been appointed by God to rule their providential empire, to defend orthodoxy, and to guide his subjects to salvation through his exemplified virtue. But in addition, these orators praised his recovery of lost territory, his suppression of vicious office-holders, and his pacification of a troubled state. Imperial oratory carried renewed social relevance in this period. The orator's role in building consensus in the fractured society of fifteenth-century Byzantium attained paramount importance for both the emperor and his audience, precisely because the Byzantine elite—comprised of old landed magnates, ecclesiastical and imperial office holders, the new entrepreneurial aristocracy, and ambitious intellectuals—were so divided by economic, political, and geographic affinities. The familiar contours of political rhetoric and imperial praise gave the emperors and their audiences a sense of purpose, unity, and political stability at a time of creeping imperial decline.

The unanimity these political mediators shared under Manuel II persisted on the ideological plane under John VIII; but on the political plane, conflict replaced concord. John's pursuit of ecclesiastical union as a solution to the empire's problems posed new challenges to a divided Byzantine elite. Imperial oratory became the venue for the performance of these arguments, which began with earnest exhortations like those of the Alexandrian Anonymous, and ended with the mutual rancor and recriminations of Eugenikos and Argyropoulos—one reproving Constantine's unionist persistence, the other castigating the anti-union zealots as the empire's true enemies. These orators also helped the conflict over church politics ramify into other contentious issues, such as Constantinople's relationship to the provinces or which brother exemplified the piety necessary to lead the βασιλεία τῶν Ῥωμαίων. As I argued in Chapter Three, orators reflected the fractious state of the late Byzantine elite in giving voice to these disputes; but they also exacerbated internal divisions by using their practice to build consent around competing ideas, policies, and princes. Dokeianos, the Alexandrian Anonymous, and Argyroupoulos, among the last generation of imperial orators, appear more as mediators in the allocation of political power in a competitive landscape rather than propagandists; as ideologues who defended the empire as an idea but in doing so helped undermine the elite unanimity essential to the Byzantine state's survival.

These disputes hovered at the border between the normative and the political. The Alexandrian Anonymous argued that John VIII should remain faithful to the creed established at the synod in Nicaea over eleven hundred years earlier. But his argument was not only a contemporary warning about the emperor's inclination at that time toward church union, it advocated a conception of imperial authority obliged to defend Nicaean orthodoxy at all costs. Eugenikos also insisted that the emperor's duty to prove himself faithful to the church was not just a transient duty in those troubled times, but a permanent obligation of the office. New

territorial conceptions of the empire blurred these boundaries as well. Argyropoulos gave clearest voice to the anxieties of a Constantinopolitan elite who equated the city's salvation with that of the *genos* of the "Romans" or—for some like Argyropoulos—the "Hellenes." Constantinople's gradual drift from the "eye of the inhabited world" to the "hearth of salvation" in imperial oratory indexed the slow contraction of political universalism that was once hegemonic in Byzantine imperial ideologies. In 1429 Isidore of Kiev had still imagined Constantinople binding together the continents and moderating their excesses as the center of the world; but two decades later, such bombast was in short supply. The vitiation of the universalist thrust of imperial ideology, which had animated Byzantium's political chauvinism for centuries, represented a profound change in the last decades of the empire and contrasts with ambitions to universal monarchy on display elsewhere in the fifteenth century. Piccolomini, Trebizond, and Arévalo, as I argued in Chapters Four and Five, all envisioned a world united under a universal monarch—though they differed on whether that king should be the Holy Roman Emperor, the converted sultan-emperor, or the Roman pontiff.

Constantinople's transformation from imperial city to urban empire not only marked the contraction of the imperial aspirations and horizons of orators like Argyropoulos, but it had political consequences as well. First, this change helped foreclose the possibility that refugees from the city might establish an alternative locus of imperial authority in exile as had occurred in the spring of 1204, when Constantinople's elite had relocated to Nicaea. Though Palaiologan princes remained in the Byzantine Peloponnese until 1460, they neither claimed the imperial mantle nor established a new imperial city as a center of resistance from which to dream of Constantinople's reconquest. Significantly, though orators like Dokeianos remained at their courts they produced no imperial panegyrics after the fall of Constantinople. Instead, Demetrios Palaiologos eventually sought refuge and rapprochement with his old allies the Ottomans, while

Thomas Palaiologos wandered Italy in search of a patron to fund his revanchist ambitions in the Morea.

Second, this view of Constantinople as “city-empire” came to inhabit the successive ideological reconceptualizations of Byzantium explored in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Imperial Constantinople was cast as the *imperium orientale* to serve as bait for Piccolomini’s crusade. It justified George of Trebizond’s vision of a Roman imperial sultan, pending his conversion. Finally, Constantinople emerged as the missing piece in Maximilian’s dreams of imperial instauration. In these schemes, western intellectuals invested the city with an almost tangible “imperiality,” a quality of being imperial that they envisioned as inseparable from a small and discrete piece of territory. This imperiality was a fantasy, but, like a mirage, seemed just on the edge of reality.

Nor was Constantinople’s inherent imperial nature the only element of late Byzantine imperial ideology appropriated by western intellectuals. More significant and even closer to the heart of Byzantine political and imperial identity was the conviction that the Byzantine empire was Roman and constituted the legitimate continuation of the Roman Empire of antiquity. This idea too lived on in the imperial projects of Piccolomini, Trebizond, and Cuspinianus. Of these, only George of Trebizond retained Byzantium’s exclusive sense of imperial identity, though it meant that the Ottomans displaced the Byzantines as Roman emperors. Piccolomini and Cuspinianus incorporated a Roman Byzantium into a superstructure of unified Roman Empire, essentially demoting Byzantium from sole *basileus* to co-emperor, from Theodosius to Arcadius. Even so, their efforts represented an abrupt departure from over six hundred years of western speculation on the historical-political nature of the medieval Roman Empire, a change that granted Byzantium a place in the geopolitical hierarchy much closer to that which the Byzantines had accorded themselves.

The adoption and adaptation of these two elements of Byzantine imperial thought by western intellectuals like Vitéz and Piccolomini—and later Cuspinianus—raises the question of whether their use of these ideas in oratory and history discloses actual intellectual influence or merely coincidental similarity. Did they imbibe these ideas directly from Byzantine source or reconstruct them from late antique models and a sense of historical parallels? It is impossible to say with certainty. Vitez and Piccolomini both enjoyed a thorough humanist education and would have read the late antique Latin historiography—like Orosius and the *Historia Tripartita*—in which the *imperium orientale* featured. And many humanists had observed parallels between the menace of the Turks in the fifteenth century and that of the Goths in the fifth, a historical analogue that may have authorized recycling late antique imperial terminology to describe their own endangered political geography. Therefore, it remains entirely plausible that only their education, humanist conventions and the historical context moved them to reframe Byzantium as part of the Roman Empire.

But Vitéz and Piccolomini also had contact, direct and indirect, with Byzantine ideas of empire. In Florence in 1429 Piccolomini had heard the Greek lectures of Francesco Filelfo, with whom he kept in contact later in life. Filelfo himself understood the political identity and imperial ideology of the Byzantines intimately, since he had served both the Venetian republic and John VIII as a diplomat for several years. A more specific possibility for a moment of communication was the Byzantine embassy to Frederick III in January 1453, which both Vitéz and Piccolomini witnessed at the emperor's court in Wiener Neustadt. Although we have no record of the oration these ambassadors delivered, Vitéz reported in his letter to Pope Nicholas V—the letter in which he first spoke of the *imperium orientale*—that the orators had confirmed the intractable threats the Byzantine empire faced. It is not difficult to imagine the ambassadors' oration emphasized the city's imperial status and Roman heritage, critical elements in the Byzantine political identity.

Alongside those interactions occurred a process with significant import for our understanding of possible influences between western and Byzantine imperial identities. As Han Lamers has shown, the Byzantine “intelligentsia” in Italy found utility in donning a mask of “Greekness” in their cultural interactions, and in stressing their connections to ancient Greek civilization—anticipating by some three centuries the assertions of Greek continuity promoted by the philhellenism of the early nineteenth century.¹ It seems the demise of the Byzantine empire as a state helped fracture old bonds between people and political identity. Those emigrés who found employment and perhaps solace in Italy like Bessarion and Argyropoulos abandoned their identities as Romans in favor of being Greek. Meanwhile those who remained behind in Ottoman Constantinople, like John Dokeianos and George Scholarios, oriented their identity more around Orthodoxy, whether identified as Hellenic or Christian.² But I argue that these reorientations of identity, many of which were performed in Italy, also cleared the way for Byzantium’s imperial space, now largely devoid of claimants to Romanness, to be ideologically appropriated for new political purposes as it was by Piccolomini and Cuspinianus.

One counterintuitive element of the attempts of both Byzantine and western intellectuals to reframe the Byzantine empire was that their efforts embodied a pattern that we might call “regeneration through failure.” Although successive attempts to stabilize imperial authority, regulate imperial politics, or mobilize a collective crusade failed to achieve those goals, each led—in a contingent fashion, to be sure—to the next attempt to reimagine the Byzantine empire. Byzantine intellectuals under John VIII made their orations a venue for a bitter and multi-polar

¹ Lamers, *Greece Reinvented*, 270–71.

² See Athanasios D. Angelou, “‘Who Am I?’ Scholarios’s Answer and Hellenic Identity,” in *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ: Studies in Honour of Robert Browning*, ed. Costas N. Constantinides, Nikolaos Panagiotakes, and Elizabeth Jeffreys (Venice, 1996), 1–19; Calia, “Meglio il turbante del sultano,” 186, 193.

struggle over the legitimacy of the emperor and his policies, hoping to use the celebration of imperial ideals as a tool for imperial regeneration. But both the opponents and advocates of the last Palaiologoi watched in vain as the empire collapsed, despite their fervent and discordant efforts to preserve it.

Western appropriations of Byzantium's imperial legacy were no more immediately successful. Vitéz and Piccolomini tried to elevate Constantinople from Castiglione's "royal city" into a Roman imperial capital to incentivize a crusade. Once again, their political ends foundered; the call to crusade encountered only disaffection around Europe and the sporadic efforts of a few willing participants were never unified into collective action. But Piccolomini's transformation of Constantinople into empty and ahistoric imperial space to which political goals like the crusade could be affixed found later adherents, as its repetition in later papal bulls and *Türkenrede* illustrates. Maximilian and Cuspinianus also dreamed of a crusade. Their failure and the lingering vitality of that dream both emerge in Cuspinianus's final exhortation to Charles V to reconquer Constantinople and to "ascend the other imperial throne."

From these political failures a new sense of Byzantium and of Europe arose. No longer Piccolomini's flat and ahistorical Roman imperial partner, Byzantium acquired through Cuspinianus a robust historical armature that endorsed a Europe and a Roman Empire that were geographically coterminous. The continuous reimagination of imperial Byzantium attained a critical new stage with Maximilian and Cuspinianus, though it was hardly the last. In representing Byzantium as part of his imperial lineage, as Maximilian did, and in writing Byzantium into the history of Europe and the Roman Empire, as Cuspinianus did, they combined to move the eastern empire from the cultural frontiers of Europe, where it had languished during the late Middle Ages, toward the center. Cuspinianus and Maximilian had

authorized a new reading of the European past, one that included rather than excluded Byzantium, that would prove a powerful ideological paradigm in early modern Europe.

The dynamic I have explored in this dissertation encompasses not only disputes over imperial history and ideology, but a process of identity formation, in which the boundaries of communities were negotiated through reflections on territory and empire. Fifteenth-century Byzantine orators like Isidore did not think of themselves or their community as strictly European; to the extent that they thought about the bounds of their Roman state, they largely preserved conventional notions of the empire's role in joining together the continents and ruling ἡ οἰκουμένη, the "inhabited world," conceits that kept Constantinople at the center of the world. Both were ideas that celebrated the Roman Empire as it had existed in its supra-continental and universalist guise: an empire that stretched over Europe, Asia, and Africa. When these ideas were abandoned, it was in favor of far narrower horizons. At the end of the empire Argyroupoulos spoke of Constantinople and the empire in more parochial terms as the land of the "Hellenes," references that connoted regional or ethnic boundaries to the empire.

I have argued, however, that the Byzantine empire helped expand, rather than constrict imperial horizons of western intellectuals. As scholars like Wallach, Hay, and Bisaha have shown, many in the fifteenth century were grappling to understand and define the boundaries of Europe and the West as moral and cultural constructs. I have argued that the historical and ideological appropriation of Byzantium consummated by Cuspinianus made Europe more plausibly the *respublica Christiana* than it had been in the early fifteenth century, when Byzantium had been excluded as schismatic and marginal. Moreover, his incorporation made the Roman Empire and Byzantium European signifiers. The end point of Cuspinianus's historicization of the Roman Empire laid claim to the Byzantine past and assimilated it to a geo-ideological idea of Europe. In this way, the continuous reimagination of the Byzantine empire constituted a critical and

unacknowledged stage of Europeans negotiating the boundaries of their community through the matrix of Roman imperial history. Obscure humanists like Franciscus Junius and Anselmo Banduri used this Roman imperial matrix to orient and justify their scholarly engagement with the culture and texts of the Byzantine world well before Gibbon put his timeless stamp on the empire's history. Of course, not all subsequent early modern Europeans saw the Byzantine empire as Roman; as Asaph Ben-Tov has shown, Lutheran humanists like Philipp Melanchthon and Martin Crusius reckoned Byzantium as the final stage of ancient Greek history.³ Even so, their engagements represent only another facet of the active appropriation of the Byzantine past inaugurated in the fifteenth century, in which scholars struggled to understand precisely where Byzantium fit among familiar categories. Here scholars sifted through the cultural and textual rubble of the Byzantine empire in an effort to construct a meaningful story about Europe's past, a creative process of scholarly discovery and self-invention that forged an enduring sense of the common civilization of "the West"—for good and ill.

This incorporation of Byzantium into an exclusively European frame represents a stage in Europe's colonization of historical pasts that had been by no means uniformly European or Western. The transformation and acquisition of Byzantium's historical legacy—a political, cultural, and religious conglomeration which spanned three continents and nearly fifteen hundred years, intersecting with peoples and polities in Persia, the Near East, central Asia, Scandinavia, and north Africa—in service of a narrowly Roman Christian Europe shows how Europeans advanced bold claims about the ownership of a cultural heritage that in fact had developed well beyond their borders. The problematic consequences of this ideological project continue to inhabit the study the history, religion, literature and culture of the premodern world

³ Asaph Ben-Tov, *Lutheran Humanists and Greek Antiquity: Melanchthonian Scholarship Between Universal History and Pedagogy* (Leiden, 2009), 98–99, 128–30.

and are increasingly attracting deserved attention. Byzantium's appropriation for a project of defining European identity represents a critical and unacknowledged stage in that process.

The changes in political and imperial identities I have described and the trajectories of imperial thought *about* Byzantine empire in the fifteenth century sketch a kind of imperial inversion. Byzantine intellectuals who had long insisted on the empire's Roman and universal character renounced those commitments in favor of different touchstones of identity. Meanwhile western intellectuals who emerged from a six-hundred-year tradition of denying Byzantium's Roman status increasingly amalgamated imperial Byzantium to a paradigm of unified Roman Empire. Exceptions naturally exist: there were some Byzantine intellectuals, like George of Trebizond and Kritoboulos, who remained resolute in their defense of a Roman Byzantium after 1453, even if this meant that the Ottomans had seized the imperial mantle from them. And many western humanists and scholars, such as Melanchthon and Crusius, continued to conceptualize Byzantium as a Greek, rather than a Roman state. Nevertheless, this period saw a reconceptualization of the Roman Empire—arguably the first thorough rethinking to occur since late antiquity—that incorporated the long-ostracized eastern imperial “other” as an equal partner in the Roman imperial tradition.

This study has shown that ideas of empire thrummed with political relevance and ideological vitality in premodern Europe. Empire became not only a form of hegemony or a claim to political legitimacy, but a chronological, cultural, and moral category as well. The imperial Europe imagined by Cuspinianus signified a culturally and religiously unified past, a community devoid of petty squabbles over religious doctrine and praxis, or over exclusive imperial legitimacy. But restoring vitality to the Roman Empire was not only about effacing the historical rifts in Christendom and bolstering solidarity in face of an Islamic enemy to the east. Armed with new confidence about their imperial destiny, Europeans also used empire's

providential and metaphysical imperatives to legitimate bellicose expansion across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and the brutal subjugation of peoples they encountered, as Pagden, Muldoon, and Lupher have illustrated.⁴ Europeans were increasingly aware that they were not alone in the world, but a reframed and expanded concept of empire helped justified their claims to dominate it.

⁴ Pagden, *Lords of All the World*; Muldoon, *Empire and Order*; Lupher, *Romans in a New World*.

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