

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Isaac Newton once commented: 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants'. This beautifully modest statement sums up well the methods and aims of modern academia, as each generation of scholars looks to stand upon the foundation of their predecessors' achievements. Yet the phrase should also be resonant for any future (and this current) president of the Oxford University Byzantine Society. The OUBS now stands at the heart of the late antique and Byzantine studies community in Oxford, easing new students into their life here, and keeping everyone informed of events from week to week. Arriving myself only last year, the society played a huge role in creating the welcoming atmosphere I encountered here, and provided fantastic opportunities to begin my academic career proper. Thus, it is these two things that I and my fellow committee members viewed as our key tasks this year.

With these considerations in mind, we have organised a socie-

ty research trip to Thessaloniki in the coming Easter holidays. Here staff and students alike will have the opportunity to see sites and artefacts not normally open to the public. Moreover, this trip is the perfect chance to form truly lasting bonds, since our various stretches studying and working in Oxford are often all too brief. We very much hope that our successors will organise another excursion next year, so that the OUBS trip will be as much a yearly feature as the rest of the society's annual duties.

Which, of course, leads us to the International Graduate Conference. This has grown as an event year on year (being now in its sixteenth!), culminating in the publication of selected papers from last year's conference. This fantastic achievement has gifted us this year the perfect opportunity to plan for a truly focused conference, which will then hopefully produce a volume of selected papers which really gets to grip with an issue. With forty-eight confirmed speakers from twenty-

four different worldwide institutions, it should be a fantastic occasion, showcasing the cutting edge of late antique and Byzantine studies.

Yet we need not wait for the conference to see this. Rather, this newsletter – another brilliant society initiative – illustrates all the reasons why our discipline continues to thrive in the city of dreaming spires. The articles and book reviews stretch the full Byzantine millennium; the graduate and alumnus profiles demonstrate the vibrant and international make-up of our community; and the Fellow's interview reveals the opportunities inherent in studying here. The issues touched on by our authors range from philology to economics, religion and society to textual traditions. Thus, it is with enormous pleasure that we present to you the fourth issue of 'The Byzantinist', long may it continue.

Nik Matheou, President 2013-14



Contents

Virginity, Barrenness, and the Dynamics of Power in Claudian's <i>De Raptu Proserpinae</i> by Lynton Boshoff	3
(Re-)Exploring a Byzantine Version of <i>Joseph and Aseneth</i> by Jonathon Wright	5
Looking Into the Mirror: Some New Reflections on Middle Byzantine Commerce by Andrew Small	7
Gregory of Nazianzus: A Case Study in Local Dispute Resolution by Anthony Sciubba	9
An interview with Peter Frankopan	11
Book reviews	14
Alumnus Profile	17
Graduate Profiles	19
About the OCBR	20

THE BYZANTINIST

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THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY BYZANTINE SOCIETY

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VIRGINITY, BARRENNESS, AND THE DYNAMICS OF POWER IN CLAUDIAN'S *DE RAPTU PROSERPINA*

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As with a number of poets of Late Antiquity, the poetry of Claudian has been experiencing a revival of interest, mostly seeking — and rightly so — to understand his work on its own terms. While the propagandistic and panegyric poems have received the most attention, no doubt due to their historical import, the *carmina minora* have been less widely mined. The *De Raptu Proserpinae*, an unfinished epic poem in three books presumed to be composed around 400CE, which is routinely included in the collection of 'lesser poems', is of particular interest in terms of the late-Antique tendency to 'mess with myth'. For the purposes of this article, I will present one of Claudian's tamperings with the classic myth of the kidnapping of Persephone, and in so doing, read it as being expressive and reflective of concerns which may have been felt in contemporary Rome.

At its core, the myth of Persephone presents an aetiological explanation for the seasons, as well as how grain was brought to humankind: in other words, qualities which are inextricably associated with fecundity and life-giving. However, in Claudian's version of the story, the main characters are presented as curiously lacking in these essential qualities. Ceres, for one, is a somewhat paradoxical figure and for the majority of the epic is explicitly portrayed as infecund: she has *fessa... viscera* (1.124)¹ and is flatly described as *infecunda* (1.125). Her palace in Sicily is an enormous (*immensa... claustra*, 1.239-240), foreboding (*ardua... moenia*, 1.238-239) and almost 'industrial' construction which ill befits a fertility goddess, with metals of different kinds (iron, *ferro, ferrati*; steel, *chalybs*; bronze, *aënis*; electrum, *electra*) being the primary building materials. Her portrayal returns to more conventional territory when she leaves Proserpina to visit her own mother Cybele in the East:

Hic ubi servandum mater fidissima pignus
abdidit, ad Phrygios tendit secreta penates
turigeramque petit Cybelen sinuosa draconum
membra regens . . .

nunc spiris Zephyros tranant, nunc arva volatu
inferiore secant. cano rota pulvere labens
sulcatam fecundat humum: flavescit aristis
orbita; surgentes condunt vestigia fruges;
vestit iter comitata seges.

1.186-190

¹ All references from *Rapt. Pros.* will henceforth be presented just as book and line numbers. Works by another author will be indicated as such.

When the most dedicated mother concealed her child in need of protection here [in Sicily], she went to her home in Phrygia, free from worry, and sought out tower-wearing Cybele while steering the sleek bodies of her serpents . . . they fly, now twisting through the wind, now cutting through the fertile lands when flying low. The [chariot's] wheel, sliding along, fertilises the furrowed ground with white dust: the ruts become yellow with ears of corn; the tracks lay together sprouting stalks and the accompanying cornfields clothe her path.

Even though this temporary return to Ceres' traditional attributes is present it is the darker side of the goddess which dominates the narrative and which provides much of the impetus for the events in book 3, where she effectively transforms herself into a fury, the embodiment of destruction and retribution, and sets fire to the countryside, in so doing re-emphasising barrenness. In like manner, both Pluto and Proserpina are debilitated when it comes to this matter. Pluto, not only by virtue of his position as King of the Dead, dead things not being particularly fecund, lacks a consort and is thus childless.² Proserpina on the other hand, while willing to be married, and in turn having a throng of suitors willing to marry her, not least of which Mars and Phoebus, is prevented from doing so by Ceres, and is thus kept in a liminal state of virginity.³ Venus and Jupiter, on the other hand, as the prime engineers of the *raptus*, are inevitably fertile and fecund: the former by her ability to inspire and create love, and the latter by virtue of his prodigious offspring, of which Proserpina is but one example. This in itself is something of an Ovidian conceit, and harks back to the concepts displayed in Arachne's tapestry in the *Metamorphoses*, where, contrary to the heroic portrayal of the Olympians in Athena's tapestry, Arachne gives a catalogue of the sexual escapades of the gods, and in particular Jupiter, indicating that true power is not achieved through heroic deeds but through conquests of another kind entirely.

For all that she is portrayed as the universal *creatrix*

² Pluto: 1.32-36; Proserpina: 1.130-132.

³ 1.133-140. Ceres is concerned primarily for her daughter's modesty and keeping her safe, ironically, from a possible *raptus*.

elsewhere in the *De Raptu*— that is, taking on the true role of fertility goddess of the piece, if the description of Ceres is anything to go by – Proserpina is still basically the means through which power is mediated, as in all the versions of this myth, that is, a passive character.⁴

Jupiter uses her to pacify Pluto and thus prevent gigantomachy. Additionally, however, in Claudian’s version, we have Ceres blocking this plan, due to her overbearing and overprotective nature as a mother. What is happening here is a rather blatant *political* move on the part of Jupiter, using Proserpina as diplomatic currency. This is of importance in the socio-historical context in relation to Stilicho, Claudian’s employer, and such political marriage on an important scale occurs at a number of moments during Honorius’ reign. First, Theodosius I marries his niece, Serena, to Stilicho. At a later point, Stilicho in turn marries his own daughter, Maria, to Honorius, evidently in the hopes of cementing his imperial ties (or perhaps more underhandedly, to cement his hold over the young emperor). Later still, in 408, after Maria had died, and when the relationship between the *magister militum* and his emperor had soured, Stilicho again marries his other daughter, Thermantia, to Honorius - although this would not have been known to Claudian, due to his death in 404. Furthermore, the historian Zosimus includes a passage in Book 5 of his *Historia Nova* which describes how Serena was anxious for Honorius to marry Thermantia after Maria’s death, in order to ensure that there would be children produced from the union.⁵ In fact, it is reported that not only were there no children from either union, but also that evidently neither marriage was consummated at all, both girls dying as virgins. While this is a reversal of the situation found in the *De Raptu*, Serena being concerned with ensuring the continuation of the imperial line where Ceres is intent on preventing any such union from occurring, it does reflect how such issues were at the forefront of concerns in the Stilichonian retinue, and probably more widely at court. Given that the myth centres around Jupiter giving Proserpina to Pluto as a wife in order to prevent all-out war with the underworld, this marriage brokering, too, can be seen as measures to prevent ‘gigantomachy’ in the real world.

On an intertextual level, in her article ‘Constructions of Venus in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* V’ Patricia Johnson presents a reading of the rôle of Venus in epic, and particularly in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Aeneid*, which removes from her the traditional attributes of a goddess of love. Rather, she is shown to be something of a sexual imperialist, concerned only with ‘the extent, and extension, of her own territory’, and in a sense makes war on all virgins. In Ovid’s version of

the *raptus*, Venus and Cupid are made to be the responsible parties for the series of events surrounding the kidnapping, with such blatantly imperialistic lines as:

Tartara quid cessat? cur non matrisque tuumque imperium profers? agitur tertia pars mundi.

Ov. *Met.* 5.371-372

Why is Tartarus an obstacle?
Why do you not extend your and
your mother’s power? It is, after
all, a third part of the world.

In Claudian’s version of the story, Venus (along with Pallas and Diana) is simply the axe, while Jupiter is the hand that wields it. In fact it is he who says that:

cur ultima regna quiescunt?
nulla sit immunis regio nullumque sub umbris
pectus inaccensum Veneri. iam tristis Erinys
sentiat ardores; Acheron Ditisque severi
ferrea lascivis mollescant corda sagittis
1.224-228

Why does the last kingdom rest
free? Let no region be immune
and let no breast under the shadows
not be incensed to Venus.
Now let the sad Fury feel passion;
let Acheron and severe Pluto’s
iron heart soften because of your
wanton arrows.

Thus in this version of the myth, it is with official, male sanction that this empire-building is carried out, reflecting once again the woman-brokering which took place in contemporary Roman politics.

In real terms, as with other broader socio-political changes which are evident in Late Roman society, such as the increased and varied presence of ‘outsiders’ — be they barbarian or of traditionally non-aristocratic extraction — in positions of power, women have new ways of being somewhat ‘emancipated’ in society within the confines of Christian mythology and symbolism, particularly by having the status of either a widow or a virgin. One might even say that with the advent of Christianity and the relaxation of Augustan marriage laws in the early 4th century, that there was an increase in the number of women choosing virginity as a viable life-option. This was an attractive and respected position, which might even improve a family’s social and political standing. Besides that, virginity had had an extraordinary status, even if it was somewhat rare, in Roman culture since the Vestals. With the introduction of Christianity into that equation, one might even be tempted to add a possible Marian interpretation to Proserpina’s portrayal, depending on one’s interpretation of Claudian’s religious beliefs from the only explicit indication of any

⁴ Proserpina weaves a tapestry of the whole universe at 1.246-270. Later, in book 2, she wears a gown (also woven by her own hand) which displays her ‘carrying’ the juvenile Sun and Moon on her shoulders (2.44-54).

⁵ Zos. 5.28

Christian adherence — the poem *De Salvatore*.

In offering this brief glimpse into the curious world of the *De Raptu*, it may appear that looking for real-world significance is a peculiar way to read a work which has been dismissed (and surely still is in the minds of many) as a piece of rhetorical fancy. However, if we are prepared to decode the many and varied meanings and allusions of Claudian the panegyrist and propagandist, why should it not be appropriate to apply the same processes to this piece? Although not explicitly connected to the goings-on in the real world,

the *De Raptu* does stand in the tradition of a long line of epic writing, not least of which Virgil, which can be read as a social commentary via the same mix of panegyric and mythologising allusion. And just because Claudian is in the pay of Stilicho, does not necessarily imply that he is prohibited from making such encoded statements, which, given that his audience was without doubt an educated elite, would certainly have been understood, and, if one goes by the vast manuscript tradition of our poem, appreciated by his contemporaries.

(RE-)EXPLORING A BYZANTINE VERSION OF JOSEPH AND ASENATH

Jonathon Wright, St. Stephen's House

A surprisingly popular tale in the Middle Ages was a work today called *Joseph and Aseneth* (*JosAs*). It starts from the expansion of a few passing biblical references: Pharaoh gave Joseph 'Aseneth daughter of Petephres, priest of Heliopolis, as his wife' who later bore him Ephrem and Manasseh (Genesis 41.45, 50; 46.20). This marriage to an idolator is passed over without comment in the Bible. However, the 29 chapters of *JosAs* explain how this boastful and idolatrous daughter of the chief priest of Heliopolis repents of her sins through ascetical fasting and mourning. Her repentance is accepted by a heavenly figure who appears and confirms she is to marry Joseph. After narrating the wedding, the tale then tells of Aseneth's adventures, where the lustful son of Pharaoh tries and fails to kidnap her with help from some of Joseph's brothers.

Today *JosAs* is extant in sixteen *koinē* Greek manuscripts, as well as seven extant ancient translations. These witnesses are divided into four text families. Burchard (2003) published a minor critical edition based on a longer text version. Philonenko (1968) is an edition based on a shorter text version. Scholarship is divided over which version is more original, as well as virtually all other questions about its origins, other than that its original language is Greek. Most sources for *JosAs* even in Greek have not been microfilmed or digitalised. Therefore scholarship has, with a few exceptions (notably Burchard (1996)), focused on interpreting the editions rather than its transmission.

Thanks to the kind permission of His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem and funding from the Polonsky Foundation, I was able to consult digital images of parts of three manuscripts in Jerusalem in September 2013. Since then, I have prepared an edition of *JosAs* from the three manuscripts in order to consider a version (known as family *c*) that has so far been largely ignored.

Context

The three manuscripts I consulted were:

- MS Panhagios Taphou 73, seventeenth century = H
- MS Saba 389, completed 1802 = J
- MS Saba 593, seventeenth century = K

None of these manuscripts contains the entire story and the family was thought to be incomplete. But in 2001 a palimpsest at the University Library of Wrocław, MS Rhediger 26 (= M) was partially deciphered and gave an eleventh century witness to a similar form of the text. This indicated that family *c* had a

Byzantine heritage close but independent of M.

In M, *JosAs* is followed by the so-called *Life of Joseph*. This work found in seven other manuscripts of *JosAs* and gives parallels between Joseph and Jesus. M also contained works of the Fathers. Like the text, the context of the story in the Jerusalem manuscripts is different. H appears to be a collection of hagiographical texts including the Apocryphal Acts of John and Martyrdom of St. Eirene. The organisation principle is not readily apparent, but there may be a link in each story containing an important female character. K, which has the closest text to H, only contains three works: the vision of Saint Demetrios, the Martyrdom of Saint Eirene and *JosAs*. In contrast J contains both hagiographical material (*Lives* of Saints Xenophon, Alexios and Julius) and well as Patristic works by John Chrysostom and (apparently) Maximus the Confessor. *JosAs* comes at the very end of the manuscript and there are no other works shared with HK. The context suggests *JosAs* was read as hagiographical rather than biblical literature.

Content

Unlike M which originally contained the full story in *koinē* Greek, HK contain a little less than half the story in *koinē* Greek (up to 16.17y). A seamlessly attached Modern Greek ending was added that reworked the text up to the wedding (to 21.9). J stops mid-word shortly before HK (at 16.10) where the manuscript ends. Unfortunately I was unable to consult the manuscript itself to discover how many folios were likely to be missing, but it seems likely that it continued as far as H and K. As J is often textually superior, it would be very interesting to know whether it included a Modern Greek ending as well. We should also note the divergence in the spelling of Aseneth's name: Ἀσενέχ in HJ; Ἀσυνέθ in K (Ἀσενέθ in other manuscripts).

When compared with Burchard's edition, among general patterns we can particularly note that the redactor seemed concerned to keep the narrative flow of the work. There are many small alterations that fall into this category, such as the addition of verbs to nominal clauses, the removal of repetitive details and descriptive doublets. Many spatial and temporal references are also removed. However, the redactor was also concerned to clarify many small details for his reader. The redactor had a penchant for replacing verbs with one of similar meaning, altering indicative verbal forms to participles, and replacing καὶ and other conjunctions to avoid repetition, though this was hardly a consistent or concerted attempt at improving the Greek.

Of more interest are changes that family *c*'s redactor makes in comparison to Burchard's text and three particular examples highlight this divergence from the story known to modern readers. First, the redactor took the opportunity to censor some details e.g., at 8.5, where Joseph touches Aseneth as he gives her his blessing, any hint of sexual arousal is removed, more completely than in any other version. Secondly and rather strangely, the redactor makes some alterations that may make sense at that moment but not in the context of the wider story, e.g., at 1.7 Pharaoh's son goes to Pentephres rather than Pharaoh to ask for Aseneth's hand in marriage. And thirdly, the identity of the heavenly man is specified as an angel, with additional changes being made to heighten some of the imagery associated with him. But most surprisingly of all, this angel is no longer 'ruler of the house of the Lord', but instead says 'I am the Lord God'.

Conclusions

Whilst my edition of this text family shows a relatively light overall redaction, it is interesting to note the considerable number of small, apparently intentional changes that alter the story. Although not obviously Christianised, especially when compared to other versions, it has been altered to fit the sensibilities and perspectives of the redactor. In doing so, several biblical allusions to the Septuagint identified by scholars have been lost, perhaps indicating they are clearer to the creators of editions and scholars than to past readers.

It appears that in the monastic milieu of Jerusalem and St. Saba, where the manuscripts lived for a long period, *JosAs* was read as a spiritually beneficial work alongside more regular hagiographical texts. There is no indication they were used in liturgy as other manuscripts of *JosAs* were, but rather appear to be reading material. Finally, K is the only manuscript to have marginalia. At the top of the opening folio one reader makes clear his feeling: 'this work is false and leads men astray'. Some time after the last copy of the story was completed readers were turning against the tale. We are perhaps fortunate to still have such a range of textual witness still to consider.

Nachwirkung. Von Egeria zu Anna Katharina Emmerick oder von Moses aus Aggel zu Karl Kerényi" in his (1996) *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth* (E.J. Brill, Leiden): 321–436

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LOOKING IN THE MIRROR: SOME NEW REFLECTIONS ON MIDDLE BYZANTINE COMMERCE

Andrew Small, Kellogg College

It was once argued that Byzantine sources were a distorting mirror, conveying a sense of the confusion that greets historians reading the source material. Not only can the sources be distorted but we can see ourselves in the mirror of the past, seeking to explain contemporary issues through our interpretation of the past, sometimes consciously, sometimes not. Even the dry topic of the Byzantine state's attitude towards trade and commerce has been influenced by narratives about the rise of the West and the free-market. In 2008 Father Tikhon Shevkunov, said to be Putin's spiritual advisor, presented a Russian TV series called *The Destruction of the Empire: a Byzantine lesson*, in which the West, represented by a cloaked figure in a Venetian mask, was gifted the commanding heights of the economy by weak, foolish emperors. This was a polemic on the record of economic reforms under Yeltsin in contrast to the prosperity Putin had brought to the country. Shevkunov may be an extreme case, but even academic writers are not averse to using Byzantium as a mirror to explain the success of the West or contemporary economic situations.

An example of proper historical writing that attempted to understand the 'rise of the west' was Roberto Sabatino Lopez's 'commercial revolution' thesis, in which Byzantium was presented as an unsuccessful Eastern alternative to the Latin West. Byzantium lacked the capital, legal infrastructure and commercial mentality of the Venetians and other Italian maritime cities to compete. (Lopez, Roberto Sabatino (Cambridge, 1976) *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages*). Variations on these themes were picked up and incorporated into many studies of Byzantine commerce, to varying degrees, by Laiou, Oikonomides and Kazhdan. The prevailing neo-liberal consensus of the 1980s and 1990s, was another influence. (Laiou, Angeliki E., 'Byzantium and the Commercial Revolution', in G. Arnaldi and G. Cavallo (eds.), *Europa medieval e mondo Bizantino* (Rome, 1997), pp. 239-253; Oikonomides, Nicolas, 'The economic region of Constantinople: from directed economy to free economy and the role of the Italians', in G. Arnaldi and G. Cavallo (eds.), *Europa medieval e mondo Bizantino* (Rome, 1997), pp. 221-238; Kazhdan, Alexander, 'State, feudal and private economy in Byzantium', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993), pp. 83-100) Reading Oikonomides' articles Venetian merchants come across as free-market shock troops that ruthlessly picked apart an uncompetitive and

complacent Byzantines who had been coddled by the regulations in the tenth-century *Book of the Eparch*. Perhaps a re-evaluation of the evidence is required. The Byzantine state and society were not antagonistic to commerce and trade. Both the state and individuals appear to be engaged with the possibilities commerce could bring.

In the tenth century, Byzantium had a more enlightened view of trade and a better-developed legal infrastructure for commerce than the West. Byzantium through its Classical and Christian inheritance had received Aristotelean economic ideas distasteful of commerce, like the West, however, hagiographies, legal practice, and contracts from the tenth century demonstrate that the Byzantines were not culturally antagonistic to profit. For example during Basil II's reign, Symeon the New Theologian's treatise on Ephesians 5:16 argued that wealth creation was a public good for society. The same reasoning was also present in Symeon Metaphrastes's version of the *Life of St Spyridon of Trimithous* that argued borrowing for trade was acceptable but not if it was for personal consumption. Moreover, lending at interest to invest in trade was not a theological issue nor was it prohibited as usury by the law, unlike in the West. There was also a considerable black market for loans and financial services 'from itinerant vendors of cash', proving there was ample capital available to be invested in trade. Byzantine law also provided merchants with a corpus of contract law and numerous protections for investors. There were twenty-four appointed legal notaries with staffs to witness contracts in Constantinople, and in the hostels of foreign merchants there were state-provided legal services for handling disputes. The tenth century was also a period of legal innovation intended to facilitate trade. Notably, the *chreokoinonia* developed in this period, a legal contract that enabled a merchant to endow a factor with capital who would then engage in trade with the profits being shared between the two parties, and is the most likely predecessor of Venetian medieval contractual practices.

Laiou argued the *Book of the Eparch*'s regulations discouraged innovation and protected the guild members of Constantinople. This is one way to think about regulation, yet a closer economic analysis of the *Book of the Eparch* shows that this need not be the case. The guilds in Constantinople were more corporate bodies set up to prevent market fragmentation, and to

cap profit margins, not only for ideological reasons but also to stimulate volume and increase supply. The only way a fish-broker, for example, could increase his overall profits was to import and sell more fish, thereby stimulating more production and increasing market competition for the share of the catch. Most importantly, it was designed to prevent concentrations of commercial power and ensure competition. This is particularly evident in the different guild regulations governing the silk industry. All this demonstrates the authorities understood how the market could function, and the political and economic dangers of vertical integration leading to monopoly. These decisions were dependent on an understanding of how commercial forces worked, and is evidence of engagement with commerce rather than hostility to it. The same sophistication may also be present in the all-important grain supply of Constantinople. The *Book of the Eparch* has a number of regulations about the price, supply, and weight of bread to be sold in the city. From other literary and archaeological sources, however, it is clear that the grain supply largely functioned through a private, monetised system. Only in times of hardship would the *Book of the Eparch's* regulations would come into effect. John Skylitzes' account of a famine in Constantinople in 967 is predicated on releases of grain from imperial stores occurring in times of hardship and not how the city was normally supplied. The imperial grain store then, at least in the tenth century, acted as a form of strategic reserve to be released in times of hardship. In this, the Byzantines may be understood to have used their Constantinopolitan grain reserves in the same way American presidents use the Strategic Petroleum Reserve: as a hedge against crises and to insulate the economy from consequent price shocks and political reaction.

As always, the strongest evidence for Byzantine commercial life is from Constantinople, but there are signs that were other thriving entrepôts in the Byzantine Empire. Trebizond was a major node on the spice route for Ibn Hawqal, a tenth century Arabic geographer, estimating its annual tax revenue to be 72,000 *nomismata*. The *De Administrando* discussed how Cherson connected the Pontic Steppe with goods from the Black Sea and Constantinople. The Byzantine state was keenly aware of the value of customs revenue it could levy on trade. Michael Psellos described Michael V watching Theodora 'with all the vigilance of a tax-gatherer waiting to collect dues from a ship in harbour.' Throughout the period of Middle Byzantine expansion there appears to have been a desire to control urban trade centres. Romanos I's attempted annexation of Ardanoutzin in the 920s was linked with controlling the trade links passing through the city. It could also explain naval campaigns in 1017 around the towns of Bosphorus and Tmutarakan that controlled the trade routes through the Straits of Kerch, and the long-term interest in holding Ani in Armenia. Where these trade posts did not exist, the Byzantines could create them again for their own stra-

tegic purposes. In the mid eleventh century, emporiums were established on the Danube in order to engage the Pechenegs in trade, and, hopefully, pacify them. Commerce was at least an aspect in strategic thinking.

The numerous trade treaties that Byzantium made in the tenth century are a further testament to this. The 992 chrysobull granted to Venice by Basil II that granted tax-relief to Venetian merchants encouraged them to go to Constantinople rather than to Alexandria, and strengthened ties with a key Italian ally. Commerce and diplomacy were intertwined. Trade agreements were crucial in Byzantium's growing engagement with the Rus, drawing them into the 'Byzantine Commonwealth' as much as Orthodox proselytising. In 987/88 Basil II concluded a treaty with Caliph al-'Aziz which enabled Byzantine freedom of trade in Fatimid territories, and allowed for the proclamation of the caliph's name in the mosque for Muslim merchants in their Constantinopolitan hostel. Such use of commercial pressure could backfire, as it did when Bulgar merchants were banned from Constantinople in 893 leading to a disastrous war. The trade treaties are not preserved in Byzantine written sources, perhaps because they did not fit the ideal image of how a Byzantine emperor should engage with foreign powers, nonetheless the episode demonstrates that trade was a fundamental tool of Byzantine statecraft.

It is evident that Middle Byzantine commerce was a dynamic and thriving force that was harnessed by the Byzantine state. The profits from commercial taxes helped fund Byzantine expansion, indeed, they encouraged it. Where armies could march, caravans could travel. Control of an urban settlement blocked invasion route during war and in peace the trade passing through the empire could be taxed there. Byzantium's merchants and lawyers were at the forefront of creating new partnerships and contracts for commerce that were, at least, the inspiration for Italian merchants. There was a sophisticated contemporary understanding of how commerce and diplomacy were linked, but one that is not easily apparent, especially from Byzantine historiographical evidence. Perhaps there is a role for some 'bias' as long as we are self-aware of it. Certainly the free-market has lost some of its lustre in the post-Lehmann era, and I cannot deny that this has shaped my thinking on both a conscious and subconscious level. Every historian looks into the 'mirror of the past', but it means each individual and every generation brings new insights, influenced by the world around him or her, when they examine old evidence. Historical inquiry is then a never-ending process, and that is a heartening thought.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS: A CASE STUDY IN LOCAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Anthony Sciubba, St. Hugh's College

Gregory of Nazianzus portrayed himself as one who desired a contemplative life of peace and quiet, but was nevertheless thrust into the public fray of practical ministry and high-profile theological debates.⁶ Yet, this self-portrayal is as unlikely as it is well-known: I will demonstrate through close examination that Gregory's theological commitments and monastic approach drove him to embrace an active life of conflict mediation. Indeed, Gregory's idiosyncratic approach to embracing a monastic life of the mind focused on theological contemplation and leadership in the Church – 'a middle path between solitude and involvement' (*DVS* 310)⁷ – provided the intellectual framework for applying theological principles to late-Antique conflicts. As such, Gregory's ecclesiastical and political career comprises an auspicious case study for conflict management in the later-Roman and early-Byzantine Empire. In this short vignette, I will focus upon one particular implementation of Gregorian theology to a local conflict in Cappadocian Church politics.

Gregory of Nazianzus' first opportunity to engage in the ministry of conflict resolution on a local political level came by way of his father, Gregory the Elder, the bishop of Nazianzus. The elder Gregory had rather unwittingly signed the homoian creed of Rimini-Constantinople 360, an action that prompted the immediate cessation of the Cappadocian monks from the local church. He therefore had it in mind to use his son's greater rhetorical skill to mend the schism between his church and the monks. Given Gregory's later commitment to leading the church while simultaneously leading a contemplative lifestyle, it would seem that the elder Gregory's idea of involving his son in local affairs would have been well received. However, the younger Gregory's paradoxical approach to monasticism remained inchoate at this stage, and he responded negatively to his father's "noble tyranny" (*Or.* 1). The elder Gregory forcibly ordained his son to serve in his church on Epiphany 362, and Nazianzen responded by fleeing to Pontus to spend time with his best friend from his student days in Athens, Basil of Caesarea.

⁶ Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 216.

⁷ Carolinne White, *Gregory of Nazianzus Autobiographical Poems* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), 33.

However, upon his arrival to Pontus, Gregory found that Basil's style of monastic seclusion with its emphasis on manual labor and ascetic denial was rather different from his vision of contemplation.⁸ Nazianzen's mature reflections on how he adopted the *via media* depict the disagreeably 'strange and harsh' approach of other monks, and Gregory explicitly mentions his high regard for 'a middle ground between involvement in society and withdrawal from it' (*Or.* 6.2) not long after his return from Pontus. Thus it seems likely given the content of his mature reflections, his immediate flight upon ordination, and his mention of a 'middle ground' upon his return, that this change of heart regarding his approach to monasticism occurred during Gregory's stay with Basil. Indeed, I would argue that it is precisely this change that precipitated his return home and provided the contemplative framework for bringing his theological education to bear on his approach to conflict management.

After acquiring this more involved monastic approach, Gregory immediately went about applying his Trinitarian theology and unitive Christology to the work of reconciliation in his father's church. Gregory's emphasis on Trinitarian theology accomplished two purposes for resolving the local conflict over church politics. First, such doctrinal confessions demonstrated to the alienated monks that their chief motivation for leaving was no longer a viable concern – the younger Gregory's view of the Trinity was 'as stable and unchanging as its very nature' (*Or.* 6.11). Furthermore, Gregory brilliantly utilized this doctrine to emphasize the peace and concord between the Trinitarian persons in order to make a social-Trinitarian argument for the unity of the church at Nazianzus, thereby 'engaging a key point in the monks' own confession.'⁹ Gregory also did not limit himself to Trinitarian arguments for unity; rather, he continued to pursue this line of harmonious logic toward the conclusion that all the believers should be one as the body of Christ is one, thus drawing upon his robustly unitive Christology.

Progress came slowly at first. After his winter visit with Basil, Gregory returned to Nazianzus to give his first oration on Easter 362. He therefore seized the opportunity to begin with the motif of Christ's resur-

⁸ John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 77, 93.

⁹ Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 190.

rection and appeal to his divided church to rise up to the new life of peace (*Or.* 1.1). Furthermore, Gregory appealed to his parishioners to ‘become like Christ, since Christ became like us’ (*Or.* 1.5), thus setting the stage for an emphasis on the incarnation that would do further theological work for his strategy toward conflict resolution in the coming years.

In his next sermon, Gregory again turned to the subject of dispute within the churches, mentioning how Christians are all too ready to argue against one another about Christ in non-Christian ways. He compared this to competitions among the pagans in wrestling, and other more characteristically violent events in which they nonetheless compete with each other according to the rules, while Christians forsake the rules of Christ-like behavior in order to use their faith as a rhetorical weapon. He denounced such conflicts, which resulted in the satirical depiction of Christians on the late-Antique stage among pagan audiences (*Or.* 2.83-86). Gregory thus established peace as central to his Christology and he deployed this as a case for reconciliation in this local conflict. He reminded his audience that it is not ‘pleasing to peace’ to fight ‘unlawfully in her name’ (*Or.* 2.85).

Evidently, Gregory’s diplomatic overtures to the separated monastic leaders were successful. In 364 he took the opportunity to compose a public sermon for the sake of guaranteeing the stability of the peace that had finally been established two years after his forced ordination (*Or.* 6.12). At first glance, it might seem ironic that Gregory’s oration celebrating the healing of the schism at Nazianzus would provide the clearest insight into his approach to dispute resolution; however, it is understandable that Gregory would utilize his full range of tactics toward peace in *Oration 6*, being that this was probably the first time the erstwhile departed monks were actually seated in the audience.

Gregory began this *First Oration on Peace* by focusing upon the evil act of tearing apart the ecclesial body of Christ, going so far as to say that the Evil One had accomplished through them what he had failed to do in the crucifixion – namely, dismembering Christ’s body (*Or.* 6.1). In this way Gregory depicted discord in the ecclesiastical body of Christ as prying apart the composite synthesis between God and man – the paradox that so typified unitive Gregorian Christology. Quoting Paul, he invoked Christ as the head of the ecclesiastical body, which has been knit together as one (*Or.* 6.4, 8). Thus Gregory argued for peace – presenting a unified ecclesiology as a necessary response to a unitive Christology.

Gregory then concluded his oration with two strong statements of Trinitarian faith. Gregory stated, ‘dissociating any one of [the] members [of the Trinity] is tantamount to destroying the whole’ (*Or.* 6.11). He then continued on to emphasize that there is ‘no discord in [the] Godhead’ and therefore encouraged his congregation to ‘draw their unity, as indeed their radiance, from the honored and holy Trinity’ (*Or.* 6.13). Gregory then instantiated his commitment to peace,

narrating how he and his father had ‘welcomed the leaders who had been assigned to the separated portion on the grounds that novel secession was prompted by piety with the object of helping the struggle of orthodox doctrine’ (*Or.* 6.11). Gregory sought to demonstrate that ecclesial unity ought to be based on a solid foundation of truth, just as Trinitarian orthodoxy is both doctrinally true and an exemplar of perfect peace. Indeed, just as the Father is the source of inner-Trinitarian unity,¹⁰ so also the Trinity must be the source of unity in the church. Thus Gregory drew heavily upon his Trinitarian theology as the fundamental framework that provided the basis for his strategy of dispute resolution.

In conclusion, Gregory of Nazianzus’ adoption of a *via media* approach to monasticism provided the contemplative vehicle to bring his theological projects to bear on a life of active arbitration. After acquiring this monastic outlook, he then deployed his understanding of inter-Trinitarian concord and the unity of Christ as theological models to pursue peace and reconciliation with the monks of Nazianzus in his father’s politically fragmented, local congregation.

¹⁰ Verna E. F. Harrison, ‘Illumined from All Sides by the Trinity: Neglected Themes in Gregory’s Trinitarian Theology’ in *Re-Reading Gregory of Nazianzus: Essays on History, Theology, and Culture*, ed. Christopher A. Beeley (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 25.

THE FELLOW'S INTERVIEW: DR. PETER FRANKOPAN



Dr. Peter Frankopan is a rare Byzantinist in not only having reached out of the discipline, but also out of academia entirely, having written for several major news organisations. As a Byzantinist, he is especially known for his

work on the reign of Alexios I Komnenos and the early crusading era. He recently provided the notes and updated translation of Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* for Penguin, and brought out to great acclaim *The First Crusade: The Call From the East*. At Oxford he is currently senior research fellow at Worcester College, and director of the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research.

How did you get into the field of Byzantine Studies?

The path towards Constantinople is different for everybody but generally most people come from a Classical background. They study Classics and Late antiquity and then find themselves in Byzantium. Like the Varangians, I came down the river systems of Russia towards the Black Sea. I had fallen in love with Russia when I was a teenage boy, and studied Russian when I was at school – also learning Arabic with a former intelligence officer who had spent some time in Baghdad. In my last year as an undergraduate at Cambridge I did a paper on Byzantium and its neighbours with Jonathan Shepard and it felt like the world opening up in front of me; the connections between East and West, the jostling of religions, the competition of cosmologies. At school, we had relentlessly focused on Western European history. So it felt like stumbling into Aladdin's cave, filled with precious treasure that few people had really been interested in. I absolutely fell in love with Byzantium and have never fallen out of love with it. In that respect, I was very lucky. I already knew I wanted to carry on my studies, but might very well have done my doctorate on Russia in the early twentieth century.

It's amazing that you arrived at this field starting from something totally different.

You say that, but the excitement for anyone working closely with primary sources is the same – trying to work out what the author meant; what they are not revealing; what contemporaries thought about events, beliefs and ideas. I suppose ultimately it is about curi-

osity and wanting to ask questions. It's true that I landed firmly on the topic of the Byzantine Empire, and basically in the period between 800-1300; but I still keep up my interests beyond this region and outside this period. I take a look at Russia newspapers online most days and follow closely how places like Turkey, Iran and central Asia are changing – partly because I feel that is my responsibility as a historian.

You have written extensively on *The Alexiad* and the reign of Alexios Komnenos. Why did you focus on this particular period of the Byzantine history or on this particular work?

When I came to Oxford, I thought I wanted to work on the Balkans. James Howard Johnston, who was my supervisor, convinced me instead to look at the reign of Alexios. There had just been a major conference in Belfast (in 1989), and not one of the speakers talked about Byzantium's relations with its neighbours or about imperial foreign policy. He thought there might be something interesting to say – and he was right! So, for my M.Phil. thesis I wrote on the wars with the Pechenegs in the 1080s and more or less did a line by line analysis of Anna Komnene's account. It turned out that the chronology – the basic sequence of events in *The Alexiad* – was wrong. At the time, I was convinced this was because the author was working with difficult material – sources that were contradictory or missed things out – making it hard for Anna to be accurate. As I worked on the text more, I realized that I had been looking at the *Alexiad* as a work of history, rather than as a work of literature. In fact, Anna is a wonderful writer, and also incredibly well-read with access to military and imperial archives of some form. So the question is did the events get mixed up, because she had various sources or because she was confused – or is there perhaps something more nuanced going on? Were these errors in *The Alexiad* deliberate, or are they part of the editorial process of pulling together different pieces of information? So, the next few years were spent patiently working through the text in great detail, finding fixed points and dates that could be corroborated by other sources, and then trying to establish what really happened. The result was a very different picture of Alexios' reign to the one that has long been accepted by scholars. The process was almost scientific: trying to conduct a first test on the Pecheneg chapters, and then formulating a methodology to use to address the rest of the *Alexiad* – and then see what kind of questions and problems that throws up.

Why is Oxford a good place to go if you are interested in the Byzantine world?

The reason why I came to Oxford is the same as why any graduate student or scholar comes to Oxford: the brilliant academics who work here. It is a glittering array of talent, across so many different fields and disciplines, and such a privilege to hear them discuss their work – let alone be taught by them or become their colleague. Oxford is the best place in the world for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies. The fact that the collections in the Bodleian as well as the Ashmolean are an added bonus. Other places are fantastic – like Paris and Dumbarton Oaks – but Oxford has always been incredibly strong. When I was at Cambridge, Jonathan Shepard told me if I was serious about becoming a Byzantine historian, there was only one choice to make: to switch light blue for dark blue!

How was the OCBR established, and what projects is it currently running?

The main reason OCBR was set up was to provide a focal point of contact for the work we do here in Oxford. There are around sixty members of OCBR who are senior academics working in Late Antique & Byzantine Studies – or in related fields: we spent some time wondering about what to call OCBR, as there are many scholars who would perhaps not describe themselves as Byzantinists, like those working on Islamic history, or Persian literature, or on Syriac, or Armenian from about 300-1500. It is a huge strength that there is such breadth in Oxford – but a weakness that we are scattered about the different faculties and departments, ranging from History to MML, from Theology to the Oriental Institute, from Classics to Archaeology, from the Bodleian to the Ashmolean. The OCBR was set up to give a single voice to our community – both inside Oxford, but also for those outside, whether fellow academics or otherwise, who are interested in what we do. Times have changed in the last couple of decades, and today it is more important than even to be showcasing the world-class work we do here which is pushing at the frontiers of the subject.

Now there are a whole series of different projects that have become attached to the OCBR. So, Jas Elsner is leading an enormous project on The Empires of Faith looking on religion across the whole of Eurasia from central Asia westwards; then we have Marek Jankowiak doing his project on dirhams and slavery, as well as a regular roster of smaller projects, such as on the 11th century, which are all doing amazing things. I think we're really keen to collaborate with each other and with other institutions, something that is quite new for us both in Oxford generally and also in our field. We are used to scholars coming towards us, but in the OCBR we are actually trying to establish such connections. One of the things we are trying

work out is how do we reach out to other institutions in other parts of the world, based in places such as Russia, Central Asia, Iran, Ukraine where there is growing interest in the past, but also a lot of work going on that we do not always know too much about. Just knowing which journals are being produced is helpful, particularly in the field of archaeology with new discoveries being made. Having a mailing list, where we arrange and send out a newsletter is a very important way for us to say that we are open to working with everybody, and not a small elite organization with a number of people working on their own. That's the way a modern university should be.

It is rather unusual to see a Byzantinist writing articles in magazines and newspapers, such as the *MoneyWeek* and the *Guardian*. In your articles, you usually draw parallels between history and the current state of affairs. How far do you think we can take cross-period comparisons? What responsibilities do historians have to engage with the wider public?

I think it's a personal choice. It is not something I had done at all until a couple of years ago. When my book on the First Crusade came out, I was asked to write about east for *The New York Times* and then *The Jerusalem Post*. Neither told me what I could or could not write, but were interested in what the lessons of the past can teach us. I suppose I agree with historians like Braudel says who was insistent that historians have responsibilities, obligations even, to set out the bigger picture and to explain things to the non-specialist. And so everywhere you look you can find inspiration: I was fascinated, for example, that the protests last summer in Istanbul were epitomized in the press and the city's inhabitants by a man standing impassive and silently – like a stylite! Or I was struck by the way that Alexios tried to use similar methods to deal with a financial crisis as the central banks have tried in recent years: the crisis in the 1080s was not caused by irresponsible banks and sub-prime mortgages, but the similar problem of a collapse or revenues and rising expenditure prompted a series of solutions not unlike those tried today. One of the most interesting was the attempt to try to the problems through what historians call debasement, but which economists trying to sound clever call 'quantitative easing' - in other words pumping our cash into circulation. If you study Alexios Komnenos, you learn that while this buys time, it does not actually work. No surprise then to guess where Alexios turned for a more effective solution: the Germans! Then aim was to re-balance the economy by trying to take some of the military pressure and costs away and allow things to stabilize. In his case, it didn't work. What did was the introduction of a rebased new currency linked to the loosening of trade ties, above all with Venice. No new currency yet in Europe, but there have clearly been major attempts to attract investment in to the EU from

other parts of the world in order reinvigorate the economy. But it is important that the questions today are not new: when you have this major contraction, how do you rebuild?

Which are, let us say, the modern approaches within Byzantine Studies? For instance, a tendency towards an interdisciplinary approach, deep specialization in a particular field or period...

Well, Byzantine Studies must be one of the most inter-faculty and inter-disciplinary subjects in Oxford, given the range of materials you consult or the variety of scholars you come into contact with. Personally, I am not entirely sure there really are intellectual boundaries that one consciously needs to cross to be 'inter-disciplinary'; it seems self-evident to me that if you are doing a PhD or writing about Byzantine history that you must look at visual as well as literary sources; or at the numismatic and sigillographic material. I'm not sure you can really wake up in the morning and decide to work on the language and literature side of things, but not on another aspect. Universities like (and need) these boundaries for administrative reasons, but I'm not sure they really exist. What I do think is more interesting about Byzantine Studies at the moment is the way we are concentrating on looking at the question of exchange and of inter-action between cultures, states and societies, and on what 'change' means. And in that, I think we are a long way ahead of other fields – because to be a Byzantine (as well as a modern Byzantinist) meant having a wider understanding of the world than a narrow perspective. There has been a great deal of discussion recently in the press about the First World War: I'm still surprised about how narrow the focus is of those working in that field. There seems to be very little discussion about what the war meant in other parts of the world, or whether the pain and horrors of what happened in Europe made lives better in other countries and regions. The 'Eurocentrism' of medieval studies and above all about the Crusades has long annoyed me – endless books where Byzantium is barely mentioned, if at all. So I think it's terrific that we try to look at a bigger picture.

What would be your advice or suggestions towards new students?

Doing a thesis is not a simple exercise. Like running a marathon, you need to have a lot of energy, stamina, and commitment. You also need to tell yourself that other people have done it before, it's achievable – although it doesn't always feel easy. It's a bit like digging in the mines, looking for gold: you have to dig, dig, and dig again, as your thesis is going to be the result of the ideas you have come up with and the material you have used. Sometimes you think you've

struck lucky, but end up going back to square one; other times, you will develop a little idea and it will blossom right in front of you. But nothing beats hard work. You really need to be in love with your subject, you need to love what you do and you need to teach yourself how to enjoy the bad days as well as the good ones. You need to be willing not to restrict yourself to a particular direction, but to be willing to listen to new ideas, and to modify and change your opinions. That's not as easy as it sounds. Finally, as you come close to finishing your PhD, it is important that you are able to talk about your subject, and to do so in a way that makes it sound interesting – which of course means thinking about your audience. It's important to be able to explain why you love your subject. You need to be able to communicate – to your peers as well as to your students if you are going to carry on after the PhD with an academic job.

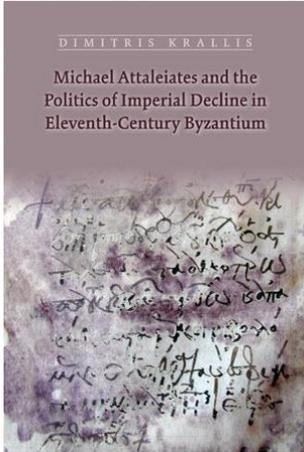
In life, if you are passionate about something, then that's why perhaps you should spend your life doing it. But if it's something that you find difficult, dull and boring or if you are fed up with reading a source or can't bear having to crack a new inscription, then you need to be honest with yourself too. I think the hardest thing about doing a PhD was being persistent and patient. You need to be aware that not every day is a good day!

Is there a phrase in either *The Alexiad* or some other Byzantine work that left an impression on your mind and you may frequently recall? A motto, let us say...

My motto is from Book 14 in *The Alexiad*. Anna says something like: "At this point in the evening my eyelids are so heavy from working hard; the candles have burnt right down and the light in the room is very murky, so I just hope the reader can forgive me if for whatever reason, parts of my arguments are slightly weaker than they should be, or if I have missed something out, because none of this is intentional on my part". When I read those lines for the first time, I thought they summed up perfectly the thoughts of a historian. Of course, one could be cynical and think this is just neat posturing by Anna Komnene. But there is something very human and very real about these words. We are all trying to express the truth as historians, and to get close to explaining what happened and why. That is a bold thing to try to do, since ultimately it requires other people have got it wrong. Doing so in a way that is persuasive and elegant makes for a good historian, I think. Anna Komnene certainly saw herself as next in a long line of scholars and writers; and I think that's a nice way of looking at what we do too. Plus, from twenty years' experience of writing late into the night, I totally get where she is coming from with the bad light and heavy eyelids – I know the feeling all too well!

BOOK REVIEWS

Dimitris Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*. Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies: Arizona Tempe, 2012.



Following an influential 1984 article by Alexander Kazhdan, the 11th-century jurist and historian Michael Attaleiates has generally been characterised as a representative of townspeople critical of the Constantinopolitan bureaucracy and sympathising with the military aristocracy, as well as a devoted supporter of the emperor Nikephoros III

Botaneiates, to whom his *History* was dedicated. After three decades during which scholars increasingly have come to question the dichotomising perceptions of civil and military elites on which Kazhdan based his argument, time is certainly ripe for a thorough consideration of alternative interpretations. The one offered by Dimitris Krallis, who aims to challenge both of these established views, is both ambitious in scope and attentive to detail, its most significant achievement being its shift in perspective whereby Attaleiates is considered not primarily as a representative of a social group, but as an individual; a principled author and a political actor with his own agenda. Crucially, Krallis addresses the curious textual disposition of the *History* in a constructive manner. The first two thirds of the text, comprising a fairly straightforward historiographical narrative covering the period 1035-1078, contrast sharply with the final third, which is a heavily panegyric account of the Botaneiates' reign, displaying many characteristics of the traditional encomium. Instead of viewing the former primarily as a preamble to the latter, Krallis demonstrates that Attaleiates in all likelihood wrote the first two thirds before the accession of Botaneiates, whereas the final third is a later addition made out of political expediency. As such, he infers that scholars have been mistaken in focusing on the account of Botaneiates' reign in their attempts to discern the views and values of the historian, when in fact such questions would be best answered through an analysis of the earlier part of the text.

Based on precisely such an analysis Krallis argues convincingly that the core purpose of the *History* was didactic. It was written against the background of the dire situation of the 1070s and intended to present the past as a lesson for the present by addressing the caus-

es of the recent decline, as well as to advertise Attaleiates' own skills as a political analyst and prognosticator in an attempt to promote the historian's own career and influence at the imperial court. This focus on utility, Krallis suggests, is inspired by the ancient historian Polybius of Megalopolis, who served as Attaleiates' principal model for the writing of history and also exerted a considerable influence on his recipe for the restoration of imperial glory, with its emphasis on proper governance, patriotism, piety and fortune. Through careful consideration of how the actions and characteristics of emperors and other important individuals are portrayed in the *History*, an outline of Attaleiates' imperial ideal takes shape, where Isaac Komnenos is identified as the primary role model for fiscal policy and Romanos Diogenes as the best example of an able military commander. Krallis also makes a number of apt observations on Attaleiates' focus on human agency as the primary factor of historical causation and his idealisation of ancient Roman virtue in contrast to the decadence of his own times, both of which carries a distinct Polybian flavour, although his assumption that these elements of the narrative would necessarily be incompatible with conventional Christian beliefs seems premature and is not substantiated with any attempt to analyse and define the limits of contemporary orthodoxy.

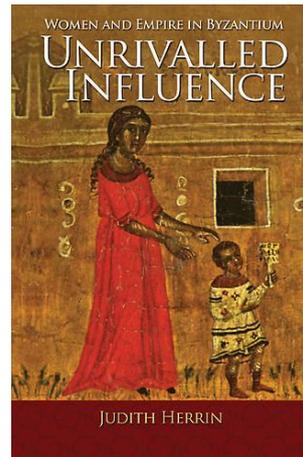
These threads of thought all lead up to what must be considered the book's most controversial conclusion, which unfortunately is also the most questionable one. Krallis argues that Attaleiates was deeply insincere in his support for Botaneiates and that the true message of the *History*, carefully veiled in sycophantic praise, was that the emperor was unfit for imperial power and should be replaced by the promising young general Alexios Komnenos, thereby foreshadowing the coup of 1081. He makes a number of relevant points here, especially as regards the discrepancy between the imperial ideal conveyed by the earlier parts of the *History* and the qualities Botaneiates is praised for in the account of his reign. In particular, Krallis is right to point out that Attaleiates' musings on the emperor's boundless generosity carries a distinctly critical subtext, although this may well be read as a polite call for a change of policy rather than for a change of emperor. He also notes a few interesting personal links between Attaleiates and the Komnenoi. As for the suggestion that Attaleiates intended to impress upon the more discerning of his readers the need to replace Botaneiates with Komnenos, however, the evidence seems rather elusive. The line of reasoning generally suffers from a tendency not to take proper stock of the issue of genre. Krallis sometimes appears to treat the account of Botaneiates reign as a traditional encomium, with the full range of expectations that brings,

even though, as he himself concedes elsewhere, it would be better described as a historical narrative deeply infused with encomiastic elements, the implications of which are much less certain. Moreover, the centrepiece of the argument, namely the assertion that Attaleiates systematically, albeit obliquely, denigrates Botaneiates' military credentials and martial abilities, consists of a long series of subtle interpretations of various episodes, each presented as providing a slight hint to the same effect, although virtually all of them remain quite open to alternative readings, especially in light of other parts of the narrative which Krallis does not consider. The hypothesis is as fascinating as it is bold and the argument is meticulously crafted, but in the end it is not entirely convincing.

Nevertheless, the book makes a significant and valuable contribution to our understanding of the life and works of Michael Attaleiates, as well as the times he lived in and wrote about, and it is sure to provide a welcome infusion of energy to the scholarly debate of these matters.

Jonas Nilsson, Exeter College

Judith Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium*. Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford, 2013.



Unrivalled Influence is one of two companion volumes of collected essays on Byzantium that span Judith Herrin's career. The first volume, *Margins and Metropolis*, focuses on the political, cultural and religious links between the city and the edges of the empire from the early medieval period onward. *Unrivalled Influence* is concerned specifically with how women fitted into the political, cultural and religious aspects of the Empire.

Herrin outlines her three aims for this volume in her introduction. First, she wishes to put in place a 'rough mosaic' of the issues in which Byzantine studies can contribute to the study of other periods and societies, particularly in terms of gender, highlighting ideas and approaches that may prove useful to a historian of any kind. Second, with a more specifically Byzantine studies audience in mind, she wishes to bring some lesser known source material to our attention. Finally, she wants 'to lay down a challenge to historians for whom comparison should be a basic requirement: why did Byzantium offer such exceptional opportunities for women?' (p. XVIII).

To fulfil these aims, Herrin looks at a number of topics, using a vast range of source material from the third to the fifteenth centuries. Herrin states the issues of trying to study Byzantine women clearly: the lack of a female perspective and the prevalence of male-authored source material, the use of rhetoric within such sources, and the limited information on non-aristocratic women. A large portion of the evidence inevitably relates to important individuals, namely empresses and saints, but Herrin does not limit her presentation to those women we have most evidence for. Rather she explores legal documents, particularly wills and court records, religious texts, histories, coins, icons, statuary and even the occasional piece of fiction to pull out traces of reality from the rhetoric. Certainly some women are easier to find than others, but it is often those we know least about that Herrin adds most too. Much of the information does have a religious character, but religion can only with great difficulty be separated from any aspect of Byzantine life, and its importance is thus reflected in the source material and Herrin's own interests.

By covering such a range of material over such a long period Herrin highlights changes that occurred in attitudes to women and their treatment. For example, she considers the fairly public role of women in the Church in the early Christian centuries, the restriction

of this role in the fourth century, and the essential exclusion of women from public involvement in the Church at the Council of Trullo in the seventh century. Each of the chapters has a different focus, though some of the detail remains the same across several, building the picture of Byzantine women up over the course of the book. Over the course of the book Herrin thus shows that women could and did take advantage of social change, playing key roles in the functioning of the empire at all levels, from the basic upbringing of children, through development of religious ideology, to the actual ruling of the empire.

While the essays look at women at every level of society, young and old, the essays are not exclusively about women. The in-between gender created by the existence of eunuchs sheds light on why Byzantine society could offer some flexibility to women, either through the influence and protection they could provide, or through the potential for female disguise as one of this third gender. The essays also present the Byzantine family in various guises, and discuss familiar issues in different ways. For example, Herrin's take on the cult of the Virgin and on icon veneration provides an interesting perspective on iconoclasm and the imperial influence on Orthodoxy. The praise and protection of women by some men also serves to highlight the changes in what was socially acceptable. Some, such as Demetrios Chomatenos, seem to have been truly pioneering in their desire to see women as individuals, subverting our views on the role and control of women in Byzantium, in both the contemporary male ideology of their descent from Eve and relation to the Theotokos, and in the reality of their daily lives.

The style of presentation also serves to show the development of Herrin's own ideas on gender studies and the role of women in Byzantium. Each chapter has a separate introduction indicating when and why

the essay was written and what had influenced Herrin's thinking at the time. Several also contain updates at the end indicating new areas of research and recent publication which have thrown further light on the topics discussed. Thus each of the chapters has been brought up to date and linked into current discussions of gender in Byzantium. The chapters have not been split up into themed sections as the questions asked and the source material tend to force some overlap. As such, this book, though useful as a dip-in, dip-out reference work, really demands more focused attention to gain most from it.

Despite the issues caused by the types of source material available, Herrin is still able to offer a broad yet detailed glimpse into the daily life of Byzantine women at different levels of society. We get tantalizing hints at the freedom women could find, their roles in trade and diplomacy, and their legal and political heft, whether as individuals or en masse. Herrin argues that some of the asides we find in the source material offer the most interesting ideas and the same can be said of her book. Hints regarding appearance and dress, social protest, shop-keeping and education, litter the work, sparking ideas and comparisons which, while often indicated, can be further explored. This is more than a 'rough mosaic', it is a complex arrangement of tesserae which certainly achieves its aim of provoking discussion and takes a huge and inspiring step closer to answering why Byzantine women occasionally held such power, thus supporting Steven Runciman's suggestion that it may have been 'the strength of Byzantine women that kept the empire going so long'.

Kirsty Stewart, Queen's College

ALUMNUS PROFILE

Sean Leatherbury

Bard Graduate Center, New York and Kenyon Institute, Jerusalem

My interest in late antiquity and Byzantium began during my undergraduate days at Yale University, in my first Byzantine art courses with Lynn Jones (now at Florida State University) and Elena Boeck (now at DePaul University). I wrote my undergraduate senior thesis under the supervision of Rob Nelson on the role of ivory consular diptychs in the gift economy of fifth- and sixth-century Byzantium. After finishing my B.A. in the History of Art in 2006, I began graduate study at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in the fall of 2007. Originally I was enrolled on the one-year M.St. in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, but after discussions with my supervisor, Jaś Elsner, as well as James Howard-Johnston, I decided to switch to the M.Phil., as the two-year programme would allow me to write a more significant thesis. During the course, I was lucky enough to study Late Antique art and archaeology with Marlia Mango and Late Antique history with Neil McLynn. I also spent a great deal of time studying Byzantine Greek and epigraphy with Ida Toth, whose knowledge of and enthusiasm for the material was extremely helpful. My M.Phil. thesis focused on the visual character of late antique mosaic inscriptions in the apses and on the walls of churches, primarily those in the western Mediterranean (e.g. Rome, Ravenna), examining how patrons and artists used both the textual content and appearance of these inscriptions to articulate their cultural and religious affiliations and aesthetic tastes. After completing the M.Phil. in the summer of 2009, I began the D.Phil. in the fall of the same year. My doctoral thesis, entitled ‘Inscribed within the image: The visual character of early Christian mosaic inscriptions’ and written under the supervision of Jaś Elsner, was an extension of my M.Phil. thesis, and considered texts written in mosaic in all parts of Christian buildings, including floor mosaics. Based on the corpus of early Christian mosaic inscriptions in Greek and Latin from both eastern and western Mediterranean that I assembled, my thesis re-contextualized these texts as late antique viewers would have read and viewed them, highlighting key elements of the relationship between word, image, and architectural space in the period and uncovering the persistent influence of classical traditions on Christian and Jewish cultures and personal identities. Thanks to travel grants from Corpus Christi College, the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research, and the Association



for the Study and Preservation of Roman Mosaics, I was able to travel to Syria, Jordan, Tunisia, and Italy to study a number of mosaics in person. I completed my D.Phil. in the fall of 2012.

Currently, I hold research fellowships at the Bard Graduate Center (BGC) in New York and the Kenyon Institute in Jerusalem, and am in the process of revising my doctoral dissertation for publication as a book, titled *Inscribing Faith in Late Antiquity: Between Reading and Seeing*. My experience at the BGC has been wonderful, and the faculty has been very supportive, including agreeing to sponsor a symposium which I am organizing for the 5th March, entitled *The Material Text in Pre-Modern and Early Modern Europe*. This symposium will gather a number of New York-area academics to discuss the materiality and legibility of inscriptions and other texts in European cultures

(<http://www.bgc.bard.edu/news/events/symposium-material.html>, where you can livestream the event if you are interested!). In Israel, I have been able to visit a number of sites important to my research, as well as develop connections to area academics, and also took part in December in a conference on late antique Jewish art at Hebrew University. During the course of my fellowships, I have been able to complete a number of outstanding projects, including articles on the visual, political, and cultural contexts of the mosaic inscriptions at Sinai; on the frames of late antique inscriptions; and on the meanings of New Testament imagery on Christian floor mosaics in the Levant. I have remained deeply involved with several projects based in Oxford, including the catalogue of the Wilshire Collection of late-Roman art at the Ashmolean Museum (to be published later this year by Susan Walker), as well as Manar al-Athar (<http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk/>), a free digital resource for the study of the art and archaeology of the ancient and medieval Middle East run by Judith McKenzie and supported by the ‘Late Antique Egypt and the Holy Land’ project under the direction of Neil McLynn. A few of my other upcoming projects include a panel at the College Art Association Annual Meeting in February, co-organized with Adam Levine (another Oxford alumnus), entitled ‘Localism, Micro-Identities, and the Art of the Late Antique Mediterranean’, as well as a conference on late antique religious institutions in Jerusalem that Konstantin Klein (yet another Oxonian) and I are in the process of organising at the Kenyon Institute next summer. As I apply for tenure-track jobs in art history, I look forward to continuing to pursue my research interests, including the relationship between

word and image and the production and reception of art in different ancient religious traditions, as well as beginning new collaborative projects. The first of these projects will be an edited volume of essays on the influence of late antique Egyptian artists on Byzantine art, a work based on the scholarship of Mab von Lohuizen-Mulder and undertaken with the collaboration of the 'Late Antique Egypt and the Holy Land' project at Oxford. While I am no longer at Oxford, the academic and personal relationships that I developed during my graduate career continue to shape my professional trajectory, and I hope to maintain close ties to the university for years to come.

GRADUATE PROFILES

Ifigeneia Georgala, *Wolfson College, Oxford*

This is my first year in Oxford doing a DPhil in Oriental Studies. I studied Archaeology and History of Art at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. I was always particularly interested in the Archaeology and Art History of the medieval period, so I continued my studies with a master's program in Byzantine Archaeology also in Athens. The culture and art of the Islamic world, which I got a glimpse of in my Byzantine Art lectures and seminars, attracted me from the very beginning. Most of my master's papers dealt with the connections and interactions between Byzantine, Western, and Islamic Art, which I found and continue to find a very exciting and promising field of research. My main interest is the material culture of the early-Islamic/Middle-Byzantine period, seen not only from an art historical point of view, but also examined for its technical, economical, and sociological implications. For my research degree I chose to study textiles, a material that played a very significant role in economy, ritual, and everyday life, in both Islamic and Byzantine society. I was happy to find that Oxford was the right place to study both Islamic Art, and its cultural connections with the Christian World. Specifically my research deals with textiles and textile production in Egypt during the early-Islamic period, taken both on its own terms and in comparison with the Byzantine world.

During my short time in Oxford I have been excited by the new perspectives and ways of thinking that were opened in front of me, and I hope that this academic environment will contribute significantly to my training and research in the future.

David Gyllenhall, *Blackfriars, Oxford*

I was born in Abington hospital, in the US state of Pennsylvania, in the year 1989, and raised—until the tenth year of my life—in the servants' quarters of a faux-Romanesque castle. The castle is known as Glencairn, and was built as the residence of Raymond Pitcairn, the depression era scion of the Swedenborgian community of Bryn Athyn, and heir to an industrial fortune of Gilded Age vintage. On the occasion of his inheritance, Raymond quit his job as a lawyer and devoted the balance of his money, time, and energy to his passion for religious art. He left his hilltop fortress bulging with treasure at the time of his death. My father was the caretaker until I was ten years old.

Reflecting on the contents of Glencairn in the light

of later developments, the collections take on enormous retroactive significance. They include a modest assemblage of Neo-Assyrian reliefs, (introducing my lifelong interest in the outstanding morbidities of the historical record), a medieval armory, (firing the in-born passion of every American male for war-waged-with-iron); The world's largest private collection of Gothic stained glass, including some particularly nice pieces from Abbot Suger's St. Denis, (inflecting my fascination with the aesthetic and ascetic details of mystical ascent);, and an *in-situ* group of exquisite 20th-century mosaics, exactingly executed in the Byzantine style, (rendering inevitably my eventual devotion to the city of Constantine and its empire).

My undergraduate years were spent at Bryn Athyn College, a tiny but excellent school, where my family did not have to pay tuition or rent, and I was free to indulge in restless peregrinations across disciplinary boundaries — most notably ancient history and religious studies. Ultimately, I graduated with a degree in Ancient History, writing my thesis on the religious threads in the pre-Socratic fragments. But it was during my year abroad, in the Divinity School of the University of Edinburgh, that I was finally introduced to Late Antique and Byzantine history as the sum and summit of my eclectic grab-bag of passions, courtesy of Drs. Paul and Sara Parvis.

Since arriving in Oxford at Blackfriars Hall to begin the MPhil in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, I have tried to make up for time lost to illness and serious linguistic deficiencies. I expect to have reading knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Syriac by the end of this year, and hope to have some command of Arabic and German by the end of next year. I've also tried to put my undergraduate writing to some use, publishing an old essay on shamanism and social differentiation in *PROTO*, and my senior thesis in the *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal of Classics*.

At the Graduate Byzantine Conference this year I am presenting a paper on spiritual mobilization in times of siege in the 6th-8th centuries, the first topic to incorporate every one of Glencairn's vestigial fascinations. My research interests going forward are focused primarily on the reception history of Iconoclasm in the Melkite and Jacobite communities of Palestine and Syria under the Caliphate, and the Christian theological response to the spectacular military successes of the Arab invasions. I also maintain an active interest in the military efficacy of religious art and authority in the Early and Middle Byzantine periods.

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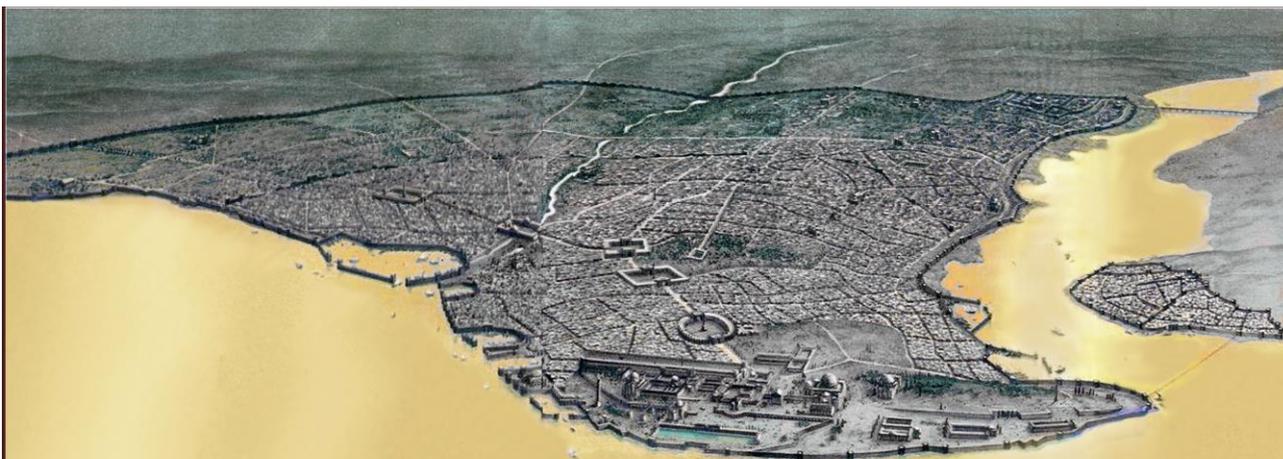


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The Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research was established in the summer of 2010 to present and promote research activity by senior scholars working in Byzantine Studies and related fields. Now, the OCBR is the focal point for Byzantine Studies at Oxford University. Covering the period from the adoption of Christianity by the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century, to the final conquest by the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth, the history of the Byzantine Empire is a remarkably rich and exciting field in which Oxford has been one of the world's leading institutions.

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