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SAILING TO BYZANTIUM:
THE BYZANTINE EXOTIC IN MEDIEVAL FRENCH LITERATURE

by
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French, in partial fulfilment
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Abstract

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This thesis examines how medieval Byzantium is represented in French epics, romances, and chronicles of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries within a discursive triangle formed by Exoticism / Orientalism / Otherness. Despite their geographical proximity with the Muslim world, which connoted the archetypal ominous Other for the Franks, the Byzantines were a Christian people, closer to the Franks in philosophy, in value systems, and in destiny than the latter were willing to admit. Both the Eastern Byzantines and the Western Franks cherished opulence and knowledge, but it was Byzantium's pagan Greek heritage, as well as its abundant natural resources, which placed it in a privileged position. Further, Byzantium was located in the mythical East, suspended between the two continents of Europe and Asia. In the Frankish mind, this geography meant that Byzantium was privy to exceptional (esoteric even) knowledge and wealth. Soon, it represented the Exotic, coveted by the Franks for its (suspicious) beauty and its attractions, and provoking fantasies of capture and conquest. Thus, Byzantium fit Edward Said's definition of an "Oriental" with all its cultural clichés of weakness, effeminacy, softness, and idleness, a construct fabricated by the West to

mirror its desires within the context of Frankish expansionism and colonialism. Aided by these parameters, a discourse of dominance, of domestication, of empowerment and of disempowerment is developed.

The negativity in the portrayal of Byzantium is the result of a deliberate distortion, exaggeration, and falsification of historical facts on the part of the French, in order to remove any suspicion of guilt for their aggression. This aggression was due in part to years of cultural antagonism and church politics. Nevertheless, the alliances between the two Christian worlds and their undeniable sameness did not go unnoticed in the works of my corpus. Ultimately, Byzantium was a between and betwixt entity, both despised but also admired by the Franks, who stood in awe before the vastness of its territories, the brilliance of Constantinople, the technological advancements in the court of the autocrat, the educated Byzantine women, and the accomplishments of its builders of symbolic edifices.

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INTRODUCTION

A. Framing the Problem.

The appearance of new literary genres in the vernacular, such as the romance and the chronicle, and the growing popularity of the epic contributed to the distinction of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries as privileged moments in the lengthy literary history of France. During this time of textual production in the French West flourished another Christian civilization in the Byzantine East, by no means a recent acquaintance to the former. Centuries of multiple relations between the two cultures, whether in the realm of Church politics, commerce, or familial alliances, to name a few, brought about feelings ranging from contempt to mutual admiration. Medieval French texts reflected this attitude of ambivalence in the portrayal of Byzantium, distant from France, and close enough to the Muslim world to be read within an inscription of difference. Yet, Byzantium was a Christian world, and within it the Franks tended to recognize the commonalities with their own systems of beliefs and values, their historical heritage, their aspirations and spiritual anxieties.

The purpose of this thesis is to consider Byzantium as a site of the “exotic,” which writes itself against the ever-present backdrop of an overwhelming and overarching trope in Medieval French literature, that of the Muslim or Saracen Other. In fact, Byzantium is to be viewed as a between and betwixt entity, an exotic world suspended between the two continents of Asia and Europe, and the two epochs of paganism and Christianity. It is a world open to speculation and to approximation, often deliberately so, thus pointing to the Frankish fantasy of conquest in the Byzantine East.

This thesis will attempt to explore how Byzantium and the Byzantines are represented in Medieval French texts of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and how that representation contributes to the construction of a "Byzantine Exoticism", related to but also separate from the broader question of "Otherness," and informed by the notion of "Orientalism" famously articulated by the late Edward Said.

Although the terms Other, Otherness, Alterity, and Exoticism are close in meaning, they do not signify the same thing. The Other, for example, may be seen as a mirror for the Self, the "I", which in our case is Frankish culture. According to Gabriele Schwab, this "mirroring Other transfers emotions-love, jealousy, envy, rejection- and provides a rudimentary framework for judgments such as comparison, anticipation, self-criticism, and self-scrutiny".¹ Thus, the rival Byzantines provoked such negative feelings in the Franks, who in turn fictionalized them according to a spectrum of extremes, ranging from the grotesque to a posture of benign ignorance.

The ambiguous term Otherness originated in the writings of the German idealist Hegel (1770-1831), was later informed by thinkers such as Heidegger and Nietzsche, and eventually developed in the psychoanalysis of Lacan and the deconstruction of Derrida, among others.² Yet, while acknowledging Otherness is a universal psychological experience, the act of othering has specific implications when used to disempower and colonize certain peoples. Thus, by "othering" the culturally different Byzantines, the

¹ Gabriele Schwab, *The Mirror and the Killer Queen: Otherness in Literary Language* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1996) ix.

² See William Desmond, *Desire, Dialectic, and Otherness* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987) esp. pp.1-6.

Franks put their political tactics and religious practices into question, insisting on their unethical comportment, and in so doing, they justified their own readings of Eastern expansionism and imperialism. Further, "Otherness is generated by deviations from culturally determined norms or transgressions of the boundaries that cultures draw to mark what they want to include or exclude", claims Schwab.³ The type of Otherness that I refer to is a cultural one, imbued with "ethnocentric and colonialist perceptions of the other".⁴ These perceptions begin and result in the representation of Byzantine strangeness as a vehicle for the devious, deservingly chastised in the Frankish mind by means that may incorporate disempowerment and, ultimately, conquest.

Alterity is a notion often used interchangeably with Otherness in literary traditions, such as postcolonial theory and hermeneutics. It derives from the Latin *alteritas*, meaning the state of being other or different or opposite. Anette C. Hammerschmidt is one of the few scholars who actually distinguishes between Alterity, "the traditional field of anthropology", and Otherness or the state of "being repressed".⁵ Alterity is related to the process and the experience of making others, of "othering" colonized objects, appearing regularly in discussions of otherness under that form.

Exoticism is also connected to Otherness. It designates what is outside our own cultural norm and experience, and it implies the eccentric, the marginal even. In truth, the notion of marginality applies to the Byzantine cultural persona in particular ways, as

³ Schwab 29.

⁴ Ibid. 38.

⁵ Anette C. Hammerschmidt, *Understanding the Other: Intercultural Hermeneutics between Self and Other* (Munich, Iudicium Verlag, 1997) 119.

the Byzantines inhabited the fringes of the Muslim world, allowing for a potentially suspicious cultural exchange. Yet, there is a distinction between the terms Exoticism and Otherness. While the former is the object of condescension but also desire, fascination, and incites a scopic view, the latter more often implies rejection and bears mostly negative connotations as part of a colonizing subtext.

Numerous studies have been published since as early as 1906 comparing and contrasting the two worlds of the French West and Byzantine East.⁶ However, there are presently no works connecting the medieval Byzantine cultural persona with the "exotic" or the "Oriental" according to the parameters offered by Said's *Orientalism*.⁷ No study has referred to the Byzantines either as the official Frankish opponent as I do,⁸ or simply as their eccentric Eastern ally, which is characteristic of Medieval French texts in the vernacular. Certainly, there is some literature related to my aspects of my thesis that has proved useful in limited ways. I will review some important examples.

⁶ Gustave Schlumberger, *Récits de Byzance et des Croisades* (Paris, Plon, 1916); John Kirtland Wright, *Geographical Lore at the Time of the Crusades* (Cortland, Rumford Press, 1925); F.P. Pickering, "The Western Image of Byzantium in the Middle Ages", *German- Life-and- Letters* 28 (1974-75); Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantine East and Latin West: Interaction of the "Sibling" Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976); Jean Richard, "La Vogue de l'Orient dans la littérature occidentale au Moyen Age", *Relations entre l'Orient et l'Occident au Moyen Age* (London, Variorum, 1977) 555-559; Steven Runciman, *East and West: Today and Yesterday* (Nottingham, Russell Press Ltd., 1978); Van Der Vin, J.P.A., *Travelers to Greece and to Constantinople* (Leiden, Archeologisch Institut le Istanbul, 1980); Henry and Renee Kahane, "The Western Impact on Byzantium: The Linguistic Evidence", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, 1982); Claude Cahen, *Orient et Occident au temps des Croisades* (Paris, Aubier Montaigne, 1983); Krijnie Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1996).

⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, Vintage, 1978).

⁸ See Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1984) on the portrayal of Saracens, the official archenemy of Western Christian society in Medieval French literature. Also, on Jews as "others" in Medieval French literature, see Gerald Herman, "A Note on Medieval Anti-Judaism as Reflected in the *chansons de geste*" *Annuaire Médiévale* (1973): 63-73.

Three dissertations pertain to aspects of my topic. Leon Stratikis, in *Byzantium and France: The Twelfth Century Renaissance and the Birth of the Medieval Romance* (1992), examines the mystery cults of Hellenistic times and observes how they were transformed into cults of saints. This is a comparative study of the Hellenistic/ Byzantine romances with Old French hagiographic literature, the *Floire et Blancheflor*, and also the Arthurian cycle and the Tristan legend. My focus will rather be to isolate and to examine the people and the sacred cities of the Eastern Christian world as they appear in twelfth and thirteenth- century French works.

Stephen Geoffrey Steele, in *Reading Alterity in Old French Epic and Romance* (1992), refers to the cultural constraints of reading the Other and to the inscriptions of difference (Saracens, antiquity) in epic and romance texts. Steele provides ample theoretical discussion of the problem of otherness and he examines the *Chanson de Roland*, Beroul's *Tristan* and several of Chrétien's romances. His corpus, nevertheless, does not address the question of Byzantium.

Nadia Maria El Cheikh-Saliba's *Byzantium viewed by the Arabs* (1994) deals with the image of the Byzantines as it is reflected in the Arab sources. It is useful for my purpose to see how the same object receives multiple interpretations, according to a specific perspective. The question of travel Eastward, however, an essential part of my discussion, was not pertinent to this dissertation. I must also mention that another dissertation presumably coming after my own is currently being written addressing the question of Byzantine female scholarship and the relationship of women to knowledge, as they are represented in Medieval French literature. This dissertation is not, however, treating the topic in light of exoticism.

Besides these theses, other scholarship has proven useful in limited ways. Pierre Martino's *L'Orient dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle* devotes its introduction to the Middle Ages but remains very general. The work itself is quite dated (a 1970 reprint of a 1906 edition). It speaks mostly of the *paysage exotique* and of Saracens. There is only a brief mention of Byzantium.

In "The Western Image of Byzantium in the Middle Ages" (1974), F.P Pickering speaks of anti-Byzantine propaganda, of a sense of guilt rather than fascination concerning the *Pèlerinage*. He argues that historical facts are reversed in order to serve a particular purpose, which is to mock Easterners. Although enlightening from a historical point of view, the article appears biased and superficial in its treatment of literature, and I refer to it in opposition to its conclusion. In "La vogue de l'Orient dans la littérature Occidentale du Moyen Age" (1977), Jean Richard places the Orient in the mythical realm of the marvelous. It addresses the question of Constantinople very briefly. It lists a few works but remains extremely sketchy.

An indispensable work is *Heroes and Saracens* by Norman Daniel (1984). The author, a historian, displays keen insights in his depiction of the Saracens of the French *chansons de geste*. He argues that the French poets take no real interest in the Saracens or Moors, but that they see them as an extension of the Western world. I examine to what extent this theory applies to the Byzantines in the epic as well as other genres.

Catherine Croizy-Naquet discussed the role of the city in her useful *Thèbes, Troie et Carthage: Poétique de la ville antique dans le roman antique au XVIIe siècle* (1994). She offers a complete and detailed comparative study but the matter of alterity is neglected. In the article "Encore une fois Chrétien de Troyes et la matière byzantine"

(1995), Krijnie N. Ciggaar discusses the importance of a historical event: the women's revolution during the reign of Empress Zoe as it is portrayed in *Cligès*. This is an intelligent discussion on East-West politics linked to the role of women in Byzantine society and I found it especially inspirational.

East-West tensions are also Sharon Kinoshita's subject in "The Poetics of Translatio: French-Byzantine Relations in Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès*" (1996). Kinoshita provides a historical perspective pointing to how a masculinized French feudal world is in constant competition with the "effeminate" Greeks. However, in spite of her numerous insights, this article deals only in part with the issue of alterity, particularly in its relation to gender. The question of the "Orient" is also not addressed.

Thus, although there have been a number of historical studies concerning diverse aspects of my topic, none has offered a complete study of the treatment of Byzantines as the exotics of fiction or even in chronicles produced in the French Middle Ages. My intent is to fill this gap by linking several elements, such as history, theoretical considerations on the question of exoticism and otherness with its political undertones and its relation to Said's theory of Orientalism, as well as a discussion of literary texts and their representation of Byzantine men and women, the ideal of Empire, geography, and architectural esotericism.

My corpus consists of texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In discussing these texts, I refer to the Eastern Christians as "Byzantines," in order to imply a specific medieval culture, differentiated from the classical pagan one, whereas my texts regularly refer to them as "Greeks", recalling their ancient (and rival) ancestry. I use the terms "Franks" or "French" to speak of the Western Christians. I also refer extensively to

seminal Latin works that chronicle embassies or Crusades to Byzantium from a contemporary as well as a much earlier period, in order to provide a historical framework and to demonstrate the general consensus concerning the "Byzantine experience" of the West. Such is the case of the tenth-century work of Bishop Luidprand of Cremona, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*,⁹ which describes his disenchantment in the Byzantine court after having been sent as envoy of Otto I to Emperor Nicephoros Phocas. I also allude to sources such as Odo of Deuil's twelfth-century chronicle *De profectione Ludovici in orientem*¹⁰ (a Crusader's account of Constantinople and its inhabitants), as well as Fulcher of Charter's account of the First Crusade¹¹.

From the *chansons de geste* corpus I include *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*.¹² In this epic situated during the Second Crusade, Charlemagne and his peers are seen visiting Constantinople, where they are hosted by Byzantine Emperor Hugon. At first bedazzled in a spinning Byzantine palace, the French knights then boast of extraordinary feats, which they must eventually perform. With the help of Christ, they show their superiority over the Byzantines with military action, thus forcing the Byzantine Emperor acknowledge his defeat. This is an exceptionally

⁹ Luidprand of Cremona, *The Works of Luidprand of Cremona*, trans. F.A. Wright (London, G. Routledge and Sons, 1930).

¹⁰ Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici in orientem*, ed. and trans. Virginia Gingerich Berry (New York, Columbia University Press, 1948).

¹¹ Martha Evelyn McGinty, *Fulcher of Charter: Chronicle of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941).

¹² Madeleine Tyssens, *Le voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople* (Gand, E. Story-Scientia, 1978). I will be using the term *Pèlerinage* throughout this thesis, as I believe that the premise of Charlemagne's journey was supposedly religious.

important work, as it offers scenes of violence, pillage and conquest of Constantinople on the part of the Franks, as I will later show in this thesis.

Girart de Roussillon,¹³ *Florence de Rome*¹⁴ and *La Chanson d'Antioche*¹⁵ depict the Byzantine world only in episodes. In *Girart*, the protagonist and the French King Charles Martel visit Constantinople to witness with their own eyes the splendors that they have heard of, and to request the Byzantine princesses in marriage. Here, too, a magic palace, and an apparent magician-king amaze them. In *Florence*, a beautiful Eastern city and a pretentious king provide a pretext for the narrative, although it quickly evolves into an abduction tale unrelated to the initial Byzantine setting. In *Antioche*, I will concern myself with the account of the Frankish camp outside the walls of Constantinople during the first Crusade, forbidden to enter the sacred Eastern city.

The Romances are represented firstly by Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès*.¹⁶ Here the East/ West dynamics are crucial. Byzantine intrigue, usurpers, and deception are components of Chrétien's tale. The young Byzantine prince Alexander travels to the court of King Arthur in the West to learn the art of chivalry. There he marries the beautiful Soredamors and they produce Cligès, to whom the throne of Constantinople rightfully belongs after the death of his uncle Alis, who had usurped it in the first place

¹³ Micheline de Combarieu du Grès et Gérard Gouran, *Girart de Roussillon Chanson de Girart de Roussillon*, (Paris, Livre de Poche, 1993).

¹⁴ A. Wallenskold, *Florence de Rome: Chanson d'aventure du premier quart du XIIIe siècle* (Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1909).

¹⁵ Paulin Paris. *La Chanson d'Antioche* (Paris, J. Techener Libraire, 1948).

¹⁶ Chrétien de Troyes, *Oeuvres Complètes*,. Philippe Walter, ed. (Paris, Gallimard, Editions de la Pléiade, 1994).

from his brother Alexander. Alis does not keep his word, decides to marry, and the triangle Alis- Fénice- Cligès is formed. With the ingenuity and the magic of nurse Thessala and the architect Jehan, Cligès is victorious, as he wins over Fénice and is finally proclaimed Emperor. Gautier d'Arras's *Eracle*¹⁷ also has a historical basis. It constitutes a literary version of the actual battle of the Persian king Chosroès against the Emperor Heraclius, while casting the young fictional Byzantine Emperor Eracle in something of a saintly light: Eracle is born of a miraculous conception, he is righteous, and he possesses three supernatural qualities, which will help him attain social ascension. We are provided with elaborate descriptions of Constantinople, and in the end, Eracle saves the Empire from the Persians.

Aimon de Varennes's *Florimont*¹⁸ is the tale of the grandson of Alexander the Great. The narrative takes place mainly in Philippopolis in the medieval province of Thrace (modern day Plovdiv, Bulgaria), and the narrator is greatly preoccupied by the similarity this love story bears to his own. The tale was made known to him while he was a traveler in those remote lands, where his questionable knowledge of Greek is also revealed. Florimont defeats the king of Hungary, kills a giant, and is rejected by a silent fairy before he meets the educated Greek princess Romadanaple, the ideal woman and link in the imperial lineage.

¹⁷ Gautier d'Arras, *Eracle*, Guy Raynaud De Lage, ed. (Paris, Librairie Honoré Champion, 1976).

¹⁸ Aimon de Varennes, *Florimont*, ed. Alfons Hilka (Gottingen, 1933).

*Partonopeus de Blois*¹⁹ relates a story quite similar to *Florimont*. In this tale, the French are considered descendants of the Trojans, and are therefore archetypal enemies of the Byzantines. The French Count Partonopeus, while under the spell of the erudite Byzantine princess Mélior, is transported by means of a magic boat to the strange and beautiful land of Constantinople. There he is welcomed in a mysterious palace by the invisible princess, who shares her bed with the youth, but forbids him to see her until he reaches adulthood. Partonopeus disobeys the princess, and he is forced to flee Constantinople. As a result, he goes mad and is finally rescued in time to compete for Mélior's hand in a tournament, where all Christians and Muslims have equal opportunities to win. After many hardships, Partonopeus wins *incognito* and becomes ruler of Constantinople.

I also include examples of the roman d'antiquité: the *Roman de Troie*²⁰ of Benoît de Sainte-Maure and the *Roman d'Alexandre*²¹. Again, there are similarities with the other narratives. In *Troie*, Trojans fight the Greeks, exotic finery that was a staple in Byzantine high society is described, and magical powers of Eastern women are alluded to. The *Roman d'Alexandre* is of particular interest, as it combines in the persona of the warrior Macedonian king the autocratic ideal, as well as the knightly qualities of the Franks. It is also important because of its portrayal of the marvelous East in a larger than

¹⁹ Joseph Gildea, *Partonopeu de Blois: A French Romance of the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia, Villanova University Press, 1967).

²⁰ Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le Roman de Troie*, ed. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Françoise Vielliard (Paris, Livre de Poche, 1998).

²¹ Alexandre de Paris, *Le Roman d'Alexandre*, ed. E.C. Armstrong et al., (Paris, Livre de Poche, 1994).

life scale, transcending the boundaries of the Cosmos and raising the questions of mappings, history, time and space in an era of theocracy.

Finally, I examine chronicles such as Robert de Clari's and Geoffroy de Villehardouin's accounts of the Fourth Crusade's sack of Constantinople, both entitled *La Conquête de Constantinople*²². During the end of the twelfth century, the notion of history is not well defined, and a chain of causes and effects is often confused with a detailed recording of events or memoirs. While Villehardouin's sophisticated record of the "official" history makes an attempt at veracity, the soldier Clari is more concerned with hearsay and miracle accounts that were commonplace among the Byzantines. However, in both cases the chroniclers' selective memory and deliberate silences attest to the subjective nature of their writings. Despite the pretense of a *de visu* account, the chroniclers saw what they were psychologically disposed to see and their memoirs remain works of fiction.²³ These two chronicles, as well as works such as *Antioche* and especially the *Pèlerinage* are specifically geared to justifying conquest and aggression, and function on the level of anti-Byzantine propaganda. Thus, they provide the key articulation and proof to my entire argument of a political subtext within the medieval French literary works.

Yet, while negativity is imperative in the rhetoric of conquest and disempowerment, many or most of the French authors fail to remain consistent in their

²² Geoffroi de Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Edmond Faral (Paris, Belles Lettres, 1938-39) and Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris, Honoré Champion, 1974).

²³ See, for example, J. Dufournet, *Les Ecrivains de la IVe Croisade: Villehardouin et Clari* (Paris, SEDES, 1973).

portrayal of the negative. Within the narratives, even the most seemingly hostile, there are always examples of sameness with the Latin Christians. In works such as the *Pèlerinage*, we see the Byzantines as potential competitors, turned into mortal enemies, and then to subdued "friends" and "equals"; in *Girart* they are allies turned into demonic magicians, and then back to familial alliances; in *Cligès* they are blood relatives turned into deceitful usurpers; in Villehardouin and Clari they are fellow Christians despised for their corruption, yet secretly "admired" for their finery, so much so, that what started as a Crusade would end in the conquest of 1204.

B. Defining the "Byzantine Exotic".

1. Medieval Byzantium.

Ancient Greece's defining role in Western civilization seems paradoxical in view of medieval Byzantium's place within a discursive triangle formed by Otherness/ Exoticism/ Orientalism. How is Byzantium, as a post-Hellenistic culture, "other", or "exotic", or "Oriental" in the context of the Frankish texts of my corpus? During the Middle Ages, Byzantium enjoyed the special status of being at the crossroads of epochs and geographies. It blended aesthetic and ideological canons of classical Greco-Roman antiquity with Christian theocracy and imperial autocracy. In terms of location,

Byzantium belonged to the *Orient*²⁴ compared to Western Christendom, the Eastern portion of an immense Empire, on the fringe of the despised Muslim world, but also as a passage to a mythical East. Yet, although the Byzantines did not connote the archetypal Other in the way the Saracens did²⁵, they often served as surrogates for the latter, *a priori* deemed wrongful, suspect, thus further rendering their case intriguing because of its ambivalence, viewed either as the "evil twin" of the Latin West, or at best its wealthier, more sophisticated half. Indeed, as replacements for the Saracens and as Others, they were detached from what constituted the Frankish identity and psyche. "De cet Autre, writes Kristeva, un espace se délimite qui sépare l'abject de ce qui sera un sujet et ses objets".²⁶ On the other hand, the Byzantines possessed many redeeming qualities, such as their Christian (albeit "schismatic") faith, as well as their appreciation for finery, both of which were shared by the Franks.

From Homer to Herodotus to Ktesias to Euripides, the Greeks constituted the curious observers of strange lands and peoples, especially those of Asia. Historically speaking, they invented the Other within the Western context. They even invented a

²⁴ I use the term *Orient* very carefully. I am referring to Edward Said's *Orient*, an artificial construct of the West, which dictates an entire state of being for peoples located in the East, characterized by softness, effeminacy, duplicity, and passivity. This state is the projection of the Westerners' fears, desires, misinterpretations of a world geographically, culturally, and spiritually distanced from their own. See Edward Said, *op.cit.* I refer to the unique situation of Byzantium, which was indeed accused of perfidy, military inadequacy and despotism by the West, thereby situating it in the *Orient* of Said, but which was also, nevertheless, Christian, thus reflecting some of the spiritual anxieties and historical experiences of the Franks.

²⁵ See Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1984).

²⁶ Kristeva 18.

quasi-pejorative word to designate it/him: *xenos*.²⁷ The Other was therefore perceived *via negationis* as consisting of heterogeneous elements whose only common trait was that they were not Greek.²⁸ Despite a claim to objectivity and universality initiated by the exposure to foreign cultural elements, Greek perceptions of the Other remained negative and intolerant generalizations, appearing either threatening, ridiculous or contemptible.

An impressive change in this mentality of the Greek world slowly started to take place after Christianity's divorce with paganism. As early as the fifth century, the Byzantines, or the *Romaioi*, as they preferred to be called as continuators of the Roman Empire (to be distinguished from the pagan *Hellenes*), saw no direct historical continuity between the ten-century-long period that was eventually labeled Byzantium and ancient Greece.²⁹ There was no Greek ethnos to speak of, Hellenic pride belonged to the past and the Byzantines, noted for their racial tolerance, provided all inhabitants of Byzantium spoke the *lingua franca* of Hellenistic Greek, accepted orthodoxy and the imperial autocrat, re-invented themselves as the new chosen people of God.³⁰ In the intellectual sphere, the Byzantines became familiar with the classics and acquired a

²⁷ Although similar in meaning, *xenos* ("foreign") is to be distinguished from the non-pejorative *heteros* ("other") and the more neutral *allos* ("different").

²⁸ According to Robert Browning, the characteristics defining sameness among the Greeks were common descent, language, religion and way of life. See Robert Browning, "Greeks and Others from Antiquity to the Renaissance", *History, Language and Literacy in the Byzantine World*, ed. Robert Browning (Northampton, Variorum Reprints, 1989) 3.

²⁹ On Byzantinism and the identity of the Byzantines, see Cyril Mango, "Byzantinism and Romantic Hellenism", *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965) 29-43; Romilly Jenkins, "Byzantium and Byzantinism", *Lectures in Memory of Louise Taft Semple*, eds. D.W. Bradeen, C.G. Boutler et als, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967) 95-132.

³⁰ Mango 30.

"Hellenistic" education for political and social advancement, at once preserving in their own works the subtlety of the ancients, but cautious towards the "dubious" ethics of pagan writings.³¹ By the twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries Byzantium was well defined as an all-embracing heavenly autocracy located in the East, and all who were outside were unimportant. Since their Western Christian brothers did not speak their language, or accept their emperor and their church, the Byzantines also considered themselves as the opposite of the Latin West, which was all Frankish to them without distinction, hence barbarian, both in the classical and contemporary sense. This attitude was to a large degree due to the Crusades, which intensified and legitimized the use of violence on the part of both the Latins and the Byzantines.³²

If the Greeks defined the Other in classical and Hellenistic times, in the medieval French texts studied here, their estranged sons and daughters will become shaded by the mark of being "Other." In the Frankish mind, the distinction between Greek (the pejorative "Grezois") and Byzantine is not made, perhaps because the new self-image of the Byzantines was never understood as a contrast to the pagan classical age. Moreover, if this blurry identity of the "Greek" Byzantines between Christianity and paganism was conveniently left unexplored, then significant grounds for equating the Byzantines with another "polytheistic" entity, the Muslims, could surface. It is not by accident that the

³¹ See Jenkins 146. Indeed, the Byzantines studied classics such as Herodotus and Thucydides, in order to master the Ionic and Attic dialects, and to be able to quote extensively passages, as proof of their erudition and their good standing.

³² Cyril Mango argues that as soon as the "Byzantine world fell apart, so Hellenism was reborn"(33). After the Fourth Crusade in 1204, certain Byzantine intellectuals started calling themselves Hellenes, according to the scholar, impacting the people very little. Further, he adds, "The handful of Byzantine neo-hellenists was eventually absorbed into the main stream of the Italian Renaissance".

latter are described as worshipping the trinity Mahomet, Tervagent, and Apollin, no doubt echoing the Greek god of the sun Apollo (an implication of the autocrat as an Oriental sun-god, perhaps?), thus twice removing the Byzantines from any legitimate claim to divine Providence.

Yet, the common spiritual aspirations between the Byzantines and the Franks could not easily be denied, as edifying hagiographical literature informs us.³³ As far as the Franks were concerned, if the Byzantines were to be understood and especially represented in genres such as the chronicle or the *chanson de geste* as different, not in a non-judgmental fashion, but as their puzzling alter ego, or even their threatening spiritual brothers, then they could be rendered worthy of the attacks against them by the Franks. This performance of othering may not have been free of moral implications for the Franks, who saw in the Byzantine version of the Other "a psychic projection of the self."³⁴ Rather than stressing their sameness, however, it appeared more useful for the purposes of the Frankish authors to focus on the differences between the two.

Indeed, the Byzantines as Others serve a specific function in Medieval French discourse. Their lands and their riches constitute the *topos* of the fantasy of conquest, a fetish even for the Western Franks. By othering Byzantium, no actual profound religious or cultural difference is ever offered; rather, an ideological and political imperative is fulfilled, thus linking the Byzantine persona to the propaganda machine of the Crusades.

³³ See my Conclusion.

³⁴ Richard Kearny, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (London, Routledge, 2003) 77.

2. *The Exotic.*

Etymologically speaking, the term "exoticism" designates the peripheral, the outer, the foreign, the distant. The exotic also infers a notion of the desirable, the interesting and the curious, but it does not necessarily warrant complete investigation. In other words, the exotic may not be deemed worthy of reflection in depth. There is an innate quality of superficiality attached to it, as it is primarily conceived of to please, to entertain, to arouse, to sexually excite, especially because of its veiled imagery. This quasi-familiarity/ quasi-impenetrability of the exotic is directly related to physical distance, as the exotic is normally located "elsewhere".

Thus, the exotic becomes the ideal vague setting for tales of strange lands and peoples, as well as for mysteries and marvels. "Strangeness" is another ambiguous notion afoot here. Indeed, Byzantine mannerisms, customs, language, and even physical appearance seemed "strange" and were, therefore, deliberately portrayed as imbued with difference, so as to imply the questionable moral disposition of the Byzantines. Through exaggeration and falsification, the Byzantines become bizarre and eccentric. These tactics made it much easier for the Franks to frown upon strange Byzantine practices if they viewed themselves in opposition to them; it would also appear morally sound if their violent actions resulted from this supposed opposition, and not their expansionist hopes. Though the East- namely Asia- typically exemplifies what is exotic, Byzantium is also a good example of this type of vagueness. Alain Labbé comments: "...l'auteur de *Girart* [...] n'a pas craint de clore l'épisode de Constantinople sur cette aura de pure féerie. Au-delà de l'étroite frange d'Orient que connaissent bien les pèlerins, les

marchands et les croisés, on sent là l'imaginaire médiéval toujours prêt à susciter sur ses confins les merveilles, les monstres et les prodiges."³⁵ Labbé then calls the Byzantine world "un horizon chimérique", no doubt in line with Jacques Le Goff's earlier treatment of the East for which he coined the term "un horizon onirique".³⁶ The resident of this distant land is an unknown, perhaps a monster of sorts. Although Byzantines were not fundamentally different from the Franks enough to deserve the epithet "monstrous", their remote geography and their cultural differences with the West certainly made them appear exotic, and that exotic at times teetered dangerously at the confines of where the monstrous was located.

Defining the exotic in the Middle Ages is a difficult task, in part because it is a modern concept. Further, it connotes the elusive and the ungraspable, either in a constructive or a negative fashion. According to Kateryna Olijnyk Longley, "Driving current notions of the *exotic* are fascination and desire: the desire to enter forbidden territory, whether in the imagination or physically, to partake of otherness and to stake a claim".³⁷ The exotic first triggers fascination, because of its novelty, its peculiarity, its mystique. This fascination with new objects, peoples, and landscapes turns into infatuation, to obsession, to fetishism. As a result, a desire of penetration, of conquest

³⁵ Alain Labbé, "L'espace littéraire et politique de *Girart de Roussillon*: Une géographie héritée de l'histoire et investie par la poésie", *Provinces, régions, terroirs du Moyen Age de la réalité à l'imaginaire* (Nancy, Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1993) 316.

³⁶ Jacques le Goff, "L'Occident médiéval et l'océan Indien", *Pour un autre moyen Age: Temps, travail, et culture en Occident* (Paris, 1977) 280-298.

³⁷ See Longley's article "Fabricating Otherness: Demidenko and Exoticism", *New Exoticisms: Changing Patterns in the Construction of Otherness*, ed. Isabel Santaolalla (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2000) 23.

and of appropriation becomes manifest. The notion of power is inherent in that of exoticism; the observer scrutinizes an object of his/ her fancy deemed excessively glamorous, and obsesses over its actual or imaginary capture.³⁸ Indeed, these facets of the exotic may apply to the case of the Franks, who traveled to Byzantium in times of political tensions leading to French visions of penetrating, conquering and colonizing the wealthy and mysterious Eastern Empire, an accomplishment of the Fourth Crusade. The works of my corpus thus offer an imaginative representation of the Byzantine exotic. The desire of actual conquest was represented in the chronicle and somewhat in the *chanson de geste*, which at times treated the subject in a parodic or even burlesque fashion, as in the *Pèlerinage*; the romances generally viewed the exotic as an opportunity for escapism. Thus, the exotic element of these works is one of "fictionalized truth"³⁹, dependent upon the "author's imaginative filling in of the plot"⁴⁰.

The exotic usually implies the mysterious, reaching its fullest potential when it is veiled and concealed. Reality indeed disrupts the workings of the exotic. In *Partonopeus de Blois*, for instance, the princess Mélior loses much of her allure when her face is exposed and her "magical powers" are explained as the result of her fine Byzantine education. The Dame of the Ylle Celee disappears in *Florimont* once the secret of their

³⁸ Ibid., 29.

³⁹ See Ron Shapiro, "In Defense of Exoticism", *New Exoticisms: Changing Patterns in the Construction of Otherness*, ed. Isabel Santaolalla (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2000) 45.

⁴⁰ Christopher Norris, *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1992) 55. Although the politics of this essay are very specific and slightly off-center with respect to my text, an author's initiative stance to provide meaningful silences or excessive and imaginary detail, in order to make a certain point, to accentuate or to down-play his emotions or reactions at a particular moment of the narration is also quite common in the Middle Ages.

liaison is no longer kept and society is made aware of her ethereal persona. In *Girart*, as soon as the Byzantine emperor ceased his strange tricks, he was no longer a point of fascination for the Franks, who then proceeded to conduct their business with the autocrat. Even in Robert de Clari's *Conquête de Constantinople*, once the "exotic" church of Saint Sophia with its immense and miraculous, illness-curing columns, was seized from the Byzantines and placed under the care of the Franks, reality was bound to dismiss any such myth, although we are never admittedly told what the French discovered after the conquest.⁴¹ What we do know in all these cases is that the Franks saw in the Byzantine exotic—be it luxuries, technology, knowledge, exhibition of mystical powers—not only an invitation to an obsessive Western gaze, but also an opportunity for self-evaluation and introspection. The Byzantine "exotic" itself awakened the awareness of the Franks as to their own systems of values, aesthetics and politics by mirroring their projected desires.

When the merchants, pilgrims and the Crusaders traveled to Byzantium, they found a culture similar to their own but different in important ways.⁴² Ethnocentrism is central to the understanding of the exotic. In the medieval French texts I examine, the

⁴¹ On the connection of the marvelous with the exotic see Jean-Marc Moura, *Lire L'Exotisme* (Paris, DUNOD, 1992).

⁴² See Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium and Interaction of the "Sibling" Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance (300-1600)*. Krijnie N. Ciggaar also examines the question of differences in ecclesiastic practice between East and West: "The average Western Christian, however, was hardly able to notice the difference in theology between East and West, except that he could see that the Orthodox clergy could be canonically married and that there was a different religious lifestyle[...] The Eastern church had preserved traditions belonging to the early days of Christendom[...] Laywomen were allowed less freedom than their Western counterparts who could enter the sanctuary of the church where the altar stood." (*Western Travelers to Constantinople*, E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1996) 51.

observing Franks are the norm by which the observed Byzantines are judged. As Easterners, the latter imply *a priori* peculiarity and alienation. The realm of the exotic is the East, because it connotes disorder, enigma, emotion; on the other hand, the West is a place of moderation, control, and balance.⁴³ Cultural differences to be taken into consideration are factors such as food, speech, and dress. Some of these factors can be applied to Byzantium as proof of exoticism. Let us examine them.

While cultures are often labeled exotic for their food preferences, the feast prepared for the Franks by the Byzantines in the *Pèlerinage* pointed to the noble status of the host rather than to his exotic persona. In fact, the banquet was standard epic fare.

When the Franks sat at King Hugon's table:

Nule rein que il demandent ne lur fud deveez:
 Asez unt venesun de cerfs e de sengler
 E unt grues e gautes e pouns enpeverez.
 A espendant lur portent le vin e le clarez,
 E cantent e vielent e rotent cil juglur.
 Franceis se desportent par grant noblité (XXII)

In reality, Crusaders traveling to Byzantium enjoyed olive oil in abundance (scarce in North-Western Europe), feasted on honey and nuts, and ate fish unknown to them in order to stay alive.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Luidprand mentions his disgust with the Byzantine diet, which was drenched in disagreeable fish oils, and which also consisted

⁴³ See John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge and London, Harvard University Press, 1981) 35.

⁴⁴ See Ciggaar, *op cit.*, esp. p.45.

of resin-flavored and watery wine.⁴⁵ The Byzantines' preference of these foods must have suggested to the Franks their strange nature. So while the account of Luidprand points to the Byzantine exotic disposition, the *chanson de geste* focuses only on the mutually accepted by both cultures "elegant" feast.

Another parameter is speech. To the foreign ear, all other peoples' languages appear inarticulate and incomprehensible, the speech of a barbarian.⁴⁶ It was Robert de Clari's linguistic ineptitude towards the Greek language, which led him to confuse the Greek name "Βουκολέων" for the imperial palace in Constantinople with "Bouke de Lion", i.e., the palace of the Lion's Mouth.⁴⁷ Linguistic discrepancies are also a key issue in *Florimont*.⁴⁸ Anthime Fourier remarks: "Toujours est-il qu'Aimon de Varennes aime à faire étalage de sa science linguistique et qu'il s'adonne volontiers au petit jeu des "étymologies".⁴⁹ At times he is accurate:

Cacopedie m'apeleiz;
Cacopedie en grejois
Dit *mauvais garson* en fransois. (4734-36)

Other times, not:

[...]Qu'il fust Eleneos nomez,

⁴⁵ Op. cit. 12. See also E. Jeanselme and Oeconomos, "Food and Culinary Recipes of the Byzantines", *Proceedings of the Third International Congress of the History of Medicine* (1922) 155-168.

⁴⁶ Let us not neglect the fact that the ancient Greeks labeled as "barbarians" all foreigners whose sole distinction was the incomprehensibility of their speech, which sounded like inarticulate cries: ba-ba-ba.

⁴⁷ Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople* (Paris, Champion, 1924) 226.

⁴⁸ For a complete study on the pseudo-Greek of Aimon de Varennes, see Jean Psichari, "Le Roman de *Florimont*. Contribution à l'histoire littéraire, étude des mots grecs dans ce roman", *Etudes romanes dédiées à Gaston Paris* (Paris, Emile Bouillon, 1891).

⁴⁹ Anthime Fourier, *Le Courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Age* (Paris, Nizet, 1960) 482.

Car eleneos en grezois
 Dissoit Florimont en fransois. (1890-93)

In fact, ελεεινός signifies the humble and the lowly, far from what Aimon had in mind. In addition to language, proper names confer an exotic flavor: Partonopeus, Aliodas, Eléminos, Athenais, Paridès, Fénice, Alis, Alexandre, Romadanaple. Likewise for place names: le Bras Saint Jorge, Phelippople, Macédonie, Andrenople, Pont, Grisople, Coustantinoble, to mention a few, as they appear in the numerous texts I study.

Finally we come to the consideration of dress. I shall offer one example, that of Urake (a gallicized form of the Spanish Uraca), princess Mélior's sister in *Partonopeus de Blois*. For Jacqueline De Weever, this Byzantine noblewoman could have been a Saracen woman: "The East is affirmed in many ways. The trope of the Wealth of the East intrudes here in the description of the Saracen woman's dress-gold and silver, garnets and sapphires, and rich embroideries. Enide's dress and cloak in *Erec and Enide* are also richly embroidered with gems as is that of the Byzantine princess Urake in *Partonopeus de Blois*. While gems usually have a positive significance in medieval texts [...] in the case of the Saracen woman such is not the case."⁵⁰ De Weever believes this is so because the ornate appearance of Urake's dress adds to her sexual attractiveness within the Frankish court. However, we might also adduce the inflated and grandiose character of the East present in the dress itself, exotic in its provocative excess.

Medieval Byzantium provided a forum for the artistic freedom of the French, through its connotations of the exotic. This term can also imply the projection of the

⁵⁰ Jaqueline de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*. (New York and London, Garland Publishing, 1998) 30.

Franks' noblest hopes and wildest dreams within the literary context. At first, actual Byzantium was composed of only unattainable sites, but the long and slow Western designs on the biblical and wondrous East initiated the process of European expansionism, thus placing the Eastern Empire officially in the fabricated sphere of the Oriental, especially with the Crusades. The Byzantine Orient, this fictitious Western construct consisting of projected desires and the fantasy of control and conquest in the Eastern Roman Empire, was to be redefined by the West via colonization.

The concept of "Exoticism" operates at multiple levels here. For the Frank of the Middle Ages, the Byzantine "exotic" was the sum of many cultural, geographical, linguistic, political, artistic and theological differences, at times perceived as dubious or at least meritorious of mention, and at times as a vehicle for a specific rhetoric of conquest among the Franks, according to certain literary genres.⁵¹ Among the Byzantines, whose recollection of a significant past inspired them to preserve literary gems of classical antiquity, it also brought about an attitude of cultural snobbery toward the Franks. Further, Latins and Greeks had very different interpretations of the spiritual meaning of the city, and of the political place of Rome and Constantinople: as the City of God according to Saint Augustine for the former, or as a Platonic reflection of the Kingdom of God for the latter. The point of reference in terms of spiritual hegemony was to be Rome, embraced by the Franks. However, massive migrations to the East because of the Crusades rather than pilgrimages, or other forms of travel (by ambassadors, merchants, artists, with movement in one direction or another), initiated a

real awareness of the Eastern exotic element, initially Byzantine, if only with respect to geography. Thus, a slow shifting of "centrality" resulted from this outward movement, resulting in a new anxiety that was reflected in the aesthetic representation of this monumental change. The movement of Westerners eastward to a land of mystery, marvel, strangeness, and incomprehensibility, but also of beauty, eroticism and luxuries was then interpreted through an array of new Byzantine images. Hugon becomes the symbol of the Byzantine imperial ideal in the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, the invisible princess Mélior personifies the triumph of her sex's acquisition of power through knowledge and education in *Partonopeus de Blois*. In *Florimont*, the lover is not permitted to speak. As soon as he breaks his vow of silence, his beloved disappears, echoing the practice of the Byzantines, which maintained women secluded in private quarters, and therefore neither to be seen nor spoken to by the curious Western knight.

As candidates for the exotic, Byzantines were seen at best as mysterious and attractive, at worst it is the embodiment of the suspicious and the questionably normative. Neither understood nor appreciated by the West, the East eventually developed into a marvelous yet suspect "Orient". In Medieval French literature the "Orient" was a projection of the West's desires as well as fears. It was connected with uncharted territories on medieval world maps. It was also a construct of artificiality.

3. Orientalism.

⁵¹ I am mostly referring to Crusade chronicles and *chansons de geste*, especially the *Pèlerinage de*

Edward Said's analysis of Orientalism is foundational in developing new theoretical tools to read the representation of the so-called Orient by the West. Although the theory of Orientalism is closely connected to postcolonialism (that is, a group of social, political, and economic practices which arise in response and resistance to colonialism, against the preservation of the assumed superiority of the colonizing force, especially of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe), it raises important questions for medievalists. Orientalism, as Said determines it, was already in existence in the Middle Ages. Jacqueline De Weever writes: "In these portraits [of Saracen women] lie the seeds of what will become the West's response to the East, the makings of an Orientalism as defined by the West. The process of the definition does not begin in the nineteenth century, at the height of empire, so well documented by Edward Said, nor in the fifteenth century, as Kevin Brownlee suggests. Rather, the process begins here, in the twelfth-century epic as the Franks, made by the poets to represent Western civilization, encounter the Saracens [or in our case, the Byzantines], also made to represent Eastern civilization, and seek to define themselves against the unknown in terms of opposites, in appearance, in religion, in destiny."⁵² David Townsend also speaks of a medieval Orientalism in a discussion on the *Alexandreis* of Walter of Châtillon: "Insofar as the poem resonates against the controversies surrounding the French prosecution of the Crusades, we can read it as one of medieval high culture's principal

Charlemagne.

⁵² DeWeever 140-141. Parentheses are mine.

moments to the long history of Orientalism."⁵³ Later, he adds: " Much textual evidence suggests that this discourse has already attained considerable impetus and efficiency before the age of modern empires or, indeed, before the European onslaught of the Americas."⁵⁴

The Orient according to Said is a construct of the West and the East fails to recognize itself in it. It is in this binary that Byzantium is caught. This, too, will echo the colonial projects of the Franks, and describes a specific view of a manufactured Orient (in our case, Byzantium) by the (Frankish) West, characterized by idleness, softness, weakness, eroticism, and wealth. Excess plays an important role in this image of the Byzantine Orient. In fact, this may be the key term to understanding Western views of Byzantium, a land of excess in all manners related to pleasure and consumption, but also to delicacy and refinement, hence effeminacy.

Indeed, the Byzantines were viewed as "Oriental" because of their allegedly soft, effeminate nature. Luidprand claims the Byzantines wear womens' purple clothes and bonnets; Odo says that they are sneaky, vengeful, wicked, short and lazy. The laziness motif continues in the *Pèlerinage*, as well as in the *Roman d'Alexandre*, where Aristotle is portrayed casually stretched out on a couch while conversing in Alexander's tent; the same image of the man on the couch re-appears in *Girart*, reminding the audience of the early Byzantine episode of the chanson. The *topos* of the deceitful Byzantine Greeks is

⁵³ David Townsend, "Sex and the Single Amazon in the Twelfth-Century Latin Epic", *The Tongue of the Fathers: Gender and Ideology in Twelfth-Century Latin*, eds. David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) 139.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 153.

repeated in romances such as *Cligès*, *Partonopeus*, *Troie*, as well as in Clari and Villehardouin. Finally, the poor military performance of the Byzantines is commonplace in the chronicles but also in *Florence de Rome*. The Westerners' travels eastward to Byzantium endowed them with new knowledge, but they did not dismiss their prejudices concerning the Orient in its entirety. For the Crusaders especially of the Fourth Crusade, Byzantium fit into the Western designs of a long and slow process of expansionism, imperialism, and colonization.

Said offers additional cultural clichés of the Orient: despotism, splendor, and sensuality (4). I find these characteristics are echoed in several texts of my corpus. In the epic *Girart de Roussillon*, a Frankish feudal context is provided, wherein the mystique and the despotism of the Byzantine autocrat initially clashes with the brass French knights, but is soon reconciled, at an attempt at East/ West diplomacy. Robert de Clari's chronicle, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, in its characteristically colorful style describes the attractions of a splendid, magical Eastern city. Finally, the romance *Partonopeus de Blois* recounts the beauty of the Byzantine princess, a theme found throughout representations of the Other, including the Saracen Other. Indeed the ornate imperial figures, the memories of mythical treasures, and the descriptions of prophetic columns and talking statues of Byzantium account for what the "European" experience singles out as "Oriental". Further, Said states: "I shall be calling *Orientalism*, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in the Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also a place of Europe's richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of the deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In

addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience." (Said 1-2). The History of Classical Greece and later of the Crusades illustrates his statement as well.

In the context of deep-seated feelings of hatred towards the Saracen/Muslim, the depiction of a negative Byzantium on the part of the French was realized not only in the spirit of incomprehension, but also in that of rivalry between two Christian worlds. Ultimately, the French distinguished in Byzantium a variation of their own values, ethics, politics, and aesthetics. This variation was certainly distanced enough to provoke the astonishment, rejection, or envy of the Franks, but also close enough for them to examine with interest bizarre Byzantine particularities- whether actual or fantasized- by recognizing familiar patterns, social, artistic or otherwise. What French literary texts of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries portray as "Other" within the "matter" of Byzantium as different, is in fact a projection of a Western world in an Eastern setting that has been exoticized, "Orientalized". It is thus of a markedly different degree from the "othering" superimposed on the depiction of the feared Saracen, although even there, cultural transpositions of the self are known to take place.⁵⁵

Said views the Orient (Asia) in a binary opposition with the West (Europe), thus creating an entire discourse based on vocabulary, imagery, doctrine, etc. This geographical distinction places Byzantium in a problematic situation, since its location on either the European or the Asian continents could be argued. The case of Byzantium is especially perplexing, because it refuses to commit to any one world, remaining

⁵⁵ See Daniel, *op. cit.*

suspended between the two, perhaps of its own perceptions of ecumenical worldview and unity, thus aggravating the Western understanding of its identity, and putting its literary representation into question. As a partial solution to this dilemma, Byzantium is initially viewed as an Oriental Other, not so much because of its geography-- which is a man-made distinction if it divides the world into Orient and West- but because it has been "Orientalized" (Said 5). A crucial shift takes place during this process, removing Byzantium from the realm of the quintessentially ominous Other, and aligning it with the relatively benign exotic. This shift hopes to conclude with the absolute domestication of Byzantium.

Indeed the term "Orientalized" implies a relationship of power and dominance of the West over the fabricated Orient, especially pertinent to the study of Byzantium, due to the expansionist intentions of the West, as recorded in Crusade History: " The historical trajectory of the Western Middle Ages more generally represents a *longue durée* of "conquest and colonization" that gradually consolidated the geographical identity of Europe [...] The Crusades, in particular, were characterized by a "supra-national quality" that transcended linguistic differentiation and, when successful, symbolized the global triumph of Latin Christendom, the ascendancy of the "Latin race" (*gens latina*)."⁵⁶ This Latin race projected onto the Orient its desires, repressions, and investments (Said 8). The creation of Latin states in Byzantium according to the feudal prototype was a by-product of Western hegemony over the Orient (Said 7). In so doing,

the West established a "collective notion identifying "us" Europeans as against all "those" non-Europeans" (Said 7). This act reflects not only the political situation of the times, but most importantly, it describes the attitudes of the people who form national identities that differentiate them from the foreigner. By virtue of their alien quality, the Byzantine become the object of the Franks' gossip and mockery--quite literally in the pronouncement of the boastful *gabs* in the *Pèlerinage* or the description of the weak Byzantines in the *Chanson d'Antioche*. This obsession with "orientalizing" the Easterner lies at the root of all inaccuracies and exaggerations. "The more remote, the more marvelous, monstrous even, says Norman Daniel, the better the result on the psyche of a miracle-thirsty culture."⁵⁷

The distinction "us" / "them" parallels the "Occident"/ "Orient" opposition and is reflected in literature. Said states that: "Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; [...] It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts" (Said 12). These texts exist in larger contexts, historical in particular, and together they create "an alternative and novel world". Thus, a discourse of power is created on multiple levels: political power, as with any colonial establishment (particularly the Latin states); cultural power, as with orthodoxies and canons of taste and values (as in the case of Byzantium); moral power, as the us/ them

⁵⁶ Bruce Holsinger, "The Color of Salvation: Desire, Death, and the Second Crusade in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*", *The Tongues of the Father: Gender and Ideology in Twelfth-Century Latin*, eds. David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) 157.

⁵⁷ Norman Daniel 269.

distinction suggests (since a status of superiority is always implied on both sides). It is precisely this power of the West that justifies its wishful dominance of the myth- and-mystery- imbedded East and produces literary creativity. This production, attributed to the dynamic exchange between authors and political concerns, is a good thing, according to Said (14-5), as long as we investigate the connection between text and historical circumstances.

At the heart of this connection lies the problem of representation. Despite any writer's claim to veracity, when addressing the Orient, all omissions and distortions are far from innocent. One must not forget that the writer is an outsider to the Orient; his entire discourse is premised on exteriority. Therefore, the concept of artificiality and of a fictitious representation of the Orient by a non-Oriental dismisses any illusion of "truth". The audience must be suspicious at all times: "The things to look for are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation." (Said 21)

Even in cases of *de visu* accounts, a writer's imagination, personal agenda, as well as his *a priori* acceptance of the standardization of a marvelous, rich, vast, and beautiful Orient may be perceived when the aforementioned devices are taken into consideration. I will illustrate my point with an example. When Villehardouin describes the arrival of the Crusaders at Constantinople in his *Conquête de Constantinople*, he abandons his normally dry writing style, devoid of details, to adopt a descriptive tone and stress the picturesque:

Or poez savoir que mult esgardèrent Constantinople cil qui
onques mais ne l'avoient veue; que il ne povoient mie cuidier
que si riche ville peust estre en tot le monde com il virent ces

hauz murs et ces riches tours dont ele ere close tot entor à la reonde, et ces riches palais et ces hautes églises, dont il i avoit tant que nuls nel poist croire, se il ne le veist à l'oeil et le lonc et le lé de la ville que de totes les autres ere souveraine. Et sachiez que il n'i ot si hardi cui la chairs ne frénist, et ce ne fu mie merveille, que onques si granz affaires ne fu empris de nulle gent puis il menz fu estorez. (XXVI)

Within nine lines, he emphasizes the sight worth beholding by repeating the verb "voir" or referring to the act of seeing numerous times; the words "riche" and "merveille" are also repeated. The impact of the landscape, the palaces, the churches, and the city walls and towers on the chronicler and his crusading army (or so he claims) is one of grandeur and unimaginable riches. Only an expedition of equal magnitude could justify its presence in such great a city. In any case, what is worth noticing is how Constantinople fits perfectly into the pattern of an Orient made spectacle. The Orient is inviting to the Western soldier simply because it is there, tempting him with its riches, incriminating him even by blurring his better judgment. Whatever follows is not the Westerner's fault. Villehardouin is carefully planning his big moment, the description of the sack of the city. Even though we are already suspicious of the Crusaders' greed, we are not to hold them accountable, for they have been victims in a sort of unexplainable trance, perfectly in tune with Oriental fantasies. Villehardouin says nothing of the soldiers' thoughts; instead, he speaks only of their amazement in face of the spectacle, conveyed in terms of richness and vastness. By acknowledging the historical circumstances surrounding his text, we may comprehend the sudden change in style in Villehardouin's writing.

Consequently, Villehardouin justifies and legitimizes transgressions on the Crusaders' part because Byzantium constitutes the Oriental Other of the Westerners. This would explain the account of an overwhelmed Villehardouin, hesitant but not ashamed to speak of the booty acquired in Constantinople. Following the description of the spectacle of the city is the speech of the Doge of Venice to the Crusaders, encouraging them to gather (by force, no doubt, though we are never explicitly told) the wheat and the goods of the "pays" (Byzantium) and then to go to the city to do what "Noster Seigneur" decides, because it is easier to fight with goods than without. As in the case of the *Pèlerinage*, where Christ himself helps the Franks realize their impossible *gabs* at King Hugon's request, Providence is on the side of the Franks, who arbitrarily make use of the possessive "our" when referring to God. This is to imply the existence of another God, "their" God, one of heresy and iconoclasm. Naturally, "their" God "lives" in "their" land ("pays"), a land endowed with a type of imaginative value: "So space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process." (Said 55) It is the West that "represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries." (Said 57)

According to Hayden White, "History is manipulated in such a way that it loses its scientific status to become another fictional mode of representation. In fact, "the discourse of the historian and that of the imaginative writer overlap".⁵⁸ From the selection of these cultural elements, only a fabricated and slanted version of reality and

⁵⁸ Hayden White, *The Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 121.

historical "truth" may be attained.⁵⁹ This is particularly true of the chronicle as a genre. In Villehardouin's account of the Conquest of Constantinople, for instance, while the author was one of the key figures in the expedition against Constantinople, he remained consistently evasive, "forgetting" to mention the Pope's persistent avoidance of all confrontation with Byzantium for ideological reasons. While he is "truthful" when he speaks, Villehardouin says much more in his silence. The Other specified by the Byzantine cultural persona is thus linked to its pseudo-historical representation.

Byzantium is indeed a dangerous Orient because of its excess and its mysterious attractions. In fact, it is perceived primarily through its excessive materiality and knowledge, which may be qualified as frighteningly decadent and morally devious; yet, at the same time, it remains tantalizing and desirable to the Franks, who are reminded of their economic and cultural shortcomings. The chroniclers are all staggered by this realization before proceeding to the official conquest; the French knights of the *Pèlerinage* are first dumbfounded and frightened, before the obligatory unveiling of the Byzantine monarch restores the status quo by shattering his ego, and inflating that of the Franks, now in control of the mystery-ridden situation. The young Partonopeus wished to see the invisible lady of the opulent Byzantine dwelling, as he fantasized of possessing her, too, seeing in her a mysterious extension of her material belongings.

By inviting the Western traveler, pilgrim, or Crusader, it is paving the way for a new median category, one of neither complete novelty nor complete familiarity: "The Orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West's contempt for what is familiar

⁵⁹ See Ludmilla Jordanova, "History, 'otherness' and display", *Cultural Encounters: Representing*

and its shivers of delight in -or fear of- novelty." (Said 59) By claiming quasi-familiarity with Byzantium, the West attempts to "domesticate" its exotic features. If Byzantium is represented in a certain way, then it is controlled and publicly made known to closely fit Western propaganda. However, there is no profit from this acquaintance, because there is no quest for accuracy. What matters is the theatrical notion of representation, where Byzantium becomes the "stage of the East" (Said 63). This narcissistic Western idea of the Orient is a result of the "long-standing political and cultural "Eurocentrism" or "West-centrism", moving from the periphery to the center."⁶⁰ Byzantium's location on the fringe of the Muslim world indeed places it closer to the marginalized Saracen Other than to the center of "normality", namely, Rome.

The portrayal of Constantinople in texts such as Villehardouin's leave an impression of accuracy, but are in fact imbued with vagueness and imprecision, echoing all the stereotypes about a weak, sensual, corrupt, and effeminate Orient, while presenting it as a "kaleidoscopic theater".⁶¹ These theatrics, these modes of representation, acquire a moral dimension. Byzantium is thus portrayed as provocatively flaunting its abundant treasures to an army deprived of means. Such corruption and cruelty could not go unpunished; the sack of Constantinople followed by the creation of the Latin state in Byzantium was the deserving outcome of this tantalizing behavior. According to Hayden White, "History is manipulated in such a way that it loses its

Otherness, eds. Elizabeth Hallam, Brian V. Street (London, Routledge, 2000) 245-259.

⁶⁰ Wang Ning, "Orientalism versus Occidentalism", *New Literary History* 28:1 (1997) 60.

⁶¹ Iain Macleod Higgins, *Writing East: The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997) 3.

scientific status to become another fictional mode of representation. In fact, "the discourse of the historian and that of the imaginative writer overlap".⁶² From the selection of these cultural elements, only a fabricated and slanted version of reality and historical "truth" may be attained.⁶³ This is particularly true of the chronicle as a genre. In Villehardouin's account of the Conquest of Constantinople, for instance, while the author was one of the key figures in the expedition against Constantinople, he remained consistently evasive, "forgetting" to mention the Pope's persistent avoidance of all confrontation with Byzantium for ideological reasons. While he is "truthful" when he speaks, Villehardouin says much more in his silence. The Other specified by the Byzantine cultural persona is thus linked to its pseudo-historical representation. Thus, whether Byzantium is viewed as part of a wondrous or terrible mythical East, or as the objective of a long-term colonization plan, we can attribute the Western misunderstandings, chastisements, or deliberate misrepresentations to what Edward Said has coined as *Orientalism*, supported by the profound lessons of East/ West History.

4. The "Medievalist's Other".

Before engaging the main argument of the thesis in subsequent chapters, it is useful to pause and reflect on the ways the term "other" and its cognate, "alterity", have been theorized by medievalists in the recent past.

⁶² Hayden White, *The Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 121.

⁶³ See Ludmilla Jordanova, "History, 'otherness' and display", *Cultural Encounters: Representing Otherness*, eds. Elizabeth Hallam, Brian V. Street (London, Routledge, 2000) 245-259.

The term "alterity" has also been used to designate inscriptions of difference in writing, and the problem of alterity in the Middle Ages may be contextualized according to some useful paradigms offered by two opposed theorists. In his essay "The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature",⁶⁴ Hans Robert Jauss places himself in line with the German hermeneutic tradition and gives very little consideration to cultural factors in his erudite discussion of Otherness. Instead, he proposes that the value of medieval literature hinges on a triad, aesthetic pleasure, surprising otherness and the model character of the medieval texts (182). When a medieval text is read, it surprises by the otherness of the historically distant past it introduces. Paul Zumthor also spoke extensively of the "chronological distance that separates the medievalist from his object".⁶⁵ Jauss takes this idea a step further, stating that although this distance is an initial deterrent for the reader, eventually the fusion of the text's world-- the past-- with the one the reader lives in --the present-- during the lectorial process results in aesthetic pleasure.

This so-called "aesthetic pleasure" is typified by the repetition of narrative patterns from one work to another. The enjoyment of the work lies not in its originality but in the ability of the audience to recognize variations of the same theme, motif, and style and to rest assured that everything is in its proper place in the "world-model" (185).

⁶⁴ *New Literary History* 10:2, 181-230.

⁶⁵ Paul Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Age*, trans. Sarah White (Lincoln & London, University of Nebraska Press, 1986) 28. Zumthor distinguishes between a relative otherness, which one can surpass if he opts to translate the Other's system of reference, and a radical otherness dismissing any notion of commonality between the reader and the text.

If the repetition of a familiar literary convention constitutes what is Other according to Jauss, then the re-working of the well known Cupid- Psyche myth within the confines of things Byzantine in *Partonopeus de Blois* and *Florimont* should be a solid example. As Psyche is carried to a magnificent palace by a strong wind, so is Partonopeus transported to a magic palace in a mysterious land by a boat. In *Florimont*, a fairy invites the hero to live in her strange kingdom, the Ylle Celee. Cupid remains invisible to Psyche, as Mélior does to Partonopeus and as the fairy does to everyone else but Florimont. A *geis* is imposed on the latter by the fairy to never speak of their liaison, which Florimont breaks only to go mad after losing her. Psyche and Partonopeus are also abandoned by their lovers after shining a lamp in their face and thus breaking the invisibility spell. But whereas Psyche and Partonopeus are finally reunited with their lovers, it takes the love of another (mortal) woman, a Greek princess, to cure Florimont's insanity and to rise socially by means of his marriage to her. Partonopeus is also offered Mélior's hand as well as her riches and the kingdom of Constantinople.⁶⁶

For Jauss, there is direct access to the world represented in the text, and historical knowledge is not relevant to the question of representation. Although it is true that the notion of patterns and motifs is very prominent in medieval literature, a historical contextualization of a text could further interest and facilitate the comprehension of the reader. So while our two late-twelfth-century texts correspond chronologically to the voyage to Byzantium of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who might have introduced samples of the "matière de Byzance" into Old French literature, we are not to

⁶⁶ Thomas H. Brown, "The Relationship Between *Partonopeus de Blois* and the Cupid and Psyche

lend importance to this historical information in identifying the thematics of things Byzantine in twelfth-century works. We are also to forget about Greek love stories brought back to France from the court of Manuel I Comnenus⁶⁷. As readers, we are summoned to maintain our sensibility specifically to the symbolic and the invisible (in this case I can say this literally) and to become a "lecteur des symboles".⁶⁸ Thus, what really matters is the pleasure attained through the variation of the narrative, and the explanation of its symbols. Symptomatic of this approach is a 1964 article by Thomas H. Brown with his summary of Fulgentius Planciades's (a sixth-century Bishop of Carthage) reworking of "Cupid and Psyche" into a Christian allegory: "The city in which Psyche dwells is the world; the king and queen are God and matter; her sisters are flesh and free will. Venus (lust) envied Psyche and sent Cupid (desire) to destroy her; he persuaded her not to behold his face, that is, not to learn of the joys of desire [...] Cupid was burnt by the oil of the lamp because the more one loves a desire, the more ardent it becomes; besides, any desire leaves a mark of sin on the skin."⁶⁹ The correspondences with *Partonopeus* and to a lesser degree with *Florimont* are evident. The knowledge of this medieval allegory's didactic function might well serve as a tool of reference for the appreciation of its variations, *Partonopeus* and *Florimont*. Thus, aesthetic pleasure may

Tradition", *Bingham Young University Studies*, 5:3:4 (1964): 193-202.

⁶⁷ S.P.Uri, "Remarks on *Partonopeus de Blois*", *Neophilologus* 37 (1953) 83-98.

⁶⁸ Jauss 185.

⁶⁹ Op.cit. 195. On the notion of the intertext, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La Littérature au second degré* (Paris, Seuil, 1982). Genette modifies Michael Riffaterre's definition of the intertext, ("L'intertexte est la perception, par le lecteur, de rapports entre une oeuvre et d'autres qui l'ont précédée ou suivie"), claiming that it refers only to "microstructures sémantico-stylistiques", whereas he opts to examine the work in its "structure d'ensemble". (8-9).

be attained by an informed audience, who immediately recognizes familiar symbols (in this case Christian), and the components of a good story.

What is disturbing about this theory is that it refuses to contextualize the matter being represented. It relies on a series of more or less arbitrary assumptions, the most fundamental being that intertextuality, this "ongoing game with known rules and still unknown surprises"⁷⁰ accounts for what is both aesthetically acceptable and at the basis of what defines the "Other". It is never made clear, however, why familiarity should necessarily signify pleasure, nor why slight variation must be labeled as "beautiful". The fact that an (educated) audience, medieval or contemporary, might recognize elements of the Psyche/ Cupid intertext in *Florimont* and *Partonopeus* says little about the aesthetic quality of the two works.

Intertexts also appear to exist between the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople* and the *Profectione Ludovici in orientem*, a fact that points to the awareness of both authors of the political tensions between Byzantines and Franks of the Second Crusade, perhaps even of anecdotes circulating among the Frankish camps in Constantinople. In his epic chronicle, Odo of Deuil, Louis VII's chaplain during the Second Crusade, expressed extreme feelings of hostility towards the Byzantines: "...they [the Byzantines] were not judged to be Christians, and the Franks considered killing them a matter of no importance and hence could with the more difficulty be restrained from pillage and plundering."⁷¹ In line with Odo's account, while

⁷⁰ Jauss 189.

⁷¹ Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, trans. Virginia Gingerlick Berry (New York, Columbia University Press, 1948) 57.

the Byzantines were not the villains of the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, they were the recipients of the Franks' ill will. In this *chanson de geste*, there is proof that *ars* possesses the ability to conquer *natura*, due to some unexplained mystical forces of the Easterners, who modified the weather, made columns spin and boy-like statues speak within the imperial palace. The Franks were asked by the Byzantines to produce the extraordinary feats they had shamelessly boasted about while mocking the Greeks, or suffer the consequences. In fact, they did, but not without the aid of Christ himself and the destruction of an imperial palace and a Byzantine princess's virginity. In Odo's work, there is claim that the German Emperor Conrad "under the very eyes of the Greeks seized their delights for his own uses [...] Meanwhile the king of the Franks, whose wont was always to season majesty with humility, enjoined upon the German Emperor with urgent entreaty that he should wait for him on this side of the Arm, and that those whose common will had undertaken a common task should also use a common plan of action."⁷² This time, the Greeks are to be pitied, but Odo carefully dismisses any accusations against the Franks, blaming Conrad for all misconduct. Is Odo suggesting that Louis VII was unaware of the Germans' doings? And what of the conveniently, but not- so- innocently- placed parenthetical remark on Louis's kingly, yet humble demeanor? By studying Odo's additions, omissions and manipulations of the historical facts, we can detect what the political climate of the times was like.

The existence of such biased accounts coupled with the author's poetic license to even further distort it establishes the parodic element of the *Pèlerinage*, both premised

⁷² Ibid. 49-51.

on the Second Crusade. "La parodie, explains Genette, est couramment le lieu d'une confusion fort onéreuse, parce qu'on lui fait désigner tantôt la déformation ludique, tantôt la transposition burlesque d'un texte, tantôt l'imitation satirique d'un style".⁷³ The more exaggerated the distortion, the more comical the effect. Once more let us consider Odo's text, referring to Emperor Manuel and King Louis VII:

Now the king, taking pity on the Emperor's fear and obeying his request, entered with a few of his men and received an imperial welcome in the portico of the palace. The two sovereigns were almost identical in age and stature, unlike only in dress and manners. [...] The Emperor asked about the king's present state and his wishes for the future, wishing for him things which are God's to give and promising him those within his own power. Would it had been done as sincerely as it had gracefully! [...] Afterwards they parted as if they were brothers, and the imperial nobles took the king away to the palace which had been designated as his lodging.⁷⁴

Passages of the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* echo this kingly encounter, between Charlemagne and Hugon:

Li reis tint sa carue pur sun jur espleiter
E vint i Carlemaines tut un antif senter:
Vit lepaile tendud e le or reflambier.
Lu rei Hugun salua, le Fort, tres volenters:
Li reis Hugun regardet Carleun, veit le cuntenant fer
Les braz ad gros e quarrez, le cors greile e delgét,
"Sire, Deu vus garise! [...]"

E dist Hugun li Forz: "Ben ad set anz e melz
Qu'en ai oi parler estrange soldeers,
Ke si grant barnages ait nul rei suz cel.
Un an vus retenderai, si estre i volez;
Tant vus durrai or e argent e aveir trussez,

⁷³ Genette 33.

⁷⁴ Odo of Deuil 59-61.

Tant en porterunt Franceis cum il en voderunt charger.
 Ore dejundrai mes beos pur la vostre amistét. (XVIII)

The Emperor's "fear", as shown in the *Profectione* is due to Charles's fierce countenance in the *Pèlerinage*. The cordial greeting is also established. We notice that the royal titles are carefully switched: Emperor Manuel is replaced by King Hugon; King Louis VII becomes Emperor Charlemagne, thus shifting Roman autocratic legitimacy and majesty back into the hands of the Western Franks, for whom this was wishful thinking, after having once again witnessed the splendor of Constantinople. But while Odo does not hesitate to question Manuel's sincerity, in the *chanson*, Hugon, as a gesture of friendship, provides the Franks with material goods in good faith. At this point of the *chanson*, we are not yet aware of the suspicious Byzantines, who will spy on the Franks after an evening of merriment. Numerous elements of this chronicle, however, are scattered throughout the nearby *laissez*, from the wealthy nobles of the Byzantine court to the entrance of the king into the imperial palace. These elements complete the parodic effect of the *chanson*, which bears the serious tone of other epics, and echoes the specifics of Odo's dry chronicle, but at the last moment the distortion touches on the burlesque. The most striking example is the comparison of the two sovereigns, who in the *Profectione* are "identical in age and stature, unlike in dress and manners." Towards the end of the *Pèlerinage*, we are also provided with a description of the two protagonists, who are similar in all things but one:

Karlemaines portet la grant corone a or,
 Li reis Hugun la sue plus basement un poi;
 Karlemaines fud graindre plein ped e .iii. pouz. (LI)

To return to Jauss's aesthetic pleasure through audience recognition of variation, in this case, it appears that the pleasure attained is both through comic devices such as reversal, where instead of the traditional nobility and heroism of the protagonist we have ignominy and bewilderment, but especially, through the manipulation of reality portrayed by a text that claims to be non-fiction, Odo of Deuil's account. Even if the audience ignored the existence of such a text (and in all probability they did), nevertheless the acknowledgment of the cultural competition between East and West, that served as a pretext for Charlemagne's pilgrimage, and therefore for the troubadour's telling of this *chanson de geste*, was commonplace enough in order to be recognized and perceived as comical, at least to a modern reader of the two texts. The parodic/ aesthetic effect would have been incomplete without this historical information. True, Jauss recognizes that in a saga "a historical event takes on the reduced (often scarcely recognizable) form in which it arrived in significance for the collective memory; most often this remains only a historically attested place or person's name, through which the *chanson de geste* factually roots itself in history."⁷⁵

Applying this argument to other genres as well, we can see how it holds true for the Alexander saga, where a well-known invincible king finally falls due to his human limitations. The prologue of *Partonopeus*, the *Roman de Troie* and Robert de Clari's *Conquête de Constantinople* which all trace French lineage to the city of Troy are also dependent on a more-or-less historical place to provide either introductions, settings or simply references to their story. But while Jauss allows for pseudo-historical references

⁷⁵ Jauss 217.

to names and places (which are frequently the only link between fact and fiction, superficial as they are), he omits the distortion of history, which makes the narrative more ambiguous and complex.

Central to a discussion of aesthetics is the question of beauty. If the ugly and the evil are mere negations of the beautiful and the good, then what are we to make of Mélior's (invisible) beauty and of Constantinople's magnificence? Jauss comments: "While the beautiful threatens to bind us to the world of the senses, the ugly *via negationis* awakens a stronger desire for perfection."⁷⁶ Umberto Eco studies the ambivalent question of beauty in all its contradictions.⁷⁷ He claims that in the Middle Ages, "Beauty was purely intelligible, the beauty of moral harmony and of metaphysical splendour [...] Intelligible beauty was in medieval experience a moral and psychological reality." (5) This metaphysical beauty, however, could be transferred to the "beauty of objects", professing that the spiritual did not necessarily negate the material world. In fact, even the beauty of the body was perfectly acceptable as an ideal, as long as it was coupled with inner beauty: "Beauty of an upright soul in an upright body, a Christian ideal of the soul externally revealed." (10) Nevertheless, beauty was also capable of rendering one vulnerable to the "seductiveness of worldly pleasures" (6). Hence, precious metals, stones and art were to be used in moderation in churches, since heavy ornamentation and opulence distracted from prayer and introspection, because of their "powerful attraction" (6).

⁷⁶ Ibid. 205.

⁷⁷ Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1986).

While the twelfth century Franks recognize and even admire the beauty of Byzantium in its material objects, the portrayal of the Byzantine as beautiful offers no edifying effect. On the contrary, it designates the frivolous and the arrogant, the seductive and consequently the diabolical. An unattractive representation of the Other would provoke emotions of compassion and pity, but the Franks feel only *étonnement* and envy towards the Byzantines. In a world where the "essence of God is invisible behind the forms of appearance of the glimpsed otherworldly"⁷⁸, the very sight of ugliness could signify the eschatological promise of salvation⁷⁹ since Saint Paul, Solomon, and even Christ were once ugly and black (or wretched), suggesting that their humiliating physical hardship led to redemption via white (or beautiful) salvation. The apparent Byzantine beauty must therefore conceal a corrupt disposition, rendering them Other to the less flamboyant Franks.

Peter Haidu agrees with Jauss's dismissal of contextualization for the literary work. According to Haidu, "The linguistic or semiotic codes, simultaneously cultural and historical, which were constitutive of the texts at their composition, are very different from the codes which constitute a contemporary lectorial competence. That is the phenomenon addressed as 'alterity'.⁸⁰ On several levels this idea seems

⁷⁸ Jauss, 205.

⁷⁹ In his article "The Color of Salvation: Desire, Death, and the Second Crusade in Bernard de Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*", *The Tongue of the Fathers: Gender and Ideology in Twelfth-Century Latin*, eds. David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) 157-186, Bruce Holsinger speaks of blackness and beauty. While he believes the Sermons hold the color white as being beautiful, blackness is a surprising, exceptional case of beauty, usually with moral implications. See pp. 165-167.

⁸⁰ Peter Haidu, "The Semiotics of Alterity: A Comparison with Hermeneutics", *New Literary History* 21:3 (1990) 671.

commonplace. Describing Otherness as the result of the historical distance between reader and text displays little originality.⁸¹ As for the Other being perceived as the object or as a projection of the cognitive subject's misconceptions, Haidu finds himself in accord with Jauss.⁸²

At the same time, while hermeneutics are concerned with acquiring pure aesthetic pleasure without consideration for the historical, intellectual, and cultural framework around the text, Haidu believes that it is through the reduction of the Other to the Same, thus the interpretation of foreign cultural norms according to familiar paradigms, that lectorial pleasure is achieved. According to Haidu, non-European cultures (for our purposes, Byzantium) cannot be perceived as the constructive subject. Instead, they remain objects of investigation, inviting the Westerner's persistent gaze, whether out of curiosity, contempt, or admiration. This holds true for the description of Byzantine king Garsire's tent in *Florence de Rome*, the palace of the *Pèlerinage*, and the Byzantine Emperor's "divertissements" in *Girart de Roussillon*:

Comenchent lor afaires a mentever
 Et il lor fait ses jous estrains veder,
 E a ses nigromanz tanpez plover,
 E signes per samblances granz aparer.
 E quant lor a pavor fait sostener,
 Si fai autres merveilles per art mover,
 E jous corteis perviz, leus a sofrer,
 C'uns non sat mout trosc au demain au ser.
 Les persones sunt granz e lor saber,
 Que n'i volent per rien mais remaner.
 Et quant voit nes pout plus per gin tener,

⁸¹ This is Paul Zumthor's main thesis in *Speaking of the Middle Ages* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

⁸² Haidu 672.

Si fait molt bonement tot lor plazer. (XVIII)

In this depiction of the Byzantine Other, the Franks are victimized, while put in a trance-like state by the magical abilities of the Eastern Emperor, who provokes torrential rain and loud thunder within the palatial walls. The autocrat manipulates them into prolonging their stay at the imperial palace for reasons that are never stated, perhaps out of his own insecurities, thus putting the Franks under his magic spell, in order to avoid any undermining of his authority. An attempt is made on the part of the Frankish observers to rationalize the Emperor's behavior, while stressing the helplessness of their own situation and the provocative flaunting of the Other's overriding particularity. Finally, when the Emperor realizes that he has been holding great and wise men, he sets them free from the trance. Though we are never told how this mysterious realization occurs, it does, nevertheless, allow for the Franks' redemption as epic heroes, despite their terrifying experience.

Thus, while the Byzantine court is indeed the object of the Franks' gaze, it is it safe to presume that the reactions of the Franks are also meticulously examined by the Emperor's entourage in this scene. To use Haidu's semiotics, the notion of alterity must be relative and allow for both interlocutors, "I" and "he", to take turns being "I" and thus create a sort of intersubjectivity. The nature of the Other is dialectic, otherwise it becomes absolute, an "Entirely Other",⁸³ dismissing any negotiation and inspiring the kind of hatred evoked by the Crusades. Like the Emperor's magic, this type of Otherness

⁸³ Haidu 683.

becomes an illusion, reduced to the cognitive subject's misunderstanding and speculation concerning the subject's actions.

Accepting an "Entirely Other" would mean accepting a difference so profound that all bases of comparison would be dismissed. Haidu opts for a milder position. The notion of Otherness is based on the common elements between the subject and object as modes of representations. Whether *in presentia* or *in absentia*, the cognitive subject recognizes itself in the object and conjures up a more or less fictitious representation of that commonality. The Franks would have remained indifferent to the level of sophistication of Byzantine *ars*- implying artistic as well as technical distinction- had it not been for their own taste for luxury. The degree to which the object surpasses the subject, either in positive or negative qualities, accounts for its Otherness. This realization explains *Girart's* Byzantine Court with its meteorological manipulations and it even detects political innuendoes of East/ West mutual mistrust. Haidu sums up the argument best in his closing remarks: "To recognize the non-identical, the different, the other whose limits of differentiation are not predeterminable or predictable is, I believe, the heart of the problematic located in the domains, not only of textuality, but also of interpersonal relations, political relations at the national scale, and, most obviously, at the international scale of diplomacy."⁸⁴ Despite the variety of purpose (from entertainment to documentation) of the *chansons de geste*, romances, and chronicles, and their range from pure fiction to alleged fact, all these *genres* reflect the Western and particularly the French view of Byzantium and its practices as a variant of the Other.

⁸⁴ Haidu 690.

Haidu's theory remains, however, problematic because it ignores the existence of racism and of power differentials, inventing a certain type of toned-down, neutral, undisturbing Other for the purpose of literary analysis. In the mind of the Franks, the fact that the Byzantines possessed objects of opulence was testimony of their excess and, therefore, of their overshadowing economic power, thus awakening an inferiority complex to the former. As a result, in order to restore balance, the Franks viewed the Byzantines as morally and biologically inferior, and so any attack against their race would no be undeserved. The Franks could not be held accountable for their violence either, since they were genetically predisposed to military action.⁸⁵

In sum, the concept of "Otherness" that has intrigued numerous scholars of Medieval French literature,⁸⁶ is inseparable from the underlying problem of how truth is attained, and of how it is created, whether through the deliberate manipulation or distortion of facts for aesthetic or political purposes, or simply because a pervasive ideology dictates what truth must be. Crusade history is often used by the authors that I

⁸⁵ Martin Bernal provides some insight on the matter of physical "superiority" of Germanic peoples. Traditionally, peoples of northern cold climates were thought to be biologically superior to those of hot climates, hence the distinction of the Aryan race. This would account for the Franks' racism towards the Byzantines. Ironically, Bernal claims that it was the ancient Greek tribes who arrived from the north to oust the local population of the Greek peninsula, thus further reinforcing this theory. Equally ironic is the modern presumption of the Protestant Germans, who proclaim their "masculine" nature, as opposed to the "effeminate" Gallo-Latin Catholics, whose priests remain celibate and don skirts. By inventing an ancestry related to the Franks, the Protestants wish to stress their racial superiority. See Martin Bernal, "Race, Class, and Gender in the Formation of the Aryan Model of Greek Origins", *Nations, Identities, Cultures*. Ed. V.Y. Mudimbe (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1997) 7-28.

⁸⁶ For example, Pierre Martino, *L'Orient dans la littérature Française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle* (Genève, Slatkin, 1976); Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Age* (Paris, Gallimard, 1977); Alexandre Leupin, "The Middle Ages, the Other", *Diacritics* 13 (1983); Paul Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages*, trans. Sarah White (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988); Moussa, Sarga, "Dire l'Orient", *Actes du Colloque de Saint-Denis de la Réunion 7-11 mars 1988, L'Exotisme* (Paris, Didier-Erudition, 1988).

study, in order to shift the whole dynamics of East/ West relations, rendering them extremely ambiguous. In so doing, Frankish culture is able to create a "relative truth", on the basis of which its expansionist motives towards Byzantium are justifiable. This confusion and this ambivalence of "truth" will be a driving concern throughout this thesis, and is linked to the question of representation in this period of the Middle Ages. The portrayal of Byzantium remains consistently ambivalent in the works discussed in this thesis. Representation is made possible by the deliberate distortion of historical events, the silences of the narrator, and age-old stereotypes concerning the comportment of the Byzantines, whether in romance, epic, or non-fiction, as the chronicle claims to be. Who then were these Byzantines in the representational systems of the 12-13th century West? Could they be viewed as post-Hellenistic era Greeks, or Others, or as exotics, or even Orientals? And indeed, how far did the representation of their cultural difference extend? My central contention is that their portrayal does not remain consistent. Rather, they are examples of the "betwixt and between," neither completely the quintessential foe of the Franks, nor their permanent ally. By this perplexing ambiguity, their persona is removed from the ultra-negative/ conquering stance that was pertinent in the case of the Saracens and shifted in part to one of "domestication". Consequently, the Byzantines cannot be subject to the Kristevian notion of abjection. For what causes abjection, according to Julia Kristeva, is "ce qui perturbe une identité, un système, un ordre. Ce qui ne respecte pas les limites, les places, les règles".⁸⁷ Byzantium is confusing to medieval France, provoking an identity crisis for the Frankish

⁸⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris, Seuil, 1980)12.

"I", who sees in Byzantium its own alienated *alter ego*, at the limit of culturally accepted norms.⁸⁸ Yet, in an era of theocracy, common spiritual experiences and aspirations between the two worlds also underlined their undeniable Sameness.

My approach is interdisciplinary, initially informed by history, but reading also through cultural anthropology and folklore. Thus I address the role of modern historiography as a means of understanding, as Eugene Vance puts it, "how social events are coded or even dictated by discourse, second, how social events cluster themselves [...] to produce interdiscursive configurations specific to this or that cultural movement and its texts."⁸⁹ The relationship of historical and literary analysis constitutes a highly debated question among postmodernist scholars. Hayden White addresses this issue in *The Tropics of Discourse*.⁹⁰ White argues in particular that the discourse of a historian and an imaginative writer can at times overlap. Since it is language that represents both history and literature, personal ideology is bound to exclude factual objectivity. The relationship between the literary text and the historical context is more complex than ever, since history can then be considered as another mode of fiction.

In a thesis where actual historical events are echoed within the confines of fiction, it is nevertheless especially significant to frame the problem in a historical context, as I do in my first chapter. Historians and theologians have indeed dealt with the subject of Byzantine East and Latin West relations at great length. The two worlds

⁸⁸ Ibid, esp. pp. 16-18.

⁸⁹ Eugene Vance, "Semiotics and Power: Relics, Icons, and the Voyage de Charlemagne a Jerusalem at a Constantinople", *The Romanic Review* 79 (1988): 164-183.

⁹⁰ Hayden White, *The Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

had been slowly drifting apart before the appearance of any one of our texts. When Charlemagne was crowned "Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire" in 800, the Byzantines, who considered themselves legitimate successors of the Roman Empire, were outraged. Nevertheless, attempts at reconciliation were made. Otto II of Germany married a Byzantine princess, Theophano, bringing Eastern traditions to a Carolingian court. But the Crusades would destroy any hope of reconciliation. On their way to Jerusalem, the Franks passed by the enormous and wealthy city of Constantinople. Misunderstandings led to further dislike; to the Franks, the Byzantines were deceitful, elitist, and "too" familiar with Muslim practices; to the Byzantines, the Franks were barbaric, greedy, and schismatic. The Fourth Crusade's destruction of Constantinople in 1203-4 maximized the hatred on both sides.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the Byzantine landscape and its pictorial representation, as perceived by the French psyche, but also as distorted, at an attempt to portray schismatic tendencies and dangerous material excess, which takes on a political dimension, once again pointing to the Latin colonialist project. Although the Eastern Empire was composed of Christian lands ranging from the southern Italian and Sicilian provinces of the Empire to territories of the Middle East, it was still remote enough to make it suspect of dangerous infiltrations. Located in an area of overlapping world-views, it acquired a cosmopolitan character, which provoked the suspicion, the fear and the jealousy of the West. Furthermore, it linked the past to the present, providing volumes of knowledge ranging from classical antiquity to the Arab world. In this charged system of location, mappings of Byzantium in the West take on a particular importance. Two twelfth-century French maps in particular, the map of Asia Minor and

of Palestine,⁹¹ portray the city of Constantinople on a more "international" scale, positioning it at the rather unprivileged lower left corner. Of course, geographical accuracy and the portrayal of Euclidean space were not the focus of these maps. At best, they could be appreciated for their symbolic value, as they were hardly geographically accurate. Byzantium or "Romania", as the Byzantines called their land as a physical and historical extension of the Roman Empire.

Byzantine women⁹² were often the imperial autocrats of this Empire, and served as the very nexus to this Empire, either as the vehicle by which Frankish rulers acquired access to the imperial throne of the East, or even as sole rulers in their own right. Indeed, the world of politics and erudition was not off limits to Byzantine women. To the Crusaders' surprise, their role was much more active than in the West. While Byzantine women were not exempt from "traditional" roles as magicians, caregivers, or wives, on several occasions, they indeed held the position of absolute autocrats and augustae: Irene, Zoe, and Theodora. The example of the fictional Mélior echoes this practice. Although in a theocratic society the monastic ideal would have these women living and attaining erudition in nunneries, these Byzantine women were nevertheless permitted to own shops, receive higher education, and even become physicians to other women. I study primarily three types of women, all connected to the ideal of Empire: empresses,

⁹¹ Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers View their World* (London, British Library, 1997).

⁹² For scholarship on women in Byzantium, see Judith Herrin and Angeliki Laiou. Also, see Krijnie Ciggaar, *op. cit.* Ciggaar speaks of the authoritative role of the empress, but also of legal rights of women in general concerning their inheritance, their children, and their education. Despite the high-profile positions held by many women, they were also kept out of the sight of men other than their family members and were usually veiled in public. This caused confusion to Western travelers to Byzantium.

wise women, who were responsible for the education of imperial women, and briefly refer to revolutionary nobles, who take political matters into their own hands.

Finally, I develop another non-dominant discourse of the Byzantine exotic, namely the esoteric, alluding to the pagan heritage of the Byzantines, but also to their cult of saints. Byzantium was a land of magic, of heavenly gardens and sometimes of enchanted palaces and monuments. These gardens and palaces followed the Persian prototype,⁹³ and impressed the Westerners that beheld a small heaven on Earth. Master builders constructed gems of architecture; artisans unparalleled in craftsmanship provided the empire with precious goods sought out in international trade. These architects and craftsmen were also bearers of mystical secrets. In texts such as Chrétien's *Cligès* Byzantine builders take on a uniquely "other" role, linked to the esoteric, the hermetic, the symbolic. Indeed, a different discourse is apparent in the portrayal of the Byzantine architect, one that places him in the realm of the extremely secretive and incomprehensible. The mythologies of the Byzantine past, examples of medieval hagiography, and translations of esoteric texts made the Byzantines good candidates for this role. Thus, the Byzantine exotic element operates on multiple levels, ranging from the historical to the hermetic, and rendering these Eastern Christians unique characters in French literature of the Middle Ages.

⁹³ See See Jean Ebersolt, *Constantinople Byzantine et les voyageurs du Levant* (Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1918).

CHAPTER 1

Byzantine East and Latin West: Historical Interfaces

A. The Birth of an "Oriental Other".

Hayden White has eloquently shown that a parallelism exists between History and Literature as narratives both using language as a means for their *ekphrasis*, in the recounting of factual as well as fictional events.⁹⁴ Both disciplines are prone to an author's bias, to his/her personal ideology and to the specific moment in time when the text was produced, among other parameters. In offering a chapter, which summarizes centuries of diplomacy, military confrontations, and theological doctrinal discrepancies between the Byzantine East and Latin West, this thesis also has a specific goal. Far from claiming any ambition of an exhaustive and in-depth historical analysis, I wish to show that the dichotomy between the two worlds was, in fact, an artificial fabrication that developed throughout the years because of political tensions and the new project of Latin expansionism in the East. What ended in the fall of Constantinople and the creation of the Latin State in Byzantium in 1204 actually began as a united Empire, which cherished its Roman heritage in matters of law, government, and aesthetics, and embraced the new religion of Christianity. Before Byzantium became "Oriental", it was merely the Eastern Roman Empire.

"The East tends to be treated as a distinct and enclosed reservoir of superior culture, from which the occasional stream is released, to pour down hill - by some

⁹⁴ See Hayden White, *op.cit.*

obscure law of cultural hydraulics - to water the lower reaches of the West."⁹⁵ Strangely it is the science of Physics that inspires this metaphor to Peter Brown in his discussion of cultural superiority and inferiority after the fall of the Roman Empire, when "East" and "West" in their European context were barely more than mere points of geographic reference, initially devoid of any notion of the "Other". Although the hydraulics metaphor holds true for the times of barbaric invasions and even for Carolingian times, subsequently, the early Middle Ages were based more on a common "European" heritage than on distinction. In fact, Hellenistic and later Roman tradition defined the cultural fabric of the Empire just as much in Constantine's newly-born Christian world as they had done for his pagan ancestors and creators of the *pax romana*. Nevertheless, animosity between the two was quick to develop, and the Greek world as a signifier of the quintessential Western prototype would cease to exist. As a matter of fact, things Byzantine were slowly equated or associated with the complex and foreign Orient in the mind of the Western Latins, even as early as the Carolingian years, and even more so with the Crusaders' writings, as well as literary epics and romances.

The fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century was preceded by another major event: the shifting of the Empire's capital, Rome, to the ancient Greek city of Byzantium, later to be called Constantinople after its founder, the Emperor Constantine, in 330 A.D. This proved crucial because the direction of expansion was to now be towards Asia, whose cultural identity and "Otherness" had a profound impact on Europe. Rome was no longer the center of the world. The ancient pagan imperial megalopolis

⁹⁵ Peter Brown, "Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity: a Parting of the Ways", *The*

handed the torch to a new Christian center along with its enormous legacy. A new era was beginning to take shape in Byzantium with the familiar powerful figure of the Emperor, responsible initially for secular matters.

Linguistic change followed this major shift. The Byzantine East became bilingual in Greek and Latin, at least among the most educated and the higher officials. Greek remained the language of education and culture. Latin was used in legal, military, and political matters and in such areas as administration and commerce. It was important that Constantinople, otherwise known as New Rome, maintained Latin as evidence of the direct link to the ancient Empire. The Byzantines referred to themselves as *Romans* or *Romaioi*, legitimate heirs of the Empire, and named their land *Romania*, land of the Romans.⁹⁶ These terms were not to be taken lightly by the Byzantines, for they saw in them a complete and official divorce from the pagan Greek world. The Byzantines seemed aware of their particular place in the world, as A.P. Kazhdan relates: "As the new 'chosen' people with the protection of God, their mission was to enjoy and to promote the Christianized culture of antiquity".⁹⁷ Indeed, while at times they were eager to flaunt their rich Hellenistic patrimony, their recent conversion to Christianity warranted a new identity given to them by the Christian Roman Emperor Constantine himself.

Orthodox Church and the West, ed. D. Baker (Edinburgh, 1976) 5.

⁹⁶ See Henry and Renée Kahane, "The Western Impact on Byzantium: the Linguistic Evidence", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 36 (Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, 1982) 127-153, for a detailed study on the use of Classical and Vulgar Latin, Romance, Old French, Provençal, and Italian in Byzantium.

⁹⁷ Aleksandr Petrovich Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1985) 167.

Rome, on the other hand, maintained the use of Latin exclusively. Linguistic discrepancies were the first signs of East/ West alienation, followed by philosophical and early theological issues. By the early fifth century, Eastern theology eventually found its way to the West by means of another Eastern novelty, namely monasticism and asceticism.⁹⁸ It is precisely due to early monasticism that difference in doctrine began to take shape. Eastern monks became prototypes of spirituality and were revered even by the Emperor. The West's comprehension of spirituality was expressed by Saint Augustine of Hippo,⁹⁹ who saw in the Church the City of God with the ideal point of reference being Rome. On the other hand, Eusebius of Caesarea, the Eastern counterpart of St. Augustine, in presenting his views of Church and State, claimed that they were closely linked. The spiritual leader of the Church was to be the Christian Emperor, equal to an ordained priest. The official prototype was Constantine, who was to maintain this theocratic monarchy. Consequently, Church and State were completely fused in the East, with the Byzantine Emperor dominating his chief ecclesiastical official, the patriarch.

While the Eastern part of the former Macedonian/ Hellenistic world confronted and lost several territories to the growing world-power of the Persian Sassanids,¹⁰⁰ the

⁹⁸ Saint Athanasius, *La Vie primitive de Saint Antoine conservée en syriaque*, ed. René Draguet (Louvain, Secrétariat du Corpus SCO Wasersebaan, 1980); Philip Rousseau, "Christian Asceticism and the Early Monks," *Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to A.D. 600: In Honour of W.H.C. Frend*, ed. Ian Hazlett (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1991) 112-122; James E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA, Trinity Press International, 1999).

⁹⁹ Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (New York, Herder, 1970).

¹⁰⁰ Fictional representations of events in chronological proximity to this decline appear in episodes of various *Alexander* cycles, exalting the prowess of the legendary Greek (albeit "feudalized") hero.

West was invaded by tribal, warlike peoples who did not fail to threaten Byzantium as well. Of these Germanic tribes, the most numerous were the Franks, favored by Constantine for their military virtues. Indeed, these people were seen as notable warriors, possessing "un culte particulier de l'honneur, lié à un sens très fort de la solidarité militaire".¹⁰¹ By the year 486 the Franks had pronounced Gaul their kingdom with Clovis as king of a mixed Roman-Germanic people. In 493 Clovis converted to Christianity and was recognized in Constantinople as representative of Roman authority. From this point on, the Franks began to acquire a "Latin" identity in the eyes of the East. The Emperor Anastasius conferred on Clovis the insignia of Roman magistrate. This was a momentous event for the dynamics of East/ West relations, since there was finally an official "West" to speak of. However, the Frankish monarch had a different vision of his role and the situation of his newly founded kingdom. Clovis believed he was the heir of an imperial tradition and that he should have absolute power. A network consisting of higher clergy and courtiers surrounded him. Loyalty was not due primarily to the State, which remained an abstraction, but to the chief of the tribe and clan.¹⁰²

In the meantime, the Byzantine East enjoyed prosperity within its capital, Constantinople, and by establishing colonies in northern Africa and in Italy. In the spiritual realm new elements were surfacing as well. Domed churches were

¹⁰¹ Zoe Oldenbourg, *Les Croisades* (Paris, Gallimard, 1965) 30.

¹⁰² For an insightful discussion on the role of the tribal chief and clan, see George Fenwick Jones, *The Ethos of the Song of Roland* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1963).

constructed,¹⁰³ thus recreating a sort of Heaven on Earth effect. Passionate debates about creed and the Divine and Human Nature of Christ were also commonplace in Byzantium. Differences in the interpretation of theological subtleties led to the creation of heresies. Such was the case of the Monophysites, who recognized only the Divine Nature of Christ beginning in the 460's. Similar disputes threatened the religious unity of the entire Christian world. The Emperor Justinian tried at all cost to avoid a dispute between the Papacy¹⁰⁴ and Constantinople, but his influential and dynamic wife Theodora, herself a Monophysite, turned the palace into a refuge for the heretics, which further injured the relations between East and West.¹⁰⁵

By the late seventh century, Western Syria, Egypt, and Armenia broke away from the official Church, embracing Monophysitism, while Eastern Syria and Persia belonged to the Nestorian sect. The fact that the doctrines of these sects appeared in both Greek and Syriac created suspicion among the Westerners: were their supposed Byzantine allies in this theological confrontation beginning to support these changes in faith and to become schismatic themselves? The Byzantines categorically denied the accusation,

¹⁰³ The domed building with highly decorative and spacious interiors was not a Byzantine invention. Mesopotamian and Persian architecture had greatly influenced the Byzantines. The dome also represented the heavens above the four directions of the earth. "In this way, claims David Woodward, the building expressed the same symbolic spatial concepts as the mappamundi, a microcosm of earth and heaven". (David Woodward, "Medieval Mappaemundi", *The History of Cartography*, eds. J.B. Harley and David Woodward [Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987] 340. Other borrowings from the East included the representation of plants, animals, and arabesque lines. Byzantine art also incorporated a new element, which was to become characteristic of future architecture: the use of tall Greek columns, remnants of pagan temples, but also recalling the columns of the Temple of Solomon. See also my Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁴ Although in terms of ecclesiastic hierarchy all bishops were equal, Constantinople or New Rome recognized the primacy of the bishop of Rome for historical reasons as an honorary distinction.

¹⁰⁵ See Joseph Damus, *A History of the Middle Ages* (New York, Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1968) 127-29

accepting in 680-81 the Sixth Ecumenical Council's definition of the two Natures of Christ in one person. Nevertheless, the seed of mistrust was planted into the heads of the Westerners, and the Byzantines would remain on the defensive for years to come.

In the seventh century, Byzantium witnessed a new threat, due to the presence of expansionism in the East, namely that of the Muslim Arabs. The Byzantines lost the significant territories of Syria, Persia and Egypt to the latter. Geographic proximity to Byzantium accounted in part for the important influence the Greek world had on the Arabs. The latter showed interest in the sciences (mathematics, astronomy, medicine) cultivated in Greek antiquity; they also translated Greek texts into Arabic and transmitted them to the West in countries that they conquered, such as Spain and Portugal. The transmission of Greek knowledge by Arab conquerors may have contributed to the suspicions felt by the Latins towards their fellow Christian Byzantines. Also, the geographical proximity of the Byzantines to the misunderstood Muslim world¹⁰⁶ could also imply that they were more spiritually and ideologically connected to the Arabs than the Westerners. The Byzantine East was thus not only suspect of heresy but also of ambivalent interactions with a dangerous non-Christian Other that had invaded their land.

In the eighth century, the problem of the Christological heresies had become more serious in Byzantium. There was an internal struggle within the Christian doctrine, some arguing that all matter is evil, while others stressed the dignity of material creation

¹⁰⁶ On the misconceptions of the Franks of the *chansons de geste* concerning the doctrines of Islam, see Norman Daniel, *op. cit.* Byzantium had a better understanding of Islam, recognizing it as a new monotheistic religion.

through the Holy Spirit. This controversy remained at the root of the iconoclastic movement, which lasted for over a full century (725-843), and whose principal claim was that the reverence of icons was in reality idolatry. Opinions were deeply split: on the side of icon veneration were the Emperor, the army, and the Eastern provinces; against the icons were the Papacy, the monks and the West. Those in favor of the holy images were victorious in this struggle, and along with victory came a new age of sophistication born in the Byzantine megalopolis, which brought about a feeling of contempt for Western Europe.¹⁰⁷ The Byzantines were beginning to see the Franks as uncivilized barbarians. Bitterness grew between the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Pope, and as a result, Rome became more closely connected with the Franks.¹⁰⁸

The gap between Byzantines and Franks increased with differences in ritual and creed.¹⁰⁹ The *filioque* issue was a clause added in 589 to the Nicene Creed as formulated by the 381 Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, professing that the Holy Spirit precedes "and from the Son", as well as the Father.¹¹⁰ The Byzantines, cautious about not allowing yet another heresy to surface concerning the un-hierarchical structure of the

¹⁰⁷ See André Grabar, *L'Iconoclisme byzantin: le dossier archéologique* (Paris, Flammarion, 1984).

¹⁰⁸ See Georgij Ostrogorki, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. John Hussey (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1957).

¹⁰⁹ See Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1955) for a detailed and informative discussion on the discrepancies leading to the division of the Church.

Trinity, a fundamental principle of their theology, expressed their objections to the Spanish-British modification quite avidly. Furthermore, on a more secular note, they did not recognize their own social structure in the acceptance of the Trinity in the shape of a social pyramid akin to the feudal hierarchy. The Byzantine God-Father was all-mighty, reflecting the autocratic model of their own world.¹¹¹

Other issues were the use of *azyma* or unleavened bread in the Eucharist, as well as the consumption of the Eucharist's wine only by the clergy in the West. The Franks allowed for these changes in their rite, thus provoking the anxiety of the Byzantines. The latter did not permit any changes in the ritual of the Church, since, according to its theology, orthodoxy and unity of rite were practically synonymous. Even more important was the political concern that was generated from this debate; the Byzantines knew that religion was the unifying agent, the historical glue that kept together the two worlds. If consensus was not reached, the effect would be very damaging. Nevertheless, these major issues, as well as the infallibility doctrine of a powerful Pope in the West paved the way to an official schism.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ To be exact, the Greek text pertaining to the Holy Spirit reads: "Και εις το πνεύμα το άγιον, το κύριον, το ζωοποιόν, το εκ του πατρός εκπορευόμενον, το συν πατρί και υιώ συμπροσκυνούμενον και συνδοξαζόμενον, το λαλήσας δια των προφητών." (And [I believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the Prophets). Compare to the Western Latin text: "Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem, qui ex Patre *Filioque* procedit; qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur; qui locutus est per Prophetas." (And [I believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets).

¹¹¹ See Kazhdan and Epstein 190.

¹¹² Kazhdan points out some of the political and social ramifications of the debate, *op. cit.*, 167-196. Besides these issues, the schism also resulted from matters of lesser importance, such as the rejection of Saturday as a fast day in the East, and the prohibition of married clergy in the West.

Indeed, the Byzantine church showed no trust in the Pope, but the Emperor's ambitions to maintain colonies in Italy depended on the support of the Western spiritual leader. Yet, despite the Emperor's great projects in the developing West, the mighty Byzantine East was to slowly decline, in part due to the invasion of the Seljuk Turks. Thus, the dynamics between East and West began to shift, as there was now need of East/ West alliances.

B. East/ West Alliances.

A new chapter opened in Byzantine / Frankish relations with the Carolingian age. When Saint Boniface anointed Pepin as king of the Franks, monarchy in the West was redefined, obtaining papal authority. The iconoclast movement had resulted in a rift between the Pope and the Emperor, and the latter lost his power in Ravenna and several parts of Italy. Pepin then secured for the Papacy former Byzantine possessions in southern Italy and the Papal State, protectorate of the Carolingians in Italy, was founded. On Christmas Day of the year 800, Charlemagne was crowned "Emperor of the Romans" by the Pope. This of course was an outrage to the Byzantines, who saw Charlemagne as a fraud and addressed him as "rex". Furthermore, he tried to secure his position as Emperor by proposing to marry a Byzantine princess, despite the generally negative response to such a "mixed" union by the Byzantines of his day:¹¹³

¹¹³ Even Otto's marriage to the Byzantine Theophano, well after a century from the Carolingian period, was permitted with great hesitation on the part of the Byzantines, who normally frowned on "intermarriages". East/ West marriage alliances became commonplace with the Francophile Emperor Manuel, himself a product of a "mixed" marriage.

In this year on December 25, in the ninth indiction, Charles, king of the Franks, was crowned by Leo the Pope. Although he wanted to attack Sicily he delayed preparing a fleet, instead preferring to marry Irene, and he sent for this purpose envoys the following year in the tenth indiction...And these envoys from Charles and from Pope Leo arrived at the most pious Irene, seeking to secure a marriage between Charles and her, and to unite East and West. This would have happened had it not been prevented by the frequent objections of Aetius [one of her eunuch advisers].¹¹⁴

Unlike the Byzantine monarchs, Charlemagne's exalted view of authority did not derive from the tradition of Roman imperialism. He was the divinely appointed leader as a worthy sacerdotal figure. He was also to become the new lawgiver of the State, characterized by the development of secular institutions.¹¹⁵ Religious wars were to be launched against the Infidels and Christianity would be spread by the sword. Charlemagne's extremism alarmed the Papacy, which was in agreement with the Byzantine Emperor against the Frankish king. However, personal interests kept the Pope politically dependent on Charlemagne, thus connecting the Frankish monarchy to the papacy. The king eventually divided his dominions among his heirs, according to the Frankish custom, instead of maintaining an indivisible Empire, as was the Eastern practice.

In the tenth century the Carolingian court was ruled by Saxon kings. In 961 Otto I entered in Italy after having promised the Pope to protect his Italian kingdom, thus introducing Byzantine trading and high culture to the Carolingians. Otto I's son, Otto II,

¹¹⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. De Boor (Leipzig, 1883) vol. 1, 472-73.

¹¹⁵ See Richard Hogdes and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983).

by an Italian princess Adelaide, in turn married a Byzantine princess, the well-educated Theophano,¹¹⁶ who profoundly impacted the West by introducing imperial court traditions and Byzantine luxuries to her conservative Western entourage. This important familial alliance receives mention in the works of my corpus, including *Cligès*, *Florimont*, and *Florence de Rome*, to mention a few; further, it constitutes the reason for Luidprand's embassy to Constantinople, where the latter was sent to ask for the princess Theophano's hand in marriage on behalf of King Otto. The Ottonian dynasty continued with Otto III, Theophano's son, whom she greatly influenced. The Christian Empire now had a double character, Byzantine and Carolingian, leaning more towards the Byzantine, since Otto III favored the Eastern imperial ideal and Byzantine refinement. However, this preference was to change when Pope Sylvester II, a persuasive scholar, convinced Otto that the West was the true heir to the Roman tradition.¹¹⁷ Thus, Rome was restored as the imperial city, placing Constantinople in a precarious situation.

C. The Official Schism.

The Byzantines had underestimated the growing power of the reform in the West and were preoccupied with interior political problems of their own. There seemed

¹¹⁶ See Judith Herrin, "Theophano: The Education of a Byzantine Princess". *The Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed Adelbert Davids (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹¹⁷"Let it not be thought in Italy that Greece alone can boast of the Roman power and of the philosophy of its Emperor. Ours, yeah ours, is the Roman Empire! Its strength rests on fruitful doms of the Scythians. Our Augustus art thou, O Caesar, the Emperor of the Romans who, sprung of the noblest blood of the Greeks, surpasses the Greeks in power, controls the Romans by right of inheritance and overcomes both alike in wisdom and eloquence." Gerbert d'Aurillac (Pope Silvestre II), *Lettres de Gerbert*, ed. Julien Havet (Paris, Picard, 1889) 173.

to be a division between the followers of Patriarch Cerularius and those of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus. The Emperor favored a political alliance with the Pope Leo IX in order to control the Norman invaders in the Byzantine territories of southern Italy; the Patriarch was opposed to such an alliance, invoking the doctrinal error of the Pope concerning the *azyma* and *filioque* issues. According to the renowned Byzantinist Geanakoplos, "The complicated mid-eleventh-century political situation of internal rivalry within Byzantium, Norman threats against the empire's Italian possessions, and the new muscle of the reformed papacy supported by the German rulers form the background for the well-known schism of 1054 between the Latin and the Byzantine churches."¹¹⁸ The papal legation arrived at Constantinople demanding of Cerularius and Constantine IX an alliance against the Normans. The result was the definitive clash between cardinal Humbert and Cerularius in the cathedral of Saint Sophia, where the legates deposited a bull of excommunication on the Holy Altar and left the church. Ironically, the bull praised the orthodoxy of the people of Byzantium and excommunicated only the Patriarch and his followers. In response, Cerularius anathematized the papal legates calling them "impious", "blasphemous", "irreligious", and "accursed".¹¹⁹ These radical actions made unity a remote possibility. During the following two centuries the Crusades¹²⁰ made attempts at reconciliation, but with practically no success.

¹¹⁸ Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984) 207.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* 212.

¹²⁰ For a complete account of the Crusades, see Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1951-54).

D. The Crusades.

1. The Normans and the beginning of Western colonization in Byzantium.

The late eleventh and twelfth centuries witnessed Latin expansionism in the East, bringing the masses of the two worlds into contact. In "La Base historique de l'épopée médiévale", Henri Grégoire described an expedition led by the Duke of Apulia, the Norman Robert Guiscard, against Byzantine Epirus. This expedition was the mere continuation of a previous military operation, conducted under the pretense of purging Southern Italy of an army camouflaged as (Byzantine) Christian, but which in reality was mostly Muslim.¹²¹ The Norman threat was the most severe to Byzantine possessions in southern Italy, and Guiscard's ulterior motives were to acquire the riches of Constantinople and Thessalonica, a city second only to the capital. This attempt was labeled as a "pre-Crusade" or a "forgotten Crusade"¹²² against the Emperor Alexius Comnenus.

The first targets were Durazzo, followed by the Ionian Islands and the West coast of the Balkan peninsula. Alexius quickly summoned the aid of Venice, who in return for the help of its fleet, would be granted trade privileges in the Republic of Saint Mark. Despite Guiscard's glorious victory over the Byzantines, due to unforeseen

¹²¹ Henri Grégoire, "La base historique de l'épopée médiévale" *Autour de l'épopée Byzantine* (London, Variorum, 1975) 527-543.

¹²² Ibid. 10.

circumstances¹²³ Durazzo was once more in Byzantine hands. But the Italian Normans never forgot the idea of Eastern expansionism. In the meantime, the Venetians created a colony in the East, occupying their own quarter in Constantinople and controlling much of the mercantile power and the trade routes to the Orient. With a growing industry in cloth production, as well as in banking,¹²⁴ Western colonies in Byzantium attracted many Latins, thus frequently provoking the animosity of the Byzantines, who saw the Western presence as an economic threat. Furthermore, the Byzantines felt that they were slowly losing control of the colonies. As Laura Balletto points out, "Les instructions données par la Commune de Gênes [another Italian people with colonies in Byzantium] à ses délégués auprès de la cour byzantine attestent comment ceux-ci étaient appelés à s'occuper directement des affaires intérieures de la colonie, en y exerçant des pouvoirs et juridictionnels et administratifs".¹²⁵

Byzantium was certainly an ideal site for the promotion of the commercial and economic interests of the West. By the end of the twelfth century, Genoese merchants multiplied their profits with the importation, exportation, and redistribution of goods in ports from the Aegean to the Black Sea.¹²⁶ It has been suggested that the term "besant" in Latin sources is really the name given by the Franks to the Syrian dinar, which they

¹²³ A.A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine State* (Madison and Milwaukee, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964) 381.

¹²⁴ A.P. Kazhdan 175.

¹²⁵ Laura Balletto, "L'Administration de la justice dans les établissements génois d'outre-mer", *Coloniser au Moyen Age*, eds. Michel Balard and Alain Ducellier (Paris, Armand Colin, 1995) 261. Parentheses are mine.

¹²⁶ See Georges Jehel, "Besants et dinars à Gênes au XIIIe siècle", *Etat et colonisation au Moyen Age et à la Renaissance*, ed. Michel Balard (Lyon, La Manufacture, 1989) 55.

called "besant sarracemat".¹²⁷ In many works of my corpus,¹²⁸ the besant is referred to as the staple Byzantine currency, establishing the standard for international trade, as a connotation for the material wealth of the Byzantine East.

Finally, Italian and French interests did not limit themselves to the sphere of finance. Cultural riches were also sought out by the Latins in the artistic and intellectual world of Byzantium, especially in the domain of translations and the exportation of objects of art, as Peter Schreiner points out.¹²⁹ Theological texts were translated, thus familiarizing the West more with Byzantine mysticism, and Byzantine styles of art and architecture deeply influenced Western tastes.¹³⁰

2. *The First Crusade.*

In 1071 the Byzantines suffered a great loss to the Seljuk Turks at the battle of Manzikert and had to surrender many of their Anatolian territories. Other invaders also threatened, namely the Patzinaks or Pechenegs, a nomadic people of the Turkic family. In 1091 Alexius wrote a letter to his friend, Count Robert of Flanders, seeking the aid of

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 58

¹²⁸ *Le Roman d'Alexandre, Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne, Partonopeus de Blois, Girart de Roussillon, Cligès, Eracle.* The dowries of Mélior, Berthe, and Elissent, for example, were counted in besants.

¹²⁹ Peter Schreiner, "L'Importance culturelle des colonies occidentales en territoire byzantine", *Coloniser au Moyen Age*, eds. Michel Balard and Alain Ducellier (Paris, Armand Colin, 1995) 293.

¹³⁰ See Siegrid Düll, "Les Monuments des Génois en Turquie et leurs rapports avec Byzance", *Etat et colonisation*, ed. Michel Balard (Lyon, Le Manufacture, 1989) 113-128. Ornamentation of buildings with the use of plant designs, for instance, became very popular.

mercenary Latins while portraying a grim picture in the East.¹³¹ The Westerners realized that the fall of Byzantium meant the advancement of the Turks in Western Europe and uncertain conditions in the Holy Land, not to mention a major blow to the common Christian legacy in East and West. The Pope hoped for more than just lending protection to his fellow Christians and to Jerusalem; he envisioned a possible restoration of the Greek "schismatic" church- "more horrid than Islam"-¹³² to the "true" Catholic faith. What began as an appeal for military aid turned into an expedition to free the Holy Land, especially the Holy Sepulcher.

In 1095 it was not difficult to convince the poor yet adventurous Latin masses at the Council of Clermont to partake in a Holy War in support of a Byzantine army surprisingly incapable of handling the crisis.¹³³ This was seen as an opportunity to receive absolution from sins by undertaking a pilgrimage, but also as a postponement of payment of debts to a feudal lord. Colonial expansion eastward became a reality, especially in France. Vasiliev notes that "The eleventh century in France was a time of frequent famines and drought and of violent epidemics and severe winters. These hard conditions of living made the population think of distant lands full of abundance and

¹³¹ For more on this carefully written letter and the hypotheses surrounding its authenticity and intent see Vasiliev 386-7.

¹³² Ibid. 396.

¹³³ Although the First Crusade was one of the first real occasions where masses of common soldiers on both sides actually met, before the "official" stereotypes of the "weak" Byzantines became widely spread (notwithstanding such accounts as, say, Luidprand of Cremona, who vehemently despised them and ridiculed their military performance), it was quite likely that the Latins approached the Eastern Christians with reservations ranging from simple puzzlement as to their handicap, to sheer mockery of their "cowardly" dispositions.

prosperity."¹³⁴ In fact, it is thought that the Crusades actually increased the population in some countries, despite all those killed en route.

The following year, however, before the arrival of a real army, Peter of Amiens, often called Peter the Hermit, aroused a crusading movement in France, consisting of poor people, small knights and the homeless who pillaged every country on their way to the Byzantine capital. Horrified by this news, Alexius transported them across the Bosphorous into Asia Minor, where they were almost all killed by the Turks. That summer, Baldwin of Flanders, Raymond of St. Gilles and Bohemond of Apulia (Robert Guiscard's son) appeared at the gates of Constantinople with the Crusaders. Having requested the aid of only several mercenaries, Alexius was overwhelmed and alarmed at the size of an immense army. The idea of a Crusade was alien to the Byzantines. Furthermore, the participation of Bohemond and the Normans was linked to unsettled scores with the Byzantines. Anna Comnena, Alexius' oldest daughter, had suspected this in her account of the First Crusade. She stated, "And such an upheaval of both men and women took place then as had never occurred within human memory; the simpler-minded were urged on by the real desire of worshiping at our Lord's Sepulcher, and visiting the sacred places, but the more astute, especially men like Bohemond and those of like mind, had another secret reason, namely, the hope that while on their travels they might by some means be able to seize the capital itself, finding a pretext for this."¹³⁵ This turn of events seemed very likely to the cynical Anna, who refused to pronounce

¹³⁴ Vasiliev 399.

¹³⁵ Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, trans. Elizabeth A. S. Dawes (New York, Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1967) 76.

the barbaric sounds of the Latins' names, whom she referred to condescendingly as "Celts".¹³⁶ Nevertheless, Alexius allowed the passage of Western troops to Jerusalem but demanded that the Latins return to him any provinces recovered in the East, claiming that they were rightfully his because of his family's origins in Asia Minor. The Byzantine Emperor did not wish to confront the Turks because they were infidels and a menace to the Holy Land, but rather, because they threatened his territories. In addition, he asked that the Crusaders swear allegiance ("*hommage*") to him in the ritualistic Western feudal manner¹³⁷ as their sovereign. But the Crusaders' acts of violence within the imperial city obligated the Emperor to transport them to Asia Minor, as he had done before with Peter the Hermit's army. Name-calling and feelings of mutual mistrust were commonplace.

Adding insult to injury, the Western leaders did not keep their word of returning the Byzantine provinces to the Emperor. First Baldwin took the city of Edessa and made it the first Latin dominion in the East, then Bohemond took Antioch, refusing any rights to Alexius. In 1104, Bohemond was defeated and he subsequently returned to Italy. He then obtained the support of the Pope and planned to attack Constantinople. Bohemond's second defeat guaranteed Alexius no further Norman threats throughout the remainder of his reign.

The First Crusade officially ended in 1099, when Godfrey of Bouillon established the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, organized in the feudal fashion. By now,

¹³⁶ Ibid., especially Chapter 10. Anna did not fail, however, to acknowledge that most Western soldiers were loud and illiterate, yet simple and pure at heart, gravely taken advantage of by those seeking to seize Constantinople.

¹³⁷ See Oldenbourg 33-34. This act was seen especially humiliating to the West, who had already sworn their loyalties elsewhere. See also p. 79.

the road had been officially paved for Western territorial and financial advancement in the East. Besides the Italian colonies in Constantinople, the Franks' agricultural dominion in and colonization of Palestine provides a further attestation of this tendency.¹³⁸ Byzantium's status in the East was now ambiguous: although the Turks had been weakened, the Latins were becoming new political foes. The Byzantines were accused of perfidy by the West. A triangle of alliances was created between the Byzantines and the Turks against the Latins, as well as between the Latins and the Turks against the Byzantines. As a sign of good will, the Emperor helped transport the Crusaders back West, but the results of the Crusade itself were catastrophic in terms of East/ West relations.

3. The Second Crusade and Manuel Comnenus.

The reign of Alexius Comnenus was followed by that of his son, John II, recognized by Greek and Latin historians as a person of high morals and military genius.¹³⁹ His foreign policy continued that of his father, but John was even more ambitious: "Alexis avait su arrêter les ennemis de l'empire; son fils formera des projets plus hardis, tentera d'enlever à ses voisins les provinces qu'ils ont arrachées aux Grecs et rêvera de rétablir l'empire byzantin dans son ancienne splendeur."¹⁴⁰

Displeased with the Venetians' growing financial power in Constantinople, John's first order of business would be to dismiss the commercial treaty Alexius had

¹³⁸ See Michel Balard 288.

¹³⁹ See Ferdinand Chalandon, *Les Comnènes* (New York, Burt Franklin, 1960) 9.

made with the Venetians. Venice responded by preparing a raid on the Byzantine islands, thus forcing John to negotiate. Pisa and Genoa also profited by the new commercial privileges and relations were restored. The same could not be said of southern Italy and Sicily, which John would have liked to restore as Byzantine territories. Instead, Roger II was crowned in Palermo, destroying any dream of restoration, but most importantly, assuming a royal title in spite of imperial objections. John then looked to Conrad III Hohenstaufen of Germany, who also had interests in southern Italy. It is due to John that an alliance between Byzantium and Germany was created.

John was succeeded by his son, Manuel I Comnenus, a renowned Francophile. In temperament as well as in policy he differed greatly from his father. Vasiliev comments: "A convinced admirer of the West who had chosen as his ideal the Western knight, the new Emperor changed at once the austere court setting of his late father. Cheerful entertainments, love, receptions, sumptuous festivities, hunting parties after the Western pattern, tournaments- all these spread widely over Constantinople."¹⁴¹ To the Byzantines' grave disappointment, the most prestigious offices of the court were handed to the Westerners who wished to remain in Byzantium. William of Tyre, Latin historian and courtier of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem praised Manuel and describes the East/West hostilities around the time of the Second Crusade:

During the reign of Manuel, beloved of God, the Latins had found great favor with him- a reward well deserved because of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 10.

¹⁴¹ Vasiliev 376.

their loyalty and valor. The Emperor, a great-souled man of incomparable energy, relied so implicitly on their fidelity and ability that he passed over the Greeks as soft and effeminate and entrusted important affairs to the Latins alone.... The Greek nobles, especially the kindred of the Emperor, and the mass of the people as well, naturally conceived an insatiable hatred toward us ... and were ever seeking an opportunity, at least after the death of the Emperor, to destroy utterly the hated race of the Latins.¹⁴²

Manuel maintained the alliance with Germany that his father had created because of the growing Norman threat. His marriage to Bertha of Sulzbach (renamed Irene in Byzantium), sister-in-law of Conrad III, was to guarantee the aid of Germany in case of Norman danger. But the Second Crusade put the alliance at risk.

What prompted this Crusade was the fall of Edessa to the Turks in 1144 and the lingering Turkish threat to other Christian states. Westerners showed a new interest in the cause of the Holy Land. Their leader was King Louis VII of France who set out with his preacher, Saint. Bernard of Clairvaux, to convince Conrad III to join them. Eventually, antagonism developed between the French and the Germans. This, coupled with an initial lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Crusaders, due no doubt to the disappointment of the First Crusade, was a major reason for the dismal failure of the expedition.

Another contributing factor was the reaction of Manuel. If Conrad was to take this new cause with the French king, Byzantium would lose its protector from the

¹⁴² William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, trans. E.A. Babcock and A. C. Krey (New York, Columbia University Press, 1943) 461-62. The portrayal of Byzantines as "effeminate" is also echoed in Luitprand of Cremona and Odo of Deuil. This characterization is in reality a juxtaposition of a refined Byzantine society possessing a mercenary army with a well trained in military matters West. Oldenbourg notes that, "le guerrier occidental, tant par la qualité de ses armes, que par ses vertus de combattant, était à cette époque supérieur aux guerrier byzantins et musulmans". (*Les Croisades*, 38.)

Normans. Manuel would also lose influence in Antioch, which could change allegiance, once supported by the Western armies. Because the memories of the First Crusade were so fresh in the minds of the Byzantines and because news had arrived of even further pillaging of the Crusaders on their way to Constantinople, Manuel ordered the restoration of the city walls, having little trust in the old alliance with Conrad. Upon the latter's arrival along with his troops, the Emperor hastily transported them to Asia Minor without substantial provisions. There, the Germans awaited Byzantine ships to ferry the army to Antioch, but in vain. They soon became easy prey for the Turks.

The arrival of Louis also caused tension, because of his new friendship with Roger, who, in the meantime, had successfully invaded Greece. The French came into contact with the Byzantines personally, but not on the best of terms: "Si les Turcs massacraient les Grecs isolés, les Latins ne se faisaient pas faute de tuer les Byzantins, qu'ils traitaient de païens... Du côté des Français, il s'était formé autour du roi tout un parti nettement hostile au basileus."¹⁴³ The French army considered seizing Constantinople in fear of a Greco-Turkish alliance against them. The Byzantine court, however, had no intentions of pursuing the hostilities. Empress Irene grew fond of Louis's wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was accompanying her husband on this Crusade. The French queen was fascinated with Byzantine luxuries and finery: "Eleanor acquired a taste for Byzantine clothes and it was probably she who brought back to France such fashions as bulbous turbans, tall, pointed hats, and shoes like the beaks of birds."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Chalandon 295.

¹⁴⁴ Desmond Seward, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (New York, Dorset Press, 1979), 45.

Louis was received at the imperial palace in Constantinople as an act of friendship, but suspicions never ceased. Soon, the French joined the Germans in Asia Minor, ignoring their failure. However, Franco-German rivalry led to Conrad renewing his alliance with Manuel against Roger while Louis met with Roger in southern Italy.

The Second Crusade resulted in the loss of any religious character in the crusading act, the advances of Muslim power in the East, and increased animosity between Byzantines and Latins: "The West blamed the perfidy of Byzantium for its failure, although Manuel could argue that the Crusaders were interested only in their own states", claims Dahmus.¹⁴⁵ One of these states was the Norman ally of the French, which they needed to maintain in order to ensure military aid and easy passage to the East through Italian territories. Manuel, glad to see the Crusade over, sought the aid of the Venetians against such an alliance, in the hopes of restoring former Byzantine territories in southern Italy. These negotiations irritated Louis VII and encouraged him to prepare for a new Crusade that would threaten Byzantium directly and destroy its bond with Conrad, who had gravely disappointed the West because of it.

However, in the following years, Louis's plans were never embraced by the French, Conrad III died and was succeeded by Frederick I Barbarossa, who addressed Manuel as *rex*, not *imperator*, believing in his own unlimited imperial power granted him by God.¹⁴⁶ Barbarossa joined William I, successor of the Norman Roger, in destroying the Byzantine-Venetian alliance and any of Manuel's hopes of territorial

¹⁴⁵ Dahmus 275.

¹⁴⁶ See Vasiliev 424.

restoration in Italy. In response, the Byzantine Emperor turned to the Pope for help, suggesting a possible union of the churches. What Manuel really desired was the unity of the Empire, with himself as Emperor, after the destruction of Barbarossa. To his disappointment, this dream did not materialize.

In 1161, Manuel married Marie of Antioch, daughter of a French prince, Raymond of Poitiers, and first cousin of Eleanor of Aquitaine. In so doing, he would eventually gain full control of Antioch, a Latin state in the East.¹⁴⁷ Years later, in hopes of improving Franco-Byzantine relations, Manuel arranged for the marriage of his son and heir Alexius II to princess Agnes (to be called Anne in Byzantium), the eight-year-old daughter of Louis VII. Yet, relations were not so easily repaired. Preferential treatment of the Latins and neglect of Byzantine interests increased the hatred of the Byzantines towards the West. In 1180, Emperor Manuel I Comnenus died, leaving behind him subjects on the verge of rebellion.

4. The Third Crusade.

After Manuel's death, his relative, the notorious Andronicus, arrived at the Byzantine court from exile, and seized the imperial throne. Andronicus formed a conspiracy, strangled fourteen-year-old Emperor Alexius II and his mother the Regent Marie of Antioch, and then, at sixty-three years of age, married the twelve-year-old widow of Alexius II, Agnes of France. Andronicus was determined to end Latin

¹⁴⁷ Byzantine suzerainty in the East has already been partly established in 1159, when Manuel humiliated and submitted Renaud of Châtillon, prince of Antioch, marking an important triumph of the Byzantines over the Latins. This new marriage alliance would reinforce the Byzantine control of Antioch.

preponderance in Byzantium. In 1182, a massacre of the Latins was organized in Constantinople. Those who escaped returned to their native lands to relate the news of the Byzantine atrocities and to seek revenge.

Byzantium now had two major Western enemies: Germany and the Kingdom of Sicily, soon to be fused into one great anti-Byzantine power through the marriage of the German Barbarossa's son, Henry, to the heiress of the Kingdom of Sicily. Andronicus sought the help of the sultan of Egypt, Saladin, while promising him Palestine. In 1185, the Latins massacred the Byzantines in Thessalonica, a city second to Constantinople in population, urban development and commerce. Andronicus was dethroned and Isaac Angelus, son-in-law of Alexius Comnenus, was elevated to the throne.¹⁴⁸

Two years later, in 1187, Saladin captured Jerusalem. This would mark the beginning of the Third Crusade, summoned by the Pope, and supported by Frederick Barbarossa, Richard the Lion-Hearted, king of England, and Philip Augustus, king of France. Richard arrived at Cyprus, whose ruler Isaac Comnenus had seceded from the Empire. The English king handed over the island to Guy de Lusignan, ex-king of Jerusalem thereby creating a new Latin state in Cyprus. In his article "Le Régime des Lusignans en Chypre et la population locale", Peter Edbury¹⁴⁹ studies the legal, financial, and religious changes in the lives of the Byzantine-Cypriots, brought on by Frankish colonization. Although the Franks did not succeed in forcing the Cypriots to

¹⁴⁸ See Robert Payne, *The Dream and the Tomb: A History of the Crusades* (New York, Stein and Day, 1984).

¹⁴⁹ Michel Balard and Alain Ducellier, eds., *Coloniser au Moyen Age*, (Paris, Armand-Colin, 1995) 354-358.

embrace the Church of the West, claims Edbury, they limited the power of the Eastern Church in Cyprus. Cypriots were not reduced to serfdom, but they could not hold the positions of vassals either. French knights and their bourgeoisie held higher offices, and offered some possibilities of social ascension to the Byzantines, by employing them in their service (358). Edbury comments that the Cypriots may not have rebelled because at the beginning of the Latin colonization many major landowners had fled (355). In any case, the colonization of Cyprus constituted a severe loss of a strategically important island in the Eastern Mediterranean for the Byzantines, despite Isaac Comnenus' efforts.

5. *The Fourth Crusade.*

The outcome of the Fourth Crusade, with all the anti-Byzantine rage and the pillaging of Constantinople, is described by both Clari and Villehardouin in their *Conquête de Constantinople*. The chroniclers recount how Pope Innocent III had received the plea of Prince Alexius, son of blinded and dethroned Isaac Angelus, to help restore his throne. On the other hand, the new Byzantine Emperor, Alexius III proposed a new union of the churches, if the West agreed to his sole rule of the Empire, which the Pope eventually accepted.¹⁵⁰

In the final years of the twelfth century, the Holy Sepulcher was once again in Muslim hands, and a new joint Crusade of Latins and Byzantines was being organized. In the West, the crusading army was composed of French (among them were Thibaut, count of Champagne, Baldwin of Flanders, and Louis of Blois), English, Flemish,

Germans, and Sicilians. Next to Innocent, the most important figure of the Crusade was the aged and blind Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, an expert economist and diplomat. Dandolo's personal hatred of the Byzantines, coupled with his knowledge of the riches of the East, inspired him to seek retaliation for the Venetians, who were massacred in Constantinople in 1182, and whose properties had been confiscated by Manuel before that.

It was agreed that the Crusaders would assemble in Venice, in order to support the ships to Egypt. But Venice refused to cooperate, unless the promised sum was paid to her in full. Finally, the Crusaders were forced to accept the proposal of the Doge to assist the Venetians in capturing Hungarian-owned Zara, situated on the Dalmatian coasts, despite the Pope's threats of excommunication. Then, prince Alexius asked the help of his brother-in-law, King Philip of Swabia, to restore his father Isaac Angelus to the throne. Philip sent an embassy to Zara to seek the assistance of Venice and the Crusaders. In return, Alexius promised a huge amount of money, an army of ten thousand men and submission to the Roman Church. Clearly, this would change the direction and the character of the Crusade. In 1203, the conquest of Constantinople was decided and Alexius, Dandolo, and Boniface sailed to the city with a fleet.

As they sailed to Constantinople, the initial sight of the city from the vessel caused the awe of the Crusaders.¹⁵¹ That same night, Byzantine vessels were burnt and

¹⁵⁰ See also Donald E. Queller, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1978).

¹⁵¹ See my discussion of Crusader and chronicler Villehardouin's treatment of the sight of the city, in connection with Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism*.

Constantinople was stormed. The Crusaders were successful in removing the usurper Alexius III, and in restoring the throne to Isaac and his son, who was proclaimed co-regent as Alexius IV.

The Crusaders spent that winter in Constantinople, waiting for the spring to continue their mission. Alexius IV was unable to pay them the promised sum and urged them to camp outside the city, so as to appease the people who were unhappy with his pro-Western policies. Soon, the son-in-law of Alexius III, Alexius Ducas Mourzuphlus, in turn dethroned Alexius IV and Isaac, and became Emperor Alexius V. The situation in Constantinople became chaotic, and the Crusaders saw no obligation to the new Emperor. In March of 1204, a treaty between the Venetians and the Crusaders discussed the distribution of the possessions of the city, about to be sacked for the second time. On April 13th, 1204, Alexius V fled and Constantinople fell to the Crusaders. In the course of three days, treasures that had been collected over centuries were destroyed. Nicetas Choniates, a Byzantine chronicler and eye-witness, contrasted the inhumanity of the Latins against Byzantines to the relative humanity of Muslims against Latins, implying that their fellow Christians had more reason to be scorned than their archenemies, the Muslim Turks:

Such were the wrongs done by the armies of the West to Christ's chosen people. They showed no humanity to anyone, but stripped them of money and property, house and clothing, and left them nothing [...] The sons of Ishmael were not so. They comported themselves humanely and gently towards the Latins' fellow countrymen when they captured Jerusalem. They did not fall like neighing stallions on Latin women [...] They permitted all the Latins to withdraw with a moderate payment per man [...] That is how the enemies of Christ treated the infidel Latins, using neither sword nor fire nor hunger nor persecution nor nakedness nor oppression, in all magnanimity. How different was the

treatment we met from our fellow Christians, though they had nothing to reproach us with.¹⁵²

The spoils of Constantinople were divided among the Latins and the Byzantines had been reduced to colonial status in their own country. The next issue to deal with was the election of a new Latin Emperor. Dandolo opposed the candidacy of Boniface of Montferrat, and Baldwin of Flanders was crowned Emperor in the church of Saint Sophia. Dandolo assumed the Byzantine title "Despot", releasing him from any obligations of homage to the Emperor. Venice took the lion's share in the partition of the northern territories of Byzantium; the French created feudaries in the Peloponnese, renamed Morea, according to the Western prototype. All along, the attitude of Innocent III had been ambiguous. He did not excommunicate the Crusaders as he had previously done in the case of Zara. But the Pope was satisfied that the Emperor of Constantinople now considered himself as "his vassal". Control of Constantinople would mean easier access to the Holy Land. This positive outlook, however, did not last long, once Innocent became informed of the Crusaders' atrocities and the completely secular character of the expedition. He wrote: "Having neither right nor power over the Greeks you seem to have impudently deviated from the purity of your vow, when you marched

¹⁵² Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae, 1835) 762-63. The fact that Choniates claims that the Byzantines were "beyond reproach" in this struggle was more a plea for sympathy, for it was no secret that the Latins had been misled by Alexius IV. Choniates implies that the only justification for such inhumane behavior would be a holy war, which was not the case. By casting them in such a negative light, deprived of Christian brotherhood, honored "even by" the Muslims, Choniates attacks the Westerners' morality.

not against the Saracens, but against the Christians, meaning not to re-conquer Jerusalem, but to take Constantinople, preferring earthly riches to heavenly riches."¹⁵³

Despite their political subjugation to the West, the Byzantines did not adopt Catholicism, and so the union of Churches was never made possible. They secretly dreamed of a recapture of Constantinople and of the restoration of past grandeur. Indeed, the recapture took place in 1261, but the restoration of past glory was wishful thinking. Perhaps the damage caused by the Fourth Crusade was the inevitable result of a long history of disagreement, mistrust, and misunderstanding. Ever since the First Crusade, the meeting of East with West had been confrontational. The Second Crusade entertained the idea of a siege on Constantinople in the entourage of Louis VII; the Third Crusade with its Norman threats was equally dangerous for the Byzantines; the Fourth brought their total annihilation. In the Westerners, or the "Franks" as the Byzantines indiscriminately called them, the Byzantines saw a foe equally menacing as the Turks in the East. Their identity was to be defined "first and foremost in contrast to the Latins."¹⁵⁴ The Latins, too, were alarmed and disillusioned by the Byzantines, seen as treacherous and arrogant.¹⁵⁵ It is due to the unfolding of centuries of History that the backdrop of a principally negative stereotype of Byzantium would not easily be erased.

¹⁵³ Cited in Vasiliev 468.

¹⁵⁴ See Robert Browning, "Greeks and Others from Antiquity to the Renaissance" *History, Language, and Literacy in the Byzantine World*, ed. Robert Browning (Northampton, Variorum Reprints, 1989) 21.

¹⁵⁵ This question, as well its treatment in literary works of the twelfth and early- thirteenth centuries, will be dealt with at length in following chapters. For a concise discussion see Sharon Kinoshita, "The Poetics of Translatio: French-Byzantine Relations in Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligès*", *Exemplaria* 8:2, (1996): 315-354.

And yet, interactions and alliances between the two worlds would not cease to take place, despite the discrepancies in matters of politics and religion. As long as both the Byzantines and the Latins had aspirations for territorial and political expansion, they would venture into one another's turf. Indeed, this was a land coveted by the Franks, a passage to a mystical world.

CHAPTER 2

Byzantine Mappings

None of us is acquainted with this territory.

Odo of Deuil

A. Cartography.

In the twelfth century, the eastward travel of Westerners created a particular understanding of physical space, blending biblical teachings with classical writings, such as Ptolemy's *Almagest*, and Strabo's *Geography*.¹⁵⁶ Despite the early Church's initial questioning of the need for cartographic representations of these territories, since only the preoccupation with the spiritual world was of true significance, medieval maps would eventually become important evocative devices of Christian symbolism, as well as pictorial renditions of geographical and historical facts and legends.¹⁵⁷ Many of these legends comprised monsters, or heretical beings, alienated from Christ. Races deemed imperfect in terms of spiritual and physical features were pushed from the Western point of reference and "normality" to the Eastern periphery. So, paradoxically, while East was the privileged location on medieval maps, or *mappaemundi*, recalling the (physical) position of Paradise, its extremities were designated for the confinement of unnatural creatures. The Crusaders' new knowledge of the Eastern landscape and inhabitants did little to dismiss this fallacy, in line with the general western medieval fascination with

¹⁵⁶ See David Woodward, "Medieval Mappaemundi", *The History of Cartography*, Volume I, eds. J.B. Harley and David Woodward, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987), esp.299. Among the concepts adopted from the Greek pagan world was the Earth's sphericity, represented by an orb.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 326.

the bizarre and the fantastic, but also serving the purposes of Western propaganda. The Frenchman Guy de Bazoches sums up this argument best: "France alone has no monsters, but abounds in wise, strong, and most eloquent men."¹⁵⁸

Medieval *mappaemundi* serve no real navigational purpose; at best, they offer approximative itineraries for pilgrims. In a theocratic society, the purpose of the maps was to invite entertainment, instruction, and contemplation.¹⁵⁹ These maps are not read for their geographical accuracy; instead, they address the essential question of fluid boundaries¹⁶⁰ by means of which the literary hero can cross from the realm of the real to the Otherworld (the otherworldly experience of *Partonopeus* is most typical). These boundaries may also be ontological, like the polymorphous corporality of certain heroes and heroines (or lack of a visible corporality in the case Mélior). To further complicate matters, these ontological boundaries may retrace dual identity: Garsire in *Florence de Rome* is king of the Byzantine world, but his name recalls Saracen characters of the *chansons de geste*, thus implying an ambivalent spiritual condition and a suspect political situation. Finally, there are socio-political boundaries that must be traversed, as well as those of orthodoxy in matters of faith. In all of these cases, Byzantium is presented as a significant boundary, at once dangerous and attractive, because of the numerous cultural differences it signifies for the Franks as well as the enticing challenges that it offers.

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Friedman 53

¹⁵⁹ For an excellent discussion on medieval maps, see Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers View their World* (London, British Library, 1997). See particularly p.13.

¹⁶⁰ Friedman 38-42.

The location of Byzantium in the East implies a connection to a marvelous land in a distant place, and therefore sheds no real light on the actual position of its territories. The question of mappings is indeed a complex one in the Middle Ages, as the science of geomorphology, "a subdiscipline of geography, concerned with the study of the form and development of the landscape",¹⁶¹ did not exist. The purpose of medieval *mappaemundi*, "was to provide illustrated histories or moralized didactic displays in a geographical setting",¹⁶² according to David Woodward. As with the chroniclers of actual or fictional journeys, the intent of the medieval cartographer and chronicler was of minimal documentary interest. Often, he would provide inventories of place-names so as to imply authenticity and real knowledge of geography, as in the case of Villehardouin, Clari, and the *Pèlerinage*. Their enumeration, however, could be haphazard, suggesting a peaceful and highly idealized *pax romana* in the case of Byzantium, stressing either the ignorance of the West or the deliberate distortion of the history of turbulent and shifting borders in the East. Thus, due to its position, the geo-historical mappings of Byzantium were subject to estimations, generalizations, misinterpretations, bias, or fraud. Byzantium was a natural divider between Christianity and Islam, a fragmented border zone already exposed to and contaminated with overlapping world views, a land of transition, flux, a gateway to the Orient of speculation and fantasy.

¹⁶¹ <http://www.hyperdictionary.com/dictionary/geomorphology>.

¹⁶² David Woodward, "Reality, Symbolism, Time, and Space in Medieval World Maps", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 74:4 (1985): 510.

Euclidean space and geographical accuracy are therefore absent from the works of my corpus. Instead, another level of truth is favored- that of medieval symbolism. Byzantium was an enormous stage in the Cosmos, an ideal setting for an intricate play and the recycling of a compelling tale. Among its inhabitants was the mighty Alexander, a larger-than-life character who sought to conquer domains outside the "Byzantium map" of fantasy; Cligès was another famous protagonist, fusing two Christianities, two Empires of East and West by means of his genealogy and his inheritance; Hector and the sorceress Médée also dwelt in the vast territories of Byzantium; finally, to Villehardouin and Clari, Byzantium was a Christian land of ancient place-names, where the drama shifts from one place to the next at random. Despite the documentary claim, there is some implicit pleasure in the narration of the events of the Fourth Crusade as cumulative inventories of happenings in a distant and wealthy ancient place, whose antiquity and geographical remoteness situate Byzantium in a discourse of Otherness. At times, the inclusion of certain territories within the maps accentuates their political and spiritual importance to the known world. Two maps are of particular interest in the case of Byzantium- the maps of Asia and Palestine- found in a twelfth-century French manuscript illustrating saint Jerome's fourth or fifth century *Liber Locorum*, which was "a listing of place-names organized under the headings of books of the Bible".¹⁶³ These maps are significant, because they focus on the position of the Byzantine territories in the Cosmos, with numerous mystical and spiritual implications. The map of Asia (Figure 3), for example, shows an immense Asia Minor, a Byzantine possession, in the

¹⁶³ Edson 26.

center of the Earth, an important position often held by the sacred city of Jerusalem (as in the cases of the Hereford, Ebstorf and Psalter maps, produced after the twelfth century). While metrical scale was not of major interest, the exaggeration of the size of Asia Minor, equal almost to Asia, as well as its central position, are meaningful parameters in the reading of this map. Indeed, the center of a map is often the most privileged position, and because it connotes the point of reference for other places; distances are measured according to the center. The center also enjoys special spiritual superiority, symbolizing the place of cosmic beginnings; Delphi, for instance was the center of the world, according to Greek thought. The Asia map shows Greece at the bottom, and the northern part of the Eastern Mediterranean coast is at the right. The map is not consistent in its orientation, as suggested by the position of Achaia (Greece) at the lower right, and Constantinople at the lower left.¹⁶⁴ Space is arranged in a way that is deemed significant to the reader. In this case, the exaggeration of the size of Asia Minor may imply the importance of the entrance to a marvelous East, or suggesting the various regions evangelized by the apostles, such as Ephesus. Indeed, Asia Minor was the birthplace of many saints-- George, Nicholas, and Blasius, to name a few-- and it was probable that the cult and veneration of the Eastern saints by Westerners were the basis for its position in the sacred center of the map. On the other hand, distance from the center implies marginalization and hostility. Constantinople at the lower left and Greece at the lower right form a triangle with the centrally- positioned Asia Minor. They imply the peripheral, in contradiction to Asia Minor. The inconsistencies of the orientation

¹⁶⁴ Edson 29.

might well be deliberate, separating Asia Minor from the other two, or simply demonstrating its overwhelming importance over them.

The Palestine map (Figure 4) places Constantinople and the entrance to the Black Sea at the lower left corner after other coastal cities of Palestine. The islands of the Aegean are placed above it to the right, while in the Far East there are the columns of Hercules and Alexander. The contemporary Byzantine megalopolis is thus included in the realm of the fantastic and the ancient. The creator of the map decided to include a popular destination of pilgrimages and a large center of Christianity in the same map as pagan heroes, whether historical or mythical. Though this type of juxtaposition was not rare in medieval maps, the anachronism implies a certain subtext; besides addressing the question of historical continuity between the pagan Greeks and the Byzantines, the mapmaker may even be insinuating the suspicious spiritual condition of the Byzantines, in dangerous proximity to the mythical. In fact, the scattered islands, with very little respect to their actual location and size, reinforce this impression of mythic lore. Lastly, "the four rivers Ganges, Indus, Tigris, and Euphrates flow from Mount Caucasus and Armenia, rather than Paradise".¹⁶⁵ The Caucasus Mountains, an obscure margin of the world, may imply a connection to the rivers of Paradise, but they also create a major barrier to all four, thus rendering them strictly unattainable due to earthly restrictions. According to popular belief, these mountains were a place of exile for the Byzantines, as well as home to the Amazon queen in the *Roman d'Alexandre*. From there, the warrior women guarded Alexander's gate, enclosing the demonic forces of Gog and Magog and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

isolating them from humanity, as shown in a series of maps (Ebstorf, Hereford). Real places thus become items of fantastic geography.

Medieval maps leave much to the imagination and invite their readers to other uncharted places. When the ambitious Alexander set out to conquer the earth, the heavens, and the sea, he placed himself outside the human realm as an act of hubris, flying outside the known map and sinking to uncharted ocean depths. As a true iconoclast, he proceeded to conquer a mythical Eastern landscape that invited expansionism. Within his magnificent tent, adorned with images of seasons and constellations, he consulted his *mappamundi*, to acquire inspiration for his future exploits, but also as a confirmation to himself and to his peers of his military dominance over the *oecumene*:

En l'autre pan après, se voliés garder,
 Veïssiés mapamonde enseigner et mostrer
 Ensi comme la terre est enclose de mer
 Et com li philosophe la vaurebt deviser
 Et metre en trois parties que je sai bien nomer :
 C'est Aise et Eürope et Aufrique sa per;
 Les montaignes, les fleuves, les cités a conter,
 Par letres d'or escrites i pöés tout trover.
 Alixandres li rois i veut molt esgarder

(*Le Roman d'Alexandre*, 2020-2028)

Alexander's *mappamundi* completes the image of Creation, along with the depiction of the other celestial bodies in his tent. Clearly, he is referring to a tripartite T-O map, with Asia occupying the top hemisphere of the map, and Asia and Africa the bottom. According to Woodward, "the parts of the T are represented by the three major waterways believed by medieval scholars to divide the three parts of the earth: Tanais

(the river Don) dividing Europe and Asia; and the Mediterranean Sea dividing Europe and Africa".¹⁶⁶

The accounts of Alexander's ambition and conquests initiated a tradition of fantastic travels, depicting vague and vast territories. In twelfth and early-thirteenth-century France, Alexander found many literary brothers and sisters who followed him on his journey to the mythical East. Their reasons for this displacement vary; some were performing a sacred voyage (*Le Pèlerinage*), others were on such a voyage turned holy war (*La Chanson d'Antioche*, Villehardouin, Clari); others still traveled East to acquire promised imperial titles (*Cligès*, *Eracle*, *Florimont*). Occasionally, heroes and heroines were victims of abductions (*Partonopeus*, *Florence de Rome*). Finally, protagonists found themselves in the East in order to defend an empire (*Le Roman de Troie*) or to become henchmen in a delegation (*Girart de Roussillon*). Whatever the purpose of the movement, there is one striking link between these works, which sheds light on Western visions of the Orient, namely, the representation of the vague, even oneiric Byzantine territory. Byzantium and especially the Byzantine city became the *sine qua non* of Oriental lure and craftsmanship and a source of seduction and *émerveillement* for the West.

As a stopover for those *en route* to Jerusalem and to the Far East, or as a final destination, the world of Byzantium was reached by pilgrims, Crusaders, knights, soldiers, envoys, and chroniclers from the West. The journey was long and treacherous, the terrain rough and mountainous, and the setting unfamiliar, from its animal and plant

¹⁶⁶ Woodward, *Medieval Mappaemundi*, 296-297.

life, to its natural resources, and finally its inhabitants. On the other hand, prior accounts of the exoticism of Byzantium, especially those pertaining to the metropolis of Constantinople, wet the appetite of curious and greedy twelfth-century travelers.¹⁶⁷ This partial knowledge of both poets and chroniclers coupled with their misunderstanding of the East found a serious challenge in the representation of medieval Byzantium. As an Oriental entity, Byzantium would be presented as mysterious and excessive to suit the purposes of the West and legitimize its political cause.

The mechanics of this Orientalizing process involved establishing an almost fictitious land, whose codes-- whether in matters of art, language, customs, or even place-names—were to be interpreted according to the givens of the Western world. As Said puts it, "It is as if, having once settled in the Orient as a locale suitable for incarnating the infinite in a finite shape, Europe could not stop the practice: the Orient and the Oriental, Arab, Islamic, Indian, Chinese, or whatever, became pseudo-incarnations of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West) they were supposed to have been imitating. Only the source of these rather narcissistic Western ideas about the Orient have changed in time, not their character".¹⁶⁸ Byzantium was an uncharted space, exotic primarily because of its geographical distance from the West, but also abundant in material riches and natural resources. Thus, Byzantium was prone to exist as a "fictional reality" in the mind of the Westerner. Said further characterized this phenomenon of

¹⁶⁷ Among those providing such accounts are ambassadors, merchants, artists, students, and church officials. See also Chris Wickham, "Ninth-century Byzantium through Western Eyes", *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive? Papers from the Thirtieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Birmingham, Variorum Ashgate Publishing, 1996) 245-246. See also Ciggaar, *op. cit.*, 21-44.

familiar versus unfamiliar territory thus: "In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary".¹⁶⁹ Byzantium was "their" land, an Eastern land beyond sea and mountains, dangerous yet alluring, resented yet desired.

B. Romania in flux.

The contradictory feelings of Western travelers to the East reflected the greater complexity of the Orient, namely its definition in terms of a geo-political, social, and philosophical entity, and access to it. According to Jacques Le Goff, we may distinguish two distinct routes of access to the Orient: "deux systèmes de pensée, deux mentalités, deux sensibilités, au demeurant souvent mêlées"¹⁷⁰, that is to say, the literary tradition and popular culture. It is precisely according to this polarity that we are also to understand the Byzantine world, especially when dealing with the question of its formal appellation. The Byzantines' term of preference when referring to their land and the one adopted by the Latins was *Romania*: "In this period [circa 330 A.D.] the term was clearly used to denote the *orbis Romanus* or the *imperium Romanum*; it was essentially a popular rather than a literary expression, formed perhaps by analogy on the model of *Gallia*, *Graecia*, *Brittania*. It was used specifically in contrast with the barbarian

¹⁶⁸ Said 54.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 55.

¹⁷⁰ Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre moyen age* (Paris, Gallimard, 1977) 297.

world"¹⁷¹. The name *Romania*, generated from "New Rome", which was another term for Constantinople, was used indiscriminately by the Byzantines to speak of their territories in Asia Minor, the Middle East, Greece proper, and the Western Byzantine provinces of modern-day Italy.

In the Latin perception, *Romania* was a generic term applied to the Byzantine East, an unspecified territory with questionable boundaries, ranging from the Italian provinces of the Empire, the former Exarchate of Ravenna, to the Greek possessions of Asia Minor, including the Greek possessions of Europe, and Western Greece, in many possible combinations.¹⁷² But as the geographic inconsistencies persisted, confusion reigned as to the location of the Byzantines, placing them somewhere in the Near East. At times, attempts were made to define the range of the territory. Fulcher of Chartres, chronicler of the First Crusade, thus refers to the Anatolian provinces of the Byzantine Empire when applying the term *Romania*:

For as most of you have been told, the Turks, a race of Persians, who have penetrated within the boundaries of *Romania* even to the Mediterranean to that point which they call the Arm of Saint George, in occupying more and more of the lands of the Christians, have overcome them, already victims of seven battles, and have captured them, have overthrown churches, and have laid waste God's kingdom.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Robert Lee Wolff, "Romania: The Latin Empire of Constantinople", *Speculum*, 23:1 (1948) 3.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 1-34.

¹⁷³ Fulcher of Chartres, *Chronicle of the First Crusade*, ed. Martha Evelyn McGinty (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941) 15-16. As McGinty points out (note 3), "The Seljuks called the state which they founded here *Rum*", reminiscent of the Greek *Ρωμανία*. The "Arm of Saint George", as we shall discuss in our study of Constantinople, appears frequently in all of the *genres* examined. It refers to the Hellespont, or the Darnanelle Straits, connecting the Bosphorus to the Sea of Marmara. Much of Constantinople's thriving economy was based on trade by ships crossing the Hellespont and merchants setting their shops around it.

Fulcher presents *Romania* as primarily a Christian land, susceptible to attack because of its proximity to the Seljuk Turks. During the Second Crusade, Odo of Deuil also situates *Romania* in Asia Minor, providing further specifications:

Romania, a land which is very broad and exceedingly rugged with stony mountains, lies beyond [i.e. Constantinople], extending to Antioch on the south and bordering Turkey to the east. Although all *Romania* was formerly under Greek jurisdiction, the Turks now possess a great part and, after expelling the Greeks, have devastated another part; but where the Greeks still hold castles the two peoples divide the revenues.¹⁷⁴

Odo speaks of the extent of the land at times of political stability, but in his day confusion about the possession of the territory seemed to be the chief characteristic. What strikes him most about the territory is its roughness and mountainous landscapes. Another observation consists of the land's shady inhabitants. Despite their defeat, the Byzantines are seen conducting business transactions with a mortal enemy of the Franks, as the *chansons de geste* will attest to, thereby raising questions about their integrity.

Besides the Latin prose chronicles of the Crusades, authors of French texts of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries have applied the term *Romania* to designate a distant territory of the Eastern Empire. The *Chanson d'Antioche*, a French chronicle in verse of the First Crusade attributed to Richard le Pèlerin, provides additional information on the location of *Romania*:

Or s'aroute dans Pieres il et sa compaignie;
Il a moult grant fiance et fils Sainte-Marie.
Passent Puille, Calabre, terre de Romenie,
Tresqu'en Constantinoble n'i ot regne guencie ;
Passent le bras Saint Jorge à petite navie,

¹⁷⁴ Odo of Deuil, *De Prefectioe Ludovici VII in Orientem*, eds. W.T.H. Jackson, James T. Shotwell, Austin P. Evans, Jacques Barzun (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1965) 87-89.

Le pui de Civetot qui vers le ciel ombrie,
 Qui defors Nique siet plus de liue et demie. (I)

It appears that Richard is giving a first person account of a known itinerary that many travelers followed on their way to Nicomedia. He situates *Romanie* after Calabria and before Constantinople thus implying the Balkan peninsula. Yet Richard is not consistent and even within a single work, the geography of Romania tends to fluctuate:

Sire" dist Solimans, "ne vous mentirai mie
 Crestien ont m'onor et ma terre saisie,
 Passe sont en Romagne sans nef et sans galee
 Ainc ne fu si grant os veue ne oie;
 Qui oeist devant Nique ma fort cité garnie. (II, 52)

This time we are to associate *Romania* with Asia Minor.

In the case of the *Pèlerinage*, the author is less indecisive. The location constitutes an essential stop on the journey from France to Jerusalem:

Ore vait li emperere od ses granz compaignies
 Devant el premer chef furent oitante milie
 Il issirent de France e Burgoine guerpirent,
 Loheregne traversent, Baverie e Honguerie,
 Chevalchent l'emperere tres par mi Croatie
 Les bois et les forez, et sont entret en Grice;
 Les puis et le montagnes virent en Romanie,
 Les Turcs et les Persanz et cele gent haie.
 Le grant eve del flum passèrent a Lalice,
 Et brochent a la terre ou Deus reçut martirie.
 Veient Jerusalem, une cité antive. (98-108)

By the juxtaposition of *Grice* and *Romanie* we may infer that these lands were two separate entities, the latter depicting Asia Minor. The itinerary, however, remains fictitious, a chain of familiar place names suggesting the vastness of the Eastern Empire. The Oriental Byzantine world is depicted in approximation, as Jules Horrent suggests:

L'itinéraire imaginaire de Charlemagne aurait donc consisté à sortir de France par l'est, à gagner la Bavière et la Hongrie et à travers les forêts balkaniques à atteindre la Grèce. Là contrairement aux expéditions réelles qui se dirigeaient vers Constantinople, le poète, pour des raisons narratives très claires, aurait fait passer ses héros directement et subrepticement en Asie Mineure, où ils prenaient contact avec les régions montagneuses de la Romanie et faisaient connaissance avec les populations turques et persanes, pacifiques pour les besoins de la fiction, mais cependant haïssables comme ennemis de Dieu."¹⁷⁵

What interests the poet most is not the geographical positioning of *Romanie*, but its rough landscape and the potential threat it poses from its Muslim inhabitants. As we shall later see, the threat comes not from the "enemies of God" but from the Byzantines of Constantinople in the guise of friendly competition.

Romanie makes its appearance in another popular medieval work, further confusing matters. In *the Roman d'Alexandre* we see it twice. First it is among famous countries and cities of the world known for their riches. So when we are provided with a list of gifts that the princess Olympias, mother of Alexander bestowed on her most gallant knights, we are informed that from *Romanie* she acquires her special silk:¹⁷⁶

...Et cendaus et tirés et le vair de Rossie
Diapres d'Antioche, samis de Romenie. (I, 163-164)

Silk was a esteemed product of Byzantium, and this time the term *Romenie* refers to the entire Byzantine Empire rather than to a specific location.

¹⁷⁵ Jules Horrent, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne. Essai d'explication littéraire avec des notes de critique textuelle* (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1961) 30.

¹⁷⁶ See Alexandre de Paris, *Le Roman d'Alexandre*, ed. E.C. Armstrong et al. (Paris, Lettres Gothiques, 1994) 81, esp. note 14.

The lack of specificity is also apparent in *Alexandre. Romenie* appears toward the end of the romance as synonymous with Macedonia. In branch IV, Alexander's barons must decide where to bury their king's body. Several of them think that *Romenie* is the perfect resting place:

Car porter en voloient le roi en Romenie. (IV, 1433).

Others seem to prefer Babylonia to the previous proposition:

Signor, en Mascedoine nel porterés vos mie,
Ne ja mais Babilone nen iert de lui saisie.
En la grant Alixandre iert sa char se pelie,
La avra sepulture. (IV, 1447-1448)

Thus, Romania remains vague, shifting, easily associated with places whose location is easily complicated, such as Macedonia. It constitutes an abstraction, an approximation, a famous place-name reputed for its vastness and located at an unspecified section of the East.

The confusion and the vagueness characteristic of *Romania* are also featured in *Florimont*:

Et li leus ou furent vain
Li quatre roi et abatu
Si fu par droit de l'ost nommeiz
Et "Sabato" fu apeleiz
De Greus et de la gent latine
Mais un atre a en la marine:
Cist est es plains de Romenie,
La fu vaincus li rois d'Ongrie. (550-557)

Anthime Fourier comments on this passage: "Il l'appelle Sabato ou Sabasto selon certaines variantes et précise qu'il ne faut pas le confondre avec une autre cité au même nom bâtie au bord de la mer, celle de Thrace, étant d'ailleurs peu importante[...] il s'agit évidemment d'une localité appelée Sebastopolis. Par association d'idées, Aimon

pense soit à Sebastopole fondée en Crimée par l'empereur Auguste, soit à une autre Sebastopolis située en Colchide sur la cote Orientale de la Mer Noire, au nord et à gauche de l'embouchure du Phase, qui marquait la limite entre l'Europe et l'Asie."¹⁷⁷

As early as the twelfth century, Aimon de Varennes recognizes the possible confusion concerning the city names of *Romania*. But cities such as Sebastopolis are located around the Black Sea—land of Médée the sorceress—thus standing at the crossroads of two continents, those of Europe and Asia. *Romania* is thus a land of transition, an opening to a magical suspended space devoid of definition. It is possibly an uncharted land, or a place that is lost at the junction of the two continents of the T-O maps, which have failed to represent the body of water that is the Black Sea. Here *Romania* is not fused with Macedonia, but with neighboring Thrace.

Specificity is also absent from the chronicle written by Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*. Rather than pinpointing the geographical boundaries of the location, the chronicle prefers to associate it with the image of an apostate, who in name is reminiscent of contemporary Rome:

Tot el premier chief, metre tot l'empire de Romanie à
l'obédience de Rome, dont il est partiz pieça. (XXXIX)

Romania is thus a marginalized schismatic replica of a sacred center called Rome. The revolutionary act which consisted in seeking refuge in the periphery, while reinventing the periphery itself as a new center, and usurping the name and the status of Empire was not to remain unchastised in Western eyes. *Romania* was indeed Empire but

¹⁷⁷ Anthime Fourier, *Le Courant Realiste dans le Roman Coutrois en France au Moyen Age* (Paris, Nizet, 1960) 481.

contaminated by violence and illegitimacy. Consequently, if we are to read between Villehardouin's lines, the Franks' acts of pillaging and subsequent colonization of Byzantium were perfectly acceptable, even meritorious, given the undoubtedly inferior moral status of the latter's inhabitants.

After Villehardouin recounted events leading to the fall of Constantinople, *Romania* thereafter referred to the new order or the newly founded Latin Empire of the East, with Count Baldwin of Flandres as Emperor. Since important territories and cities such as Salonica were under the jurisdiction of Boniface de Montferrat named King of Salonica, it was understood that *Romania* was reduced in size and designated only the Eastern provinces governed by Baldwin. Despite this limitation in size, *Romania* was now an entity embraced by the West, and the idea of maintaining a center in the periphery became perfectly acceptable, as long as it was in the hands of the Crusaders. Villehardouin proudly states his new title—"Mareshal de Champagne et de Romanie"—with no signs of remorse for his compatriots' prior plundering.

Villehardouin's road to precision is quickly abandoned by the early thirteenth century French epic *Florence de Rome*. In this work, the enemy kingdoms of Rome and *Romania* are easily confused, or rather fused in name, suggesting the proximity of the two cultures. In a heated discussion between rival kings the Roman Otto and the Byzantine Garsire as to the future of the Princess Florence, the two territories, Rome and *Romania* echo each other:

Puis li a escrié: "Rois plainz de grant folie,
A cest cop vos chaloig et Romme et Romenie." (1446-1447)

Romenie designates the Byzantine world here, traditional bearer of riches (*Vint somiers toz chergiez de l'or de Romenie!* 132). However in the appendix of the same work there is a drastic switch. Here, the Emperor of Rome, devastated by his daughter's ill fate, is joined in his pain by his countrymen:

Par deviers l'empereur disoient li plusour
 Que par ceste naissanche avenroit tel dolour
 Que toute Romnenie en avenroit tristour.
 (Appendix 78-80)

So, while the territory surrounding Rome is now called Romnenie, the Byzantine world is referred to as "Gresse":

De Gharsille diray de Gresse oultre le mer.
 (Appendice 200)

This constant shifting of identities is not mere carelessness on the author's part. It implies more than a mere misunderstanding of geography. The West, and particularly Rome in this situation, eager to call Romania her own, with all the historical implications such an act might suggest, demotes Byzantium to overseas "Gresse", a pejorative term echoing phonetically King Garsire's despised name in the *chanson*. Equally in question is the issue of to whom the land belonged.

Florence de Rome is not unique in this fusion of Rome and *Romania*. *Girart de Roussillon* poses an identical problem. In this epic, when the ambassador Dregon returns to France after having visited the Byzantine Emperor, he speaks highly of the monarch and entices Charles with his impressive heritage, to be bequeathed to his two daughters:

"Pois sa mort laiset Rome a ses enfanz
 E per l'onor quam vols aveir, qu'es granz
 N'az ostroiat Girart Flandre e Braibranz
 Ere veis que de lai te vient li manz;
 Ce gar per afenar ne la souanz"

E Carles respondeit e sanz enganz:
 "La muliere l'onor vuele l'enfanz" (106-112)

The Byzantine princesses appear as heirs to Rome, not *Romenie*.

Despite the fusion between *Rome* and *Ronmenie*, *Florence de Rome* clearly distinguishes between Byzantines and Romans:

"Et Grifon ne sont mie mout grantmant alosé
 Et Romain sont de guerrie hardie et aduré." (368-369)

It is interesting to note here that there appears to be a semantic interplay as Byzantine Greeks as "Grifons", a common Old French term, and the griffon or griffin, a monstrous being present in works such as the *Roman d'Alexandre*. No doubt, a suspicious moral disposition is implied, and for this reason the author wishes to differentiate between the two.

Gautier d'Arras opts for the same tactics of distinction in his *Eracle*:

Eracles i vint premerains
 et ce pesa molt as Roumains;
 ne mais se Rome en fu irie,
 Coustantinoble en devint lie. (5279-82)

However, there remains a degree of fusion between East and West if we take into account Eracle's identity: son of Roman nobles, he becomes Emperor of Byzantium. Thus, in all its travels from East to West and vice versa, as portrayed by numerous literary texts, *Romania* remained in flux.

C. Itineraries.

Despite the imprecisions as to the location and the identity of *Romania*, we may safely conclude that it most often referred to the land of the Byzantines. Specific

localization was not essential. In texts such as the *Pèlerinage*, a pretense of *vraisemblance*, obtained through the enumeration of place-names real and familiar to Westerners, gave an impression of authenticity. This authenticity, however, may be quickly dismissed because the chain of place names suggests a picture- perfect peaceful Orient. The depiction is highly implausible because of the very existence of ethnic and religious diversity at a time of turbulence. We are thus provided with a poetic rather than actual vision of the world. While the author claims there is peace in an immense Eastern Empire, the mere presence of Byzantium was problematic because it disrupted the neat binary opposition between Christian West and Muslim East, inviting multiple world-views to coexist in relative harmony.

Byzantium could not be easily conceived, labeled or identified except in terms of size. When speaking of King Hugon's territory, Charlemagne's wife based her account on hearsay, stressing the distance between two points of Hugon's land in the *Pèlerinage*:

Del rei Hugun le Fort ai mult oi parole.
Emperer est de Grece et de Costantinoble
Il tent tute Perse tresque en Capadoce,
N'at tant bel chevaler de ci en Antioche. (46-49)

The aura of Hugon and his land expanded even beyond his domain and reached France.

Furthermore, real places were mingled with vague locations so as to imply immense distances and knowledge based primarily on hearsay. In *Girart de Roussillon* we see that the passage to Byzantium is as long as it is treacherous. From Mont-Joux in France, Girart and his companions have a long trip ahead of them:

De Brandiz a Duraz passent as nous
E Carles torne arere per sos eclaus,
E cil chevaugent tant puizie esgaus,
Tro bent Costantinoble, sunt au portaus. (134-137)

Mountains and valleys are suggestive of the hardships of the itineraries. Furthermore, on a different note, there appears to be a clear intertext of the *Chanson de Roland*:

Halt sunt li pui e li val tenebrus,
 Les roches bises, les destreiz merveillus.
 Le jur passerent Franceis a grant dulus;
 De .XV. lius en ot hom la rimur.
 Puis que il venent a la Tere Majur,
 Virent Guascuigne, la tere lur seignur. (Laisse LXVI)¹⁷⁸

This famous descriptive stanza, in which the location of the massacre of the French is being staged and the landscape participates of the ominous, the evil, and the funerary, is echoed in *Girart*. The difficulties encountered in the Byzantine landscape foreshadow the dismal outcome of the journey, which resulted in war between the two feudal heroes. This type of representation is noteworthy, as it favors the usage of picturesque details, implying "knowledge" and giving the impression of geographical and historical truth. The image of the vastness of empty spaces may thus suggest a more spiritual dimension of the itinerary, not devoid of a prophetic quality.

The motif of vastness is repeated in *Cligès*. When Alexandre's messenger claims the Empire which had been unjustly usurped by his brother Alis, the latter, convinced of Alexandre's death, refuses to concede:

Et s'il est vis, por coi ne vient?
 Ja redoter ne li covient
 Que assez terre ne li doigne. (2489-2491)

Although Chrétien provides little geographic precisions concerning Byzantium, he shows concern for the issue of distances, beginning with the travels of Alexandre from

¹⁷⁸ Jenkins T. Atkinson, *La Chanson de Roland* (Boston Heath, 1924).

Constantinople to Southampton. This particular distance is measured by supplying temporal specifications:¹⁷⁹

An la mer furent tot avril
Et une partie de mai. (270-271)

Time as a means of measuring distance on itineraries also appears in *Florimont*. In one passage, Aimon de Varennes proposes two routes, one by sea and the other by land, from Egypt to Greece. On this voyage, the crossing of the Bosphorus, referred to as the Arm of Saint George could have realized three times a day, since they were so narrow:

Ilux est li Bras plus estrois;
Passer le puet le jor trois fois (175-176)

Odo of Deuil, speaking of the same territory, says it could be crossed seven or eight times in one day. It is difficult to speculate as to the truthfulness of either account. The author claims personal experience on this voyage favoring the sea route as his hero Philip also did on his way to a Byzantine city called Abydos:

A quinsaine sunt arrivei
A Avedon une citei. (443-444)

The duration of a fortnight might appear to be a precision but in reality it is a vague approximation. Despite Aimon's alleged first-hand experience, itineraries in Byzantium

¹⁷⁹ In the tenth century, Luidprand of Cremona (F.A. Wright, *The Works of Luidprand of Cremona. Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana* (London, George Routledge and Sons, 1930) had measured the distance from Constantinople to the Greek city of Naupaktus in terms of time also: "My guide was with me and after forty-nine days of ass-riding, walking, horse-riding, fasting, thirsting, weeping and groaning, I arrived at Naupaktus which is a city of Nikopolis". This specific itinerary is but one example of a long list of negative impressions Byzantium left on the ambassador.

are characterized by false measurements closer to the approximate and the figurative than the real.

The evocation of place-names in Byzantium implies a vast and vague territory and the distances traversed are often measured in time rather than space. But the mention of place-names serves another purpose. At first glance it is a pretense of worldliness on the part of the writer claiming knowledge of the area. But most importantly it is a depiction of an exotic world with strange appellations, appealing to the Franks because of its eccentricity, perhaps even its enticing secrets. Certainly, this would be a world worth penetrating. This is a world of linguistic strangeness, strewn with exotic names. Villehardouin is by far the most elaborate in referring to cities that follow Constantinople's phonetic lead: Messinopolis, Adrianople, Christopolis, Philipopolis, Arcadiopolis, Bulgaropolis, Cariopolis, Cartopolis, Trajanopolis. Such names are reminiscent of ancient times and far-off lands. These are cities that demonstrated resistance to the Franks, generally after the fall of Constantinople, in an attempt to avoid Western domination. Villehardouin sees them as merely decorative elements, denotative of the generic Other and suggests little differentiation between them. A possible conquest of one city or another at random would not entail personal observation or even curiosity, nor would it require justifications on the part of the Franks for their attacks on Byzantium.

Furthermore, Aimon de Varennes is keen on cities ending in -polis inspired by Emperors' names:

Grant terre avoit par heritage:
Sa citei tenoit Phelipople,
Et Moriane et Andrenople

Et la Nature et Salubree,
 Et Galepol et l'Araclee,
 La citei de Pont et Grisople
 Panados sor mer et Cristople. (882-888)

Fourrier identifies these cities by positioning them in Asia Minor and the area around the Black Sea. He claims that the insistence on these place names designates a sacred route: "A l'exception de Philippople, d'Adrinople, d'Heraclee du Pont et de Gallipoli, toutes ces localités jalonnaient la Via Egnatia qui reliait Durazzo à Constantinople par Ochrida, Monastir, Vodena, Salonique, Rendina, Chrysopolis, la vallée de Philippes, Cavalla (Christopolis), Maronia, Panizo, Rodosto, Eregli, Silviri et Athyra. L'itinéraire était bien connu des croisés et des pèlerins, tout comme celui qui, partant de Constantinople, remontait par Andrinople et Philippople vers Sofia, Nisch et Belgrade."¹⁸⁰ Finally, other than a sacred route, Fourrier believes that Aimon's choices of place-names portray an imperial way attaching Belgrade and Sofia to Philippopoli, Andrinople and Constantinople. The ideals of Empire and pilgrimage are thus valorized by the insistence on place-names with an exotic ring. This valorization is especially pronounced in the depiction of the Byzantine capital city, Constantinople.

¹⁸⁰ Fourrier 476. The mention of a sacred route also appears in Odo's *Prefectio*. The chronicler demonstrates a near-obsessive tendency to list the place-names of his itinerary to Constantinople. The writing of this route serves a didactic purpose for all those who wish to follow in his footsteps in a route to God: "In this account the description of the virtuous deeds furnishes the reader a good example, the names of towns indicate the route of the journey, the nature of the localities suggests the caution which should be observed in provisioning. For never will there fail to be pilgrims to the Holy Sepulcher; and they will, I hope, be more cautious because of our experiences". (Odo de Deuil, *Prefectio*, 29-31). Thus, the goal of the Western pilgrims to attain the Holy Land "justified" their attitudes and their behavior on the road to salvation.

D. Constantinople.

Oh what a noble and beautiful city is Constantinople! How many monasteries and palaces it contains, constructed with wonderful skill! How many remarkable things may be seen in the principle avenues and even in the lesser streets! It would be very tedious to enumerate the wealth that is there of every kind, of gold, of silver, or robes of many kinds and of holy relics. Merchants constantly bring to the city by frequent voyages all the necessities of man.

Fulcher of Chartres

Constantinople is arrogant in her wealth, treacherous in her practices, corrupt in her faith; just as she fears everyone on account of her wealth she is dreaded by everyone because of her treachery and faithlessness.

Odo of Deuil

Noble and wealthy or arrogant and corrupt, Constantinople, city of contrasts, was the soul of Byzantium. On the same site flourished the city of Byzantium, founded by sailors in 657 B.C. Constantine, the medieval city's founder, was determined to preserve the Hellenistic spirit of Constantinople and he turned it into a center of art and learning by creating libraries and museums.¹⁸¹ The Edict of Milan in 313 B.C. recognized the Christian community of the Empire and transformed Constantinople into a center for Christianity and at the same time preserved the concept of a Greco-Roman city-state. No other city in Byzantine history compared to the size and importance of the Empire's crowded capital, affectionately addressed as New Rome, the city of the Virgin, the Queen of Cities or by the generic term, the City.¹⁸² Located at the crossroads of civilizations, Constantinople was not only a bridge between Europe and Asia but also a

¹⁸¹ See Steven Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization* (London, Edward Arnold and Co., 1933) 29.

¹⁸² Runciman 13.

historical center of successive civilizations: Greek, Roman, Medieval Byzantine. Furthermore, it was an international meeting place for artisans, sailors, merchants, and Crusaders. Constantinople was a metropolitan city, where people from all corners of the known world interacted and exchanged information, at times pertaining to geography, based on their personal itineraries, or on the accounts of the travels of their kinsmen.¹⁸³ The City's exceptional geographic position (Figures 1,2) led to its cultural and commercial hegemony over most of the known world.¹⁸⁴

The metropolis caught the eye of those who traveled East. The initial sight of Constantinople had Charlemagne and his peers in awe in the *Pèlerinage*. After crossing mountains and hills they beheld a city as an oasis and were quickly bedazzled by the panoramic view. The passage begins with the verb "voir":

Virent Constantinoble, une cité vaillant,
Les cloches et les egles et les punz relusanz.
Destre part la citet, de une liue grant,
Trovent vergers plantez de pins et de lorers beaus
La rose i est florie, li albus e li glazaus. (262-266)

Constantinople was an impressive spectacle at first glance for Villehardouin as well, whose repetition of the verb "voir" invited a form of voyeurism.

The *topos* of the Western gaze penetrating this Eastern urban center at the first encounter is repeated in *Partonopeus de Blois*. Here, the author wishes Constantinople

¹⁸³ In John Kirtland Wright, *Geographical Lore at the Time of the Crusades* (New York: Dover, 1925), it is stated that, "By the year 1200 it is safe to infer that practically every town and village of France, England, Germany, and Italy held someone who had visited the East and was not unready to tell what he had seen there and on his way out and back". (293). As determined, these itineraries consisted largely of travels on Byzantine soil.

¹⁸⁴ See P.J. Alexander, "The Strength of Empire and Capital as seen through Byzantine Eyes", *Speculum* 37: (1962) 340-347.

to initially remain nameless enveloping the land in a veil of mystery and stressing its otherworldly qualities. Partonopeus approaches an isolated walled city. Intrigued by its defensive aspect he decided to enter:

Et voit les murs de la cité
 Qui contre ciel donent clarté
 A merveille sont droit et haut. (787-89)

In *Florence de Rome*, yet another wall must be penetrated:

Coutentinnoble fu citez de grant aport,
 Li mur en sont fermé en haut et un regort
 D'arbres et de loriers i avoit maint bon ort. (3071-73)

The imagery of the fortifications of Constantinople is commonplace in the works discussed in this study. Historians attest to their necessary and early construction as part of a continued plan of the Byzantine Emperors to build, fortify, and embellish their capital.¹⁸⁵ Constantine began constructing the walls that would protect it from Eastern and northern invaders. Theodosius II continued the building of the massive wall in 411.¹⁸⁶ Odo refers to the fortifications as "a spacious and impressive ring of walls".¹⁸⁷ Within the fortifications, the terrain was extremely irregular, with open spaces, fields and numerous hills, which led Constantinople to be compared to Rome in this respect. Citizens would leave the fortifications through public gates leading to roads and city streets. The walls also have a symbolic importance. According to Steven Scully, the city

¹⁸⁵ See Jean Ebersolt, *Constantinople Byzantine et les voyageurs du Levant* (Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1918) 12

¹⁸⁶ The area of the city within the eighteen-kilometer-long and eight-meter-high outer walls consisted of thirteen square kilometers, impressive to all who beheld them. Another inner wall of eleven meters in height made the city practically impregnable by land. Local legend had it that Constantinople was impenetrable because an angel on horseback defended the walls and protected them.

¹⁸⁷ Odo 41.

wall is a "line of demarcation separating polis from non-polis".¹⁸⁸ It creates a protective enclave cultivating the civilization of the community within and prohibiting access to outsiders. Crusaders bear witness to such an exclusion, remembered specifically by Odo who claims that "the Greeks closed their cities and fortresses and offered their wares by letting them down from ropes."¹⁸⁹ This practice of the Greeks implies fear and disdain for the Latins but also a concern with contamination. A city of ancient origin, rich in churches, monasteries and relics, and a midpoint between the French Abbey of Saint Denis and the Holy City of Jerusalem, Constantinople was a sacred city and an invasion would suggest profanation. Emmanuèle Baumgartner studies the image of Constantinople stating that it is "une image fascinante moins de la ville idéale que de la ville désirable à pénétrer, à posséder."¹⁹⁰

Constantinople was a desirable city to the Westerners, who promptly fantasized about its capture, even if they were assigned only to its vicinities. On the scale of magnificence it ranged from the "head of the world", if we are to believe Robert de Clari, or to simply "a good city" in *Antioche*. Chrétien's perception lies somewhere in the middle, as he saw in Constantinople the incarnation of the empire and power. In the words of Alexandre's messenger, who claimed the Empire from Alis:

Antant que tes freres te mande:
La soe chose te demande,

¹⁸⁸ Stephen Scully, *Homer and the Sacred City* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990) 57

¹⁸⁹ Odo 41.

¹⁹⁰ Cited in Joel H. Grisward, "Paris, Jérusalem et Constantinople dans le *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*. Trois villes, trois fonctions", *Jérusalem, Rome, Constantinople. L'image et le mythe de la ville au Moyen Age, Colloque du Département d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne*. textes réunis par Daniel Poirion (Paris, P.U.P.S., 1986) 79.

Ne contre reison rien ne quiert
 Soe doit bien estre et soe iert
 Constantinoble que tu tiens. (2469-73)

Although the location and size of *Romania* vary, the actual portrayal of Constantinople is somewhat consistent. As Catherine Croizy-Naquet puts it, " La réitération dans chacun des romans joue comme preuve et comme garantie de vérité."¹⁹¹ The repetition of the same motif by various writers of different genres suggests that fiction, as well as the "historical" chronicle, had not completely distorted or exaggerated the image of Constantinople. Rather, writings reflect less a stylized ideal of an imperial city, and more an actual environment, as it was perceived, certainly allowing for subjectivity of the individuals who produced them.

While no genre of twelfth century French literature may provide an actual or complete portrait of the city, it is pertinent to note that even the occasional discrepancy between two writers constitutes a commentary on the noteworthiness of a certain detail. Let us consider for instance the description of Constantinople's streets. Odo of Deuil, who gave a profoundly negative account of the city, pointing to the poverty, filth and crime of the city, in line with the common motif of excess:

The city itself is squalid and fetid and in many places harmed by permanent darkness; for the wealthy overshadow the streets with buildings, and leave these dirty, dark places to the poor and to the travelers; the murders and robberies and other crimes which love the darkness are committed [...] In every aspect she exceeds moderation; for just as she surpasses other cities in wealth, so, too, does she surpass them in vice. (Odo 65)

¹⁹¹ Catherine Croizy-Naquet, *Thèbes, Rome et Carthage. Poétique de la ville antique dans le roman antique du XIIe siècle* (Geneva, Slatkine, 1994)283

Perhaps he is implying that the city needed to be disciplined, possibly by a willing outsider. This is a far cry from the depiction in *Partonopeus*, where the hero was impressed by the cleanliness of the streets:

Il est entrés en une rue
Qui de tai et nete et nue; (210-11)

The documentary tone of Odo was abandoned for that of a quasi-mythical and alluring land, where the absence of rain accounted for the clean streets in a town with no dirt road. Realistically, such a land would have been arid and barren contrary to the descriptions of gardens, vineyards, and fields that are provided.

The *Pèlerinage* portrayal also clashed greatly with Odo's *Prefectio*. When King Hugon left his golden plow unattended in his field, the Franks were concerned, but were later reassured that they were under no danger. This *chanson de geste* presented Constantinople as a sort of Utopia, where the external threat from Saracens as well as internal dangers from thieves and criminals did not exist. Constantinople was part of a peaceful and crime-free Orient, linking it to the *pax romana* of prior times. Contradiction is, however, an innate trait of this work. This idealized portrayal, remains suspect, for if Charlemagne had no fear of traversing such an Orient, he would not have had the assurance of the holy relics brought back from Jerusalem to safeguard his company en route to France via Constantinople. Such texts suggest an absence of regard for truth and raise suspicions as to the real motives of the Franks in need of talismans against their fellow Christians, at once ready to bring havoc in their effort to disturb and outshine the Byzantines.

Yet, there is some consensus on the representation of Constantinople. Villehardouin speaks of the great open space of the city. He never thought it would have been possible to conquer it with the great churches and palaces and people within. Constantinople's size is in direct proportion to the Franks' great victory and the Byzantines' defeat, although, as Villehardouin insinuates, the conquest of the city was never the plan of the Crusaders.¹⁹²

The open space was a trait remarkably described in *Partonopeus*, as the hero admired the view from the tower of the Chief d'Oire.¹⁹³ On the East, Partonopeus admired the endless sea and the animals. On the South he distinguished fields and vineyards and other riches (1628-84).

Villehardouin had also spoken of vast wheat fields, implying like *Partonopeus*, the abundance of a fertile land that the Franks were eager to profit from.¹⁹⁴ The abundance in natural resources and the fertility of the soil around Constantinople¹⁹⁵ are

¹⁹² See Jean Dufournet, *Les Ecrivains de la IVe Croisade: Villehardouin et Clari* (Paris : SEDES, 1973) on the silences of Villehardouin.

¹⁹³ Iluec descent, monte en la tor,
Ainc hom ne vit nule mellor,
Et quant est venus as creniaus,
Que il trove et bons et biaux,
Esgarde vers solel levant
Et voit la mer qui dure tant
Que nus n'en puet veir le fin (1621-1627)

¹⁹⁴ Sachiez se nos alons à la terre ferme, la terre est granz et large, et nostre gent sont povre et diseteus de la viande. Si s'espandront par la terre por guerre la viande, et il I a mult grant plenté de la gent el pais si ne porrons tot garder que nos n'en perdissions[....] Il a isles ci près, que vos poez veoir de ci qui sont habités de gens et laborées de blez et de viandes et d'autres biens. Alons I qui prendre port et receuillons les blez et les viandes del pais. (XXVI)

¹⁹⁵ The abundance due to a healthy rural environment surrounding the Byzantine cities is discussed in a series of lectures called *Diskussionsbeitrage Zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinischen Kongress* (Munche, 1958).

echoed in Odo.¹⁹⁶ The idea of the earth's abundance is inseparable from the *topos* of a city wealthy in material goods. This is a most common motif suggesting an exoticism of another sort where the abundance of a mythical Golden Age never died out. In *Antioche*, for example, Byzantine Emperor Alexius I is reminded that it was he who invited the Franks for military assistance:

Vous mandaste François, por bien et por aie,
Que venissent à vous en vo cité garnie. (V)

The stereotype is repeated verbatim in *Florence de Rome* over half a century later:

Seignors, vos savez bien que que la chanson die,
Qui tient Coutentinoble mouldt a grant seignorie,
C'onques ne fu citez de tresor si garnie. (119-21)

The city's wealth, but also its pretentiousness are thus implied.

Nowhere is Constantinople's abundance more implicit than in Robert de Claris' account. The chronicler bases some of his perception of the city's riches on hearsay for which the Byzantines are responsible:

Ne je ne quit mie, au mien ensient, que es quarante plus rikes
chité du monde eust tant d'avoir comme on trouva ce cors de
Constantinoble. Et si tesmengoient li Griu que les deus pars de
l'avoir du monde estoient en Constantinoble et le tierche estoit
eparse par le monde. (CXXXI)

The city's wealth brought on the astonishment of those who beheld it. Clari continues:

Après li pelerin esgarderent le grandeur de la vile et les palais et
les risques abeies et les riques moustiers et les grans merveilles
qui estaoient en la vile; si s'en merveillierent molt durement et se

¹⁹⁶ The country abounds in good things which grow of their own accord, and would be suitable for other things if the region had cultivators. It is neither flat-lying as a plain nor rugged with mountains, but is located among hills which are suitable for wheat and grains and it is watered by the very clearest springs and streams. (33)

merveillierent molt du moustier Saint Souphie et de la riqueche
qui i estoit. (LXXXIV)

Villehardouin is in accord with Clari, who lists extensively the Crusaders' loot in gold, silver, precious stones, furs, and silk among other goods attesting that " a son escient par verté que puis que li siecles fu estorez, ne fu tant gainie en une vile." (CCL) Jacques Le Goff stresses the importance of Constantinople as the wealthiest urban center of the world: "Constantinople avec son million probable d'habitants et ses richesses monumentales, ses magasins (...) est la révélation de la ville (...) Byzance, même pour les Occidentaux qui n'ont pas contemplé ses merveilles c'est au Moyen Age la source de presque toutes richesses car les plus précieuses importations latines viennent de chez elle, qu'elle en soit la productrice ou la distributrice." ¹⁹⁷

Constantinople's immense wealth was due in part to its maritime and its commercial activity. In *Partonopeus*, Byzantine Princess Mélior boasts of this activity:

Li pors est tex desos le mur
Vint mil nes tot a seur
I puent estre et sejourner. (801-3)

By land and by sea merchants from all over the world flocked to Constantinople:

Constantinople was also a place of complicated demographics which was reflected in the socio-economic sphere: "L'aspect économique est en liaison étroite avec l'organisation et la structure sociales. Il a trait à la production et à la consommation, à l'industrie ou l'artisanat, au volume et à la forme des échanges aux marchés et escales, aux colonies des marchands étrangers, aux conditions douanières, impôts, taxes, péages,

¹⁹⁷ Jacques Le Goff, *La Civilisation de l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, Arthaud, 1965) 181-182.

franchises, etc."¹⁹⁸ The demographics, in constant flux due to the ever-migrating local and foreign populations in and out of the city are an indication of Constantinople's worldliness and sophistication. It constitutes a forum where cultures meet. Clari speaks of the Venetian merchant quarters in the city, as does Villehardouin. The latter mentions the Jewish quarters in the outskirts of Constantinople called the "Stenon". Constantinople is also home to Persians, Saracens and other Muslims of Spain in *Partonopeus*. In this work distinguished fighters are invited from all corners to compete for Mélior's hand in marriage. Mixed camps of Muslims and Christians are formed in the tournaments: Asian Muslims join the German camp while Spanish Muslims are on the side of the Franks. Twenty-four pagan princes fight twenty- three Christians. With this almost equal number of combatants, the poet wishes to portray a climate of fairness and equality in Constantinople, where, as Runciman points out, the only basic requirement of making it one's home was to speak the Greek language.¹⁹⁹ A variety of cultures dictated an attempt at peaceful symbiosis, no doubt idealized to a degree. The judges of the tournament were African, making it a global event, in which all known continents participate. The participation of Africa is particularly interesting. Indeed, according to Fourrier, "Pour l'Afrique il se souvient qu'à l'époque de Clothaire Ier en Occident c'est à dire de Justinien en Orient (567-565 AD) elle fit partie de l'Empire byzantin: "cest notre Aufrike", dit Mélior. Aussi les sept juges qui en proviennent ne

¹⁹⁸ *Diskussionsbeiträge* 81.

¹⁹⁹ Runciman 190. Despite the statement of Runciman, we also bear witness to the opposite, as in Anna Comnena's case, whose prejudice against the Franks of the First Crusade are characteristic of a general attitude.

sont-ils pas païens mais chrétiens."²⁰⁰ The author relies partly on history to explicate this variety of cultures and to add to the portrait of Constantinople an impression of realism. In addition, the act of mingling pagan and Christian components is a form of diplomatic neutralization among peoples divided by religious difference.

However, this neutrality does not always hold true. In *Girart de Roussillon*, the hatred of the Byzantines toward the Muslims and the Africans does not in the slightest recall *Partonopeus*. *Girart* is more in line with the binary Christian/Muslim opposition. Here the Byzantine Emperor is grateful to the Franks who fight a battle for him:

Li message li content noves danant:
Que François vont sa tere for Aquitant;
Com sunt mort Arrabit et Aufricant. (144-146)

An impression of historical truth is given throughout the works by the repetition of certain well-known place names, either in Constantinople proper or its vicinity including the islands. Such an island is Tenedos. Partonopeus is obligated to set anchor there due to a sudden storm and he is made captive of a terrible tyrant, Armand, who wishes to participate in the competition. In the *Roman de Troie*, Tenedos is a port or a castle receiving the hurried Trojans with open arms:

Après orriez de Tenedon
Coment fu pris et coment non. (217-18)

Without giving details, the two writers speak of a closed space, a miniature of Constantinople's overwhelming presence.

²⁰⁰ Fourrier 404.

A consistent point of reference is the Arm of Saint George at the crossing of the Hellespont. This place name is already familiar to us in *Florimont*. In Villehardouin's text, the straits of Saint George lead to Abydos, towards Turkey. They are a beautiful sight and a passage to an intriguing Orient, echoed also in *Clari*.²⁰¹ This location is important because it marks the official entrance into Asia Minor, a land with mystical connotations. It is strange that the author of the *Pèlerinage* should omit such a staple description, despite all his preoccupations with geographic veracity. The author of *Girart*, however, did not: [*E pois volunt annar au braz Saint Joire/ 279*]. Nor did the author of *Florence*: [*Delez le Brez Saint Jorge en sont ou baille entre/ 3113*]. Finally, Richard the Pilgrim makes note of the famous crossing in *Antioche*: [*Parmi le bras Saint Jore Statins les a menés/ XIII*]. The passage of Saint George carries all those crossing it to the other side, placing the "island" of Greece on the same coast as Turkey, according to Villehardouin. It was highly unlikely, however, that Villehardouin had mistaken peninsular Greece for an island, since both the land and the sea routes were familiar to the Crusaders. Such an appellation was an attempt at exoticizing the land. The mention of Turkey suggested the official beginning of a mysterious Orient.

²⁰¹ Tant alerent qu'il vinrent à un port que on apele Bouche d'Ave, qui estoit bien cent lieues de Constantinople. Or estoit cil pors là Troie la Grant sist, à l'entrée du Bras Saint George. De là si se resmurent, et cinglèrent tant contremont le Bras Saint George qu'il vinrent à une lieu de Constantinople. (XL)

Thus, the peninsular country was referred to as an island in order to connect it to a more mysterious lore.²⁰²

In conclusion, cartographical representations of Byzantine territories, as well catalogues of Byzantine place-names and itineraries do not bear any particular importance in geographical precision. In their most innocent form they are an attempt at approximation, while at worst, they constitute a portrayal of an exotic land characterized by the use of haphazard details, a land which is desirable and fantasized about because of hearsay and speculation. The Franks remain deliberately detached from such a land, relying on mythical accounts, such as the Alexander legend, for specifications. Indeed, Byzantium would merit greater precision in its physical description, only if it had been less remote. The absence of geographical proximity, coupled with old tales of travelers to the East attributed a lore of exoticism to the landscape in vague, ambivalent, and contradictory terms.

Yet, despite the numerous paradoxes and dichotomies in the representation of Byzantium and its prized Constantinople, with all the implied notions of deliberate distortion and Western colonialism, the Eastern Empire was also viewed as a positive opportunity for all parties involved. Byzantium as the ideal setting for East/ West fusion is characteristic in the exemplary case of *Cligès*. In this work, *Cligès* departs from

²⁰² Instances where place-names were wrongly labeled might indeed imply a seemingly true misconception concerning a specific locale. In the *Roman de Troie*, for example, the Peloponnese was depicted as a city, when in fact it is a peninsular body of land in Southern Greece, home to many famous city-states such as Argos and Sparta. A geographical error in *Partonopeus* positioned Crete in Africa. Geographical proximity of Byzantium to the Muslim world invited confusion for the Franks, as in the case of Odo, who saw the Byzantines as natural allies to their neighboring Turks and conspirators against the Westerners.

Arthur's court to find a new home and throne in Constantinople. Chrétien creates a new geography of universalism: Fénice, a Western princess, is the most beautiful woman in all Christendom; Cligès is the most worthy man in the world. Reluctant to pronounce Western fantasies of expansionism and propaganda, Chrétien breaks loose of East/ West distinctions, by proposing a peaceful symbiosis between the two worlds. The entire Cosmos is the necessary stage for the vision of Chrétien. In its Eastern component, the Empire was to be ruled by a mighty suzerain not necessarily of the male gender, a practice deemed extremely dangerous by the Franks, who wished to use it as a means of their personal benefit and ultimately as a strategy of conquest.

CHAPTER 3

Women as Nexus to Empire

The portrayal of women in the corpus of works studied in this thesis plays a pivotal role in the representation of the Byzantine Exotic. Whether they are viewed as heirs to a vast empire, or as scholars, witches or healers, Byzantine women have been the object of Western fascination.²⁰³ Two such figures of women stand out for their role in the structure of twelfth century French narratives: the imperial woman and the wise woman or nurse, who provides the Byzantine princess or future empress with tools to sustain herself. Yet, while the role of the older nurse/ confidante has been consistent throughout the works, there is no single persona for the Byzantine empress. Byzantine princesses are manifest in a variety of situations, either as *porphirogenitae* princesses and sovereigns in their own right (Mélior in *Partonopeus de Blois*), naturalized Byzantine empresses (Fénice in *Cligès*), Westernized rulers (Elissent and Berthe in *Girart de Roussillon*), bride-show empresses (Athenaïs in *Eracle*, Amordaille in *Florimont*), or links in a legendary line (Romadanaple in *Florimont*). They do, however, share important traits, such as their significance in the succession of the imperial line, their

²⁰³ For a synopsis on the role of women in Byzantium, see Vern L. Bullough, *The Subordinate Sex: A History of Attitudes toward Women* (Baltimore, Penguin, 1979). See especially Chapter 6 ("Byzantium: Actuality versus the Ideal"); see also Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Role of Women in Byzantine Society", *JOB* 31:1 (1981) 258; Judith Herrin, "In Search of Byzantine Women", *Images of Women in Antiquity*, eds. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt. (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1983 160-180); Deno Geanakoplos. *Byzantium* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984); Lynda Garland, "The Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women: A Further Note on Conventions of Behaviour and Social Reality as Reflected in Eleventh and Twelfth Century Historical Sources, *Byzantion* 58:2 (1988) 360-387.

participation in the social elevation of the Emperor, and especially their highly learned status.

A. Mighty Empresses.

The case of Empress Mélior in *Partonopeus de Blois* is of particular interest. In this tale, the strong female presence is felt in relation to social stereotypes, Byzantine customs, and the reversal of male-female roles in the quest for a worthy spouse.

Young Partonopeus is a descendant of the Trojan Macromiris. This is the familiar Trojan War intertext, echoing by extension the Byzantine/ Frankish dislike for one another. Upon his arrival in a paved city by way of a magic boat²⁰⁴, he is welcomed in an opulent Oriental palace, and waited on by invisible, perhaps even demonic servants. As Partonopeus profits from the comforts of a luxurious bed, he is approached by a girl who pretends to be shocked by this encounter. The girl wonders if she has been betrayed after retiring to her quarters (*Sui jo traie?*/ 1150). Was this an indication of the notoriety of Byzantine conspiracies echoed by the *Partonopeus* poet? It would have been plausible that she was frightened by attacks of usurpers after her prestigious throne. However, the arrival of Partonopeus at the court had been orchestrated by the princess, so in fact she was not threatened at all, but the mere allusion to a conspiracy recalled a specific aspect of a familiar history and something of a cliché to the West, placing the girl in the line of usurped Byzantine Emperors. In his ignorance, Partonopeus also

²⁰⁴ Seeking refuge in a luxurious boat is reminiscent of fairy-tale stock. Helaine Newstead ("The Traditional Background of *Partonopeus de Blois*". *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 61:4, 1946). sees this as a clear Celtic otherworldly element (946).

adhered to a Byzantine tradition, in spite of his sex. The princess willingly shared her bed with the youth, indulging in a novel experience for both parties (*Flors i dona et flors i prist* / 1305), momentarily situating them on an equal plane, at least sexually. After the explicitly described sexual act, she hastens to restore her position of prominence, claiming to possess vast and rich lands, (*Tote Besance est mes empires* / 1341) and uncountable knights.²⁰⁵ It was this kingdom that she wished Partonopeus to rule, (*Vos en serés et rois et sire* / 1342). The princess's barons willed her to find a husband, and for this purpose she had send a search party to France, thus recalling French-Byzantine alliances. The practice of releasing a search party to obtain a spouse for a future heir to the throne was indeed quite common in Byzantium, but the quest had always been for a bride, never the opposite. These bride-shows, as they were called, involved messengers traveling to distant areas of the empire, looking for the future empress.²⁰⁶ In the case of *Partonopeus*, it was the French young man who was sought after in a bizarre role reversal, further reinforcing the mightiness of the Byzantine princess, who, against gender norms, also decided to enjoy a sexual experience with her potential husband, while testing his performance in love-making.²⁰⁷ The routine bride-show custom of the

²⁰⁵ This was, no doubt, an allusion to the immense Byzantine "international" mercenary army. Villehardouin mentions this army, claiming that the Byzantines were too cowardly to fight their own battles, and so hired foreigners, including Muslims, for this purpose.

²⁰⁶ A prime example was Empress Irene, who had arranged such a bride show for her son Constantine, while looking for a girl of a specific age, height, and shoe size. Vern Bullough (op. cit. 126) believes that this last detail may in fact have been inspiration to the popular Cinderella story of later centuries. Portraits of the young lady would also be presented to the court and so the selection could be made

²⁰⁷ In their article, "Male Beauty and Sexual Orientation in *Partonopeus de Blois*" (*Romance Studies* 17:1 [1999] 41-55), Penny Simons and Penny Eley argue that Partonopeus's Trojan ancestry coupled with his exceptional, feminine even, beauty alluded to his potential homosexuality, a suspicion Mélior wished to rule out well before her irreversible marriage to him.

Byzantines, no doubt deemed strange by the Franks, provided the context for this reversal, thereby rendering Partonopeus the object of the girl's desire and gaze. Mélior's extreme power, beyond even the normatively excessive allowances of her imperial position, becomes unnatural, especially since she manipulates a young boy into premature manhood, by means of a local custom that was traditionally designed for her sex. Hoping to regain his dignity, Partonopeus wishes to see the girl (*Molt vos voroie avoir veue* / 1442), but is first conditioned by a two-and-a-half-year *geis*, by which he is not permitted to do so at the risk of losing his beloved, until he matures as a knight.

Partonopeus's nostalgia forces him to return a year later to his native France, where he would prove himself in his land as a worthy man for a princess. Consumed with grief in the absence of his beloved, he ceases to eat and drink.²⁰⁸ He admits his love-sickness²⁰⁹ to his mother, enraging her with Mélior's invisibility clause. Partonopeus's mother immediately presents his case to the French king, stating that a demon disguised as a woman had her son under a spell. She would much rather have seen Partonopeus engaged to the king's beautiful niece. A magic potion saw to it that the boy briefly forgot Mélior, in line with the "forgotten fiancée" folktale motif (D2003 of the Thompson²¹⁰ classification) and only remembered her when the king's niece, his new fiancée, referred to her as "la bele fee vostre amie".

²⁰⁸ Similar behavior was manifest in Chrétien's *Yvain*, when the hero was abandoned separated from his beloved.

²⁰⁹ See Chrétien's "mal d'amer" in *Cligès*. The author offered a clinical treatment of the symptoms of love. But whereas Chrétien presupposed sight as a prerequisite for love, in *Partonopeus* the same symptoms are found even in complete darkness.

²¹⁰ See Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1932).

Was Mélior indeed a Byzantine fairy? In truth, her behavior appeared mysterious to the French youth, but it was really his mother, ignorant of the reasons for her *geis*, who demonized her to the king. At first glance, Mélior's surroundings evoked an otherworldly atmosphere. Partonopeus thought that he had traveled to another world, perhaps implying that he thought to have ascended to Heaven. But is a strange and unique ambiance enough to signal the presence of a supernatural being? One is tempted to assume so. While invisible, Mélior possessed fairy-like qualities, according to Laurence Harf-Lancner.²¹¹ The latter finds similarities between the fairy Mélusine and Mélior, whose name obviously resonates with our heroine's. In brief, the folklorist proposes a narrative formula of a "conte mélusinien", tracing parallels in the behavior of both "fairies", starting with the pact between the couple to maintain the girl's invisibility, their meeting in complete darkness, and their life in a sumptuous palace. The pact was then violated by a transgression of the taboo, resulting in the shunning of the hero; finally, after a difficult ordeal, the lovers were reunited in an Otherworld, in our case, Byzantium.²¹² Harf-Lancner also believes that there are traits of the fairy Morgane present in the persona of Mélior, insofar as she practically kidnapped the boy, while sending a white deer to lure him into her trap.²¹³ As far as the narrative model goes, Mélior indeed resembles a fairy. She even tried to keep the youth by providing him

²¹¹ See Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les fées au Moyen Age : Morgane et Mélusine : la naissance des fées* (Geneva, Slatkine, 1984).

²¹² Ibid. 321-22.

²¹³ Ibid. 323.

with extravagant gifts, another act attributable to a fairy.²¹⁴ But in the case of Mélior, these gifts were more the sign of her elevated social status and her Orientalized identity, rendering her an object of Western acquisitive rage and admiration, equal in value to the material goods that she dispersed. Mélior became a supernatural replacement for urbanity, wealth, and sophistication for the dumbfounded Frankish knight. Diane Purkiss puts it best: "Medieval romances, however, often refuse to understand or look at Byzantium directly, but instead rationalise its splendour by making it supernatural; it is much easier to bear being outshone by fairies than by a heretical human civilization".²¹⁵ Thus, following the familiar pattern that pointed to Mélior's supposed fairy status served a specific political purpose, salvaging a sense of dignity for the culturally inferior Partonopeus. I believe that it is unlikely that the author meant to cast Mélior as a fairy. In fact, he attributes her behavior to her imperial rank and her profoundly Byzantine education. The *Partonopeus* author vacillates for a long time between the imaginary and the realistic in his enigmatic portrayal of the princess and has his audience guessing about her nature.

In her article "Fées et Chevalerie: Observations sur le sens social d'un thème dit merveilleux"²¹⁶, Anita Guerreau-Jalabert provides more valuable insight on the nature of fairies. Fairies are creatures of the outdoors, preferably forests²¹⁷. A forest is in fact

²¹⁴ Ibid. 325.

²¹⁵ Diane Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York, New York University Press, 2000) 203.

²¹⁶ In *Miracles, Prodiges et Merveilles au Moyen Age*. XXVe Congrès de la S.H.M.E.S. Orléans, juin 1994 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995) 133-149.

²¹⁷ Ibid. 135.

present in our work, namely, that of the Ardennes. This forest, however, was not under the jurisdiction of the princess. The realm of Mélior was her palace. In keeping with the tradition of enchanted palaces,²¹⁸ Mélior's castle appeared magical insofar as it was opulent, as is usually the case in the representation of Eastern imperial residences. Bedazzled by the gold cups, gems, and precious rare objects, Partonopeus might have failed to notice the servants assisting him in the dim light. It is true that in an actual bustling Byzantine palace, such an act would have been highly unlikely. In *Partonopeus*, the image of a silent Byzantine palace devoid of human presence is an oddity, stressing the boy's overall bizarre experience. His amazement was a state of mind provoked by the impact of material objects. Partonopeus thus echoes the ambiguous Western attitudes regarding opulence, as presented in Clari, Villehardouin, but also in *Girart*, and the *Pèlerinage*. Besides their fascination for material wealth, it appears that Partonopeus and his literary peers also attached a sinister element to finery, thus reflecting a tendency of his day to demonize any such opulence of the East, especially if that bore the mark of a Byzantine (enemy) proprietor. Thirdly, Byzantine opulence takes the form of a negative order, in line with the strange, a possible manifestation of magic at work to stupefy and paralyze the beholder of the riches. These strange abilities are inherent to the objects, which function as if animate beings, identified with their owner, Mélior. Consequently, any person under the spell of finery cannot be held accountable for any indiscretions, and thus the young man would like to have justified his behavior at the palace.

²¹⁸ See also Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,

Another factor that could have attributed a fairy-like disposition to her could be her proximity to and her association with water.²¹⁹ The princess's castle was located by the Bosphorus, and Partonopeus got there by way of boat. Beautiful fairies who live by the water, according to Guerreau-Jalabert, function as mentors in the art of love for young knights. Yet, despite Mélior's aquatic surroundings and all the erotic correlations, she is by no means Partonopeus's mentor, nor is she versed in the ways of love, although she did stage the entire bedroom encounter, perhaps with the French innuendo of her undeserving imperial power.

"Les fées sont immuablement jeunes et belles", continues Guerreau-Jalabert in her account on what constitutes a fairy.²²⁰ Mélior's age was not a mystery; she was a young woman referred to as a "dame", a bit older than Partonopeus. Her beauty, on the other hand, remained questionable, until the boy disregarded her *geis* and shined a lantern to her face, causing her to lose her fairy-like allure. Certainly, even before the revelation scene Partonopeus assumed she was beautiful, as convention would have it, in agreement with her beautiful lifeless belongings. Fairies were also thought to live independently from time. This, too, cannot hold true for Mélior, as she imposed specific temporal restrictions on Partonopeus, paying close attention to the actual passing of time. In addition, the princess was obligated to function according to the limitations imposed upon her by her consuls, thus marrying within a prescribed amount of time.

1989) 107.

²¹⁹ Ibid. 136.

²²⁰ Ibid. 138.

Finally, fairies may appear or disappear at will.²²¹ As with other traits, this may also be contested in the case of Mélior. The young princess remained invisible to Partonopeus not by her will, but because she awaited his maturation as a knight.²²² She appeared only at the boy's will, who at the suggestion of his mother and a French priest, disrespected the *geis*, thus diminishing Mélior's "powers", rendering her visible and so less mysterious.

As soon as Mélior lost her cloak of invisibility, she explained her situation, dismissing any suspicion of supernatural abilities. Despite appearances, her powers were in reality the result of her fine education (4573-4672). As the privileged daughter of the Byzantine Emperor of Constantinople, she had access to the seven arts, medicine, writing, and also to magic; her aunts, veterans of the latter art, had taught her well. Briefly, mention is made to the motif of the older Byzantine wise woman, developed at length in other works. This intellectual achievement only seemed appropriate for the female heir of a prestigious throne, who profited from the wisdom of numerous teachers:

Maistres oi buens et de grant pris,
Et je molt bonement apris
Maistres oi de tos esciens
Par foies plus de deus cens. (4588-4592)

The seven arts were the curriculum of the trivium and quadrivium. Mélior singled out her knowledge of "fesique" and "astronomie", which complemented her

²²¹ Ibid. 138.

²²² Such was the official pretence provided by the princess. If her initial sexual encounter with Partonopeus had not been pleasurable, it would have been much easier to dispose of an undesirable lover while still cloaked with invisibility, rather than without. It appeared that Partonopeus had to further prove his manhood by engaging sexually before taken seriously.

involvement with "divinite", and certainly "nigremance" and "enchantement". But while Mélior's profound scholarship elevated her above many of her contemporaries, it did not give her a supernatural quality. Knowledge of "magie" did not render an individual demonic or otherworldly; rather, it was regarded as an important extension of medicine, especially in the inclusion of botanical components in the act of healing.²²³ As for the "arts" of physics and arithmetic, they were used in calculating the position of planets and the number of stars in the sky for the study of astrology and astronomy. Both domains, albeit different, tended to be conflated in fiction. Healing and astrology also went hand-in-hand in the twelfth century. The latter was greatly respected, especially given its age-old tried formulas from Egypt:

Et cil Egypte li artos,
 Qui fait par sens d'astrenomie
 Maint bel sens et mainte maistrie. (7249-7252)

Despite the stigma of illegitimacy and demonology given to magic by the Church Fathers, this "art" became an integral part of practical know-how and it was often the woman's place to master it. Knowledge of magic had traditionally been connected to the world of paganism, hence the pre-Christian Orient of Egypt and Greece. Remnants of antiquity lived on in Byzantium, itself doubly suspicious of pagan and Oriental magic echoed in *Partonopeus*. Those who studied and practiced the dangerous sciences were

²²³ See footnotes to section B of this chapter; see also Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London, Faber and Faber, 1972) 119-46; Edina Bozoky, "Mythic Mediation in Healing Incantations," *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture*, ed. Sheila Campbell, Bert Hall, and David Klausner (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1992) 84-92; Kieckhefer, *Op. Cit.*, Faye Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1998); Mirko D. Grmek, ed., *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

feared or ascribed supernatural dimensions: "Le magicien médiéval sera de préférence, et pour très longtemps, l'autre: le Sarrasin, le Grec, le Juif, le nain, le banni".²²⁴ In reality, however, scholarship and magic were closely connected as part of a curriculum for a woman of Mélior's rank.

While magic was an essential component of Mélior's education, it was not exclusive. Unlike most girls her age at best educated in convents on theological matters, reading and writing,²²⁵ Mélior was fortunate enough to profit from the education customarily accorded to boys. We know for a fact that she was well-spoken; Partonopeus could distinguish this praiseworthy quality of hers early in their relationship. This was not unusual, as the instruction of language was of primary importance in Byzantine learning. She made no mention of her schooling in Law, but because of her imperial status and her connection to power it was likely she had a solid basis in this domain. Furthermore, since she proclaimed to be heir to her father's throne, she must have played a crucial role as wife of the Emperor-designate, with training in the reception of foreign embassies, diplomacy, and in ecclesiastical and philanthropic activities appropriate for her position. Byzantine princesses were expected to represent their family's interests, as a vehicle of diplomacy. Thus, the selection of Mélior's future husband had to be carefully and wisely planned. A Porphyrogenita by all probability, a

²²⁴ Michel Stanesco, "Nigromance et Université: Scolastique du merveilleux dans le roman français du Moyen Age". *Milieus universitaires et mentalité urbaine au Moyen Age: Colloque du département d'études médiévales de Paris Sorbonne et de l'Université de Bonn*, juin 12-13, textes réunis par Daniel Poirion (1986) 132

²²⁵ See Judith Herrin, "Theophano: The Education of a Byzantine Princess", *The Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. Adelbert Davids (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Byzantine princess born to reigning emperors, she chose to marry Partonopeus, a man outside her circle. This act would dictate a candidate of exceptional standing.

In truth, Mélior's reasons for selecting Partonopeus remain vague. Early in the narrative, we are told at length of his beauty, and quite briefly of his good disposition, generosity, prowess and humility (545-550), which seem more in line with convention than reality. Perhaps his royal blood promoted his candidacy; and yet, his Trojan ancestry would render him an archetypal enemy of the Greeks (indistinguishable from the Byzantines in the mind of the Franks, for all practical purposes). Perhaps it was his physique, a more plausible scenario, given the fact that the princess had secretly become infatuated with him. After she was made visible to the youth, the court realized Mélior's indiscretions and the Byzantine knights were bound to kill the young Frank. Mélior became more saddened for the loss of her attractive lover than that of her riches, which were also jeopardized. Her ladies-in-waiting shared her admiration for the boy's appealing physique: (*Con plus l'avisent, plus lor pleist*).²²⁶ In either case, the act of portraying the young woman and her ladies as lustful and sensitive to male seduction may present inescapable political implications, whereby a Trojan-French²²⁷ has been coveted by these Byzantines. The nobility of Partonopeus's lineage is viewed in contrast to the devious nature of the Byzantine women in an effort at anti-Byzantine propaganda.

²²⁶ Had the author found an occasion to imply an infamous incident in Byzantine history, when Justinian's wife Empress Theodora hid a Monophysite leader of the iconoclast controversy in her private chambers for twelve years, thus stressing the corruption of a court with considerable female authority?

²²⁷ The French have perpetuated the myth that their dynasty descends from the fleeing Trojans, as the Prologue reminds us. This *topos* is commonplace in several romances, such as *Troie* and *Enéas*.

The notion of the Byzantine female gaze "penetrating" the undressed French youth is of particular interest in my analysis of the Byzantine woman. Thus far, Partonopeus had been handed the "weaker" role, always told how to act by his beloved as well as his mother. Mélior's revelation functions as a turning point in the tale. Once the princess was seen, she was no longer able to dictate Partonopeus's actions, other than to ban him from her kingdom in order to renew her quest for a capable husband. This rejection drove the boy to madness, and he was cured only after Mélior's younger sister dressed and armed him in preparation for the contest that would decide the most fitting candidate for Mélior's hand in marriage. At the tournament held a year after the lovers' separation, the masked Partonopeus was dubbed by the Byzantine princess herself. This time it was he who concealed his identity, acquiring the recognition of his manhood from Mélior. By concealing his identity from the princess behind his own "invisibility" mask as a French knight, Partonopeus became empowered and could expect to be on an equal footing with his fellow knights. It was Partonopeus who now held the situation in his hands, and his maneuverings would either reward him with the woman and the throne, or completely annihilate him. On the contrary, Mélior had lost all control. After her invisibility was violated, she succumbed to the order of business imposed upon her by her male entourage, functioning primarily as a prize-bride. It appears that concealment was a manifestation of power for whoever practiced it. At this point of the narrative, the male-female dynamics had greatly shifted; the powerful female sovereign lost control over the future of her Empire (as well as her mystique), and we find ourselves in the male-dominated domain of the tournament.

As the contest proceeds, candidates from Christian and non-Christian lands take part, with Partonopeus, still incognito, a Christian of distinction, faulted only by the rather limited size of his kingdom. His rival in this competition stands the Sultan Margaris²²⁸, flawed by his religion, pending his conversion. Our author makes another shift here: dissatisfied with the criteria offered for the selection of her future husband, the princess wishes to see the man she would marry. In Byzantium, it was common practice for the bride and bridegroom never to meet or see one another before the actual wedding ceremony, but here, Mélior wishes once more to control the situation, and it is no secret that physical beauty is essential to her:

Molt vueil que cit soit beax et genz
Que fera de moi ses talenz.

As if for a beauty contest, the candidates are told to reveal themselves. By "undressing" the men again and violating their incognito, Mélior's near-fetish is voiced and respected, rendering her again real sovereign.

While the judges applaud the Sultan's clothes and physique, they deeply admire Partonopeus's beauty. Despite her delight, Mélior hides her feelings and pretends to adhere to the male judges' decisions, while enjoying the pleasure of voyeurism and manipulation, faking her preference for the other candidate. Finally, Partonopeus is selected, the union between Partonopeus and Mélior made possible, and the French knight ascends to the position of Byzantine Emperor.

²²⁸ A character by the same name appears in the *Chanson de Roland*. In this epic, Margaris is the only Saracen with noble features, including an attractive physique. It is interesting to note that "Margaris" in Greek refers to the pearl, a luxury item of great beauty frequent in the Orient. The Persian character in *Partonopeus*, by being given this name, thus acquires a quasi-Byzantine persona in the neutralizing environment of equally beautiful, Orientalized Constantinople.

The author of *Partonopeus* did not wish to blame Mélior for the troubles of his protagonist. A far cry from the misogynist spirit of his day, he concluded that he loved women, and so did God, since it was He who made them beautiful. Yet, in contradiction, he admitted that women were vain and therefore forced to become reserved. Indeed, beauty is a major theme in *Partonopeus*. While the beauty of Byzantine women as well as that of the Byzantine landscape and city do play an important role in other texts of my corpus, mostly as the code for a process of seduction, it also plays an ambiguous role as at once something desirable, divine, and as something deceitful, material and sinful. Constantinople is as admirable as it is despicable for its beautiful images in Villehardouin and Clari; Athenais is as lovely as she is treacherous in *Eracle*. The beauty of Partonopeus does not appear to follow this paradoxical position. The quest for beauty may explain most of the characters' actions. Partonopeus sought beauty, and for this reason disregarded Mélior's taboo; Mélior sought beauty, and so she traveled to his land to secretly admire him; later in the competition, she had her candidates remove their helmets, in order to base her selection on their appearance; the beauty of Mélior's land and palace makes the French youth think twice about leaving behind all the luxury of a rich and enchanted Orient. Whether or not the author is adhering to his pretended historicity is of little relevance. The familiar echo of a beautiful and enchanted Orient was a tried model for an interesting tale, especially if that tale made references to actual truths about the Byzantine East, thus fusing the otherworldly with the real. Partonopeus's beauty and his prowess would distinguish his candidacy, bringing together his "female" and "male" characteristics.

During her invisibility, Mélior enjoyed extreme power. She forwent the appeal of having Partonopeus become enamored with her because of her beauty, had he seen it, in order to enjoy a sexual relationship inappropriate outside of wedlock. Likewise, Partonopeus's emasculation and his empowerment were due to his incognito. Byzantium presented itself as the ideal milieu for such goings-on: "In the already fabulous representation of a medieval Byzantium, they [the uneasiness and the obsession] introduce another level of the fabulous, the deception of fiction that is the very likeliness of medieval romance".²²⁹ What remains interesting in *Partonopeus* is the shifting and the balance of power between a Byzantine Empress and a French knight in a tale of beauty and concealment. After their marriage, new titles had been acquired: Partonopeus was crowned Emperor of the East, enjoying his imperial status and displacing the hierarchy in their relationship one final time.

The acquisition of the Empire through the line of the woman is a *topos* encountered in another work of the twelfth century, entitled *Florimont*. This work is situated in the distant past of pagan times, of Hellenistic Greece, of the mythical foundation of cities. No mention of Byzantium is made, but aspects of twelfth-century Byzantium are certainly echoed. The poet Aimon de Varennes provided his readers with a familiar genealogical prologue beginning with Babylonian (Egyptian) king Madian,

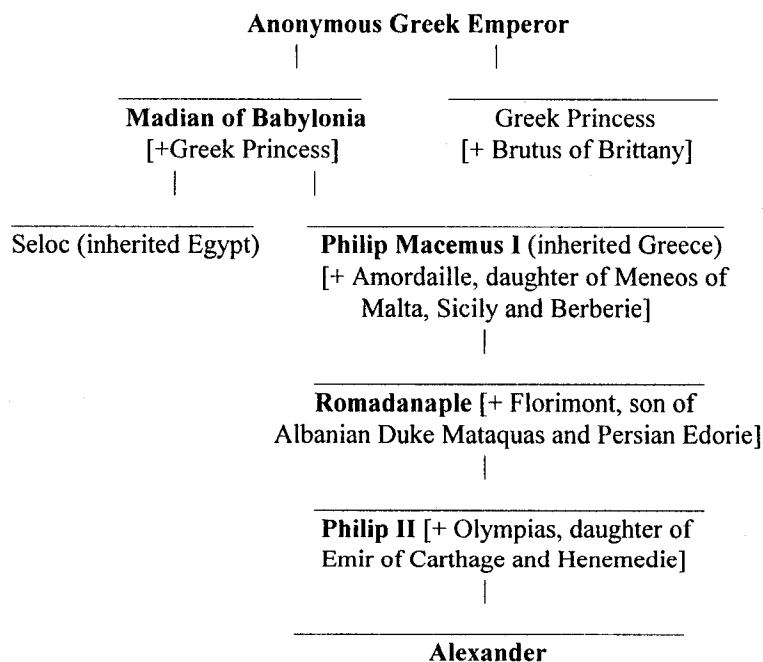
²²⁹ Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth and Closure in Twelfth Century French Fiction* (Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 1993) 138.

father of Philip I of Macedonia and great-great grandfather of Alexander the Great.²³⁰

Aimon was not content with the incomplete story of this famous dynasty and he wished to fill the gap with *Florimont*: "The life of King Phelipe of Macedonia (the great grand father of Alexander the Great) was well-known, according to Aimon, but had been incomplete [...] because it lacked the life of his son-in-law Florimont; this in turn proved a lacuna in the lineage and the cycle of Alexander that Aimon intended to fill"²³¹.

What appears interesting is Aimon's claim that he intends to restore the missing pieces of the dynasty's history as it had been passed down to Florimont by way of his wife, the daughter of Philip I, Romadanaple, herself heir to the throne and link between past and future Empire.

²³⁰ In order to clarify the complicated genealogy, I provide the following model as point of reference:



As Philippe Walter pointed out, "Contrairement à Cligès, toutefois, cette première génération de personnages concerne la future héroïne et non le héros"²³² For this reason, the appearance of Romadanaple in the narrative constitutes a high point in the story, and it is Florimont's connection through marriage to a powerful woman that gives rise to a new hero. Aimon seemed anxious to arrive at this point, so as to segue into the biographical account of Florimont, as the protagonist of his work. The narration of the events around the birth of beautiful Romadanaple as well as the love interest between the princess and Florimont also prove especially valuable for the actual composition of the romance. It is Douglas Kelly's belief that *Florimont* is the fusion of two tales: one of them about king Philip, already known in France, and the other about Florimont, a local tale in Byzantium²³³. By introducing *Florimont* to French audiences, Aimon aligned himself with the great poets of the Alexander cycle; by introducing Romadanaple, he guaranteed the legitimacy of Florimont's famous descendant, and therefore, that of his own tale-telling. Romadanaple acted as an agent of interlacing between two tales, elevating Florimont as a worthy successor to a Greek dynasty, and inserting his story and his memory into a well-known legend. She also connected the pagan Greek world to medieval France via Byzantium.

The capacity of women to determine heroes' identities is a key issue in *Florimont*. In the case of Alexander, for example, his Oriental origin has preoccupied many

²³¹ Douglas Kelly, "The Composition of Aimon de Varennes' *Florimont*", *Romance Philology* 23:3 (1969) 280

²³² Philippe Walter, *La Mémoire du Temps : fêtes et calendriers de Chrétien de Troyes à La Mort Artu* (Paris, Champion, 1989) 193

scholars²³⁴. The hero was the result of the union between the Egyptian-born Olympias and Macedonian Philip II. Philip, too, was of Egyptian blood, as he was the son of an Egyptian king and a wealthy Greek princess. With regard to Philip Macemus, or Philip I, Fourier comments, "Son père, Madian, d'abord amiral, avait épousé une princesse grecque et régna de ce fait à la fois sur l'Égypte et la "Grèce", c'est à dire la Macédoine, que sa femme lui avait apportée en dot".²³⁵ Therefore, as far back as we know, the "Greekness" of King Philip and ultimately Alexander could be attributed to a woman. The princess's granddaughter, Romadanaple, would do the same for her husband, Florimont, son of the Duke of Albania, Mataquas. With their union, Florimont became king of most of the Mediterranean world, with its Balkan and Middle Eastern components present in this intricate tale of pre-Byzantine times, and yet anachronistically recalling the vastness of the Byzantine Empire at its height in pre-Comnenian times. Like Mélior, Romadanaple was also hidden from all her international suitors that sought her hand in marriage, as well as the Greek throne. Philip hid her and allowed no one to see her. The seclusion of the young girl was common practice in Byzantium, where women were expected to live in segregated quarters, the gynaeconia, and not be seen. Philip decided to reward the suitor who served him well for the duration of three years by allowing him to see and to be kissed by his daughter, thus rendering

²³³ Kelly 291.

²³⁴ See Fourier 450, especially note 17. His quote: "L'Égypte, patrie des Pharaons, était nommée aussi Macédoine".

²³⁵ Ibid. 450.

Romadanaple a type of prize-bride,²³⁶ in a similar situation to that of Mélior at the Tournament. Up to this point, the female heir's exemplary education has had no occasion to shine, but we are not informed of all this uniquely for the purposes of convention. Indeed, the Greek princess's virtues and accomplishments will become the tool by which a worthy hero will distinguish himself.

We are then introduced to Florimont, impressively educated in the seven arts, thus mirroring Romadanaple. After having slain a monster, which was a real menace to the Greek countryside, he is approached by an ethereal fairy-like being, the beautiful girl of the Ylle Celee. As implied by her name (or, rather, the name of her place of residence), the lady of the Ylle Celee may be viewed literally as the enchantress Calypso (the Greek Καλυψώ meaning the concealed), thereby introducing stock Homeric pagan tradition into this twelfth-century French romance. The mysterious lady makes an enticing proposition to Florimont, similar to the one made to Odysseus²³⁷:

Je sui, voir, de l'Ylle Celee
Et por toi ai ge mer passee
En ma terre nen at plus hoir:
Se tu wells a moi remanoir
Tu seras rois de ma contree

²³⁶ One of the suitors anxious to win this prize was Camdiobras, king of Hungary, with whom Philip eventually went to war. Fourrier remarks that the choice of a Hungarian was no coincidence: "Si Aimon choisit un souverain de Hongrie comme adversaire du monarque grec, peut-être est-ce parce qu'il se souvient des hostilités qui opposèrent durant de longues années (1151-1167) Manuel Comnène a Geiza II et a Etienne III" (451). Apparently, the latter's brother Bela III was promised Byzantine Princess Maria's hand and the imperial crown. Manuel, however, broke the engagement, thus triggering the fury of Bela. In *Florimont*, mention of the Bulgarian Meleain aiding Camdiobras was made. Although such an alliance between Hungarians and Bulgarians cannot be established, there were, in fact, interactions between Byzantium and Bulgaria, especially after the submission of the former to the latter by Basil the Bulgaroktonos (i.e. "Slayer of the Bulgarians") in 1018 (452).

²³⁷ On the lush, luxuriant island of Ogygia, Odysseus spent seven years of his ten-year journey home with the beautiful seductive nymph Calypso, who virtually possessed him and compelled him to live a sensual but vegetative existence. See Homer, *The Odyssey*, V:71-82

Et je roine coronee. (2487-2492)

There was, however, a condition for this generous offer: Florimont could never reveal their affair. As in *Partonopeus*, young Florimont is unable to honor this *geis* of silence, and at his mother's and (male) magician-teacher's insistence, he reveals his secret and is shunned by the lady.²³⁸ A madman renamed Pauvre Perdu,²³⁹ he appears at Philip's court to face the Empire's enemy. Romadanaple is presented to Pauvre Perdu, who is immediately cured of his love-sickness brought on by the girl of the Ylle Celee. Inspired by his new love, Florimont defeats his opponent, becomes the head of the Greek army, and eventually the son-in-law of Philip.

Florimont's marriage was the means to his social ascension. Unlike Partonopeus's beauty which distinguished him, it was his exceptional prowess and his fine learning appropriate for his aristocratic status that promoted his candidacy, and ultimately acted as catalysts to his succession. As Walter notes, "Le mariage n'est plus une fin en soi; il devient un moyen privilégié pour fonder un ordre humain, idéal garanti par des personnages hors du commun".²⁴⁰ The hero's marriage not only rewarded him with the prestige of such a position, but also with the ideal companion. Besides the wealth and the title Romadanaple brought to Florimont, she returned Florimont's sanity, as the lady of the Ylle Celee's counterpart. While Mélior, an echo of both the lady of the Ylle Celee and of Romadanaple, was the cause of the hero's demise but also of his ultimate salvation, Romadanaple's presence led only to Florimont's unconditioned

²³⁸ See also Chrétien's *Yvain* as well as *Lanval* of Marie de France.

²³⁹ Yet another echo of Chrétien's *Yvain* and the Tristan legend.

ascension and her curative abilities stemmed solely from her most worldly qualities. The princess quickly asserted herself as the hero's intellectual equal basing their relationship on mutual respect, rather than fascination and ("magical") manipulation. Florimont and Romadanaple became the parents of Philip II, named after his maternal grandfather. It was Romadanaple's contribution to the line that would eventually produce Alexander. Indeed, the romancer intended to end his work with the mention of this most noble birth.

Women as agents of the central hero's social ascension were also an integral part of the plot in *Eracle*. In this work, the rapport between the woman and the hero was of a different nature, namely mystical. At the core of the hero's ascension lay his special gift of recognizing three things; the perfect horse, precious stone and virtuous woman. Eracle selected the ideal Empress for the Roman sovereign, thus securing for himself privileges that would later permit him to arrive at the highest position, that of Byzantine Emperor.

While Eracle's rise to the throne was facilitated by a woman, unlike *Florimont*, however, neither his own lineage, nor that of the empress would guarantee him this honor. Eracle's ascension was due exclusively to his divine conception and thereafter his devout religious upbringing and his saintly demeanor. Son of Roman Christians, Eracle was a gift of God bestowed upon his parents. He would be nicknamed Dieudonné, recalling the Greek Θεοδόσιος. As for the name of Eracle, a historical as well as a mythological connotation may be established. Modeled after actual Emperor Heraclius (reigned 610-641 A.D.), who restored the Holy Cross to Constantinople by defeating the

²⁴⁰ Op. cit. 193

Persian Chosroès, *Eracle's* storyline parallels this event. The account of Eracle's supernatural conception²⁴¹ initially seemed to place this tale in a hagiographical tradition, where the Christological central figure was expected to perform miraculous feats. Finally, the extraordinary traits of Eracle may in fact be an allusion to the heroic Herakles, or Hercules, therefore once again associating the pagan-Greek with the Christian-Byzantine in this French text.

Despite the historical implications behind his name, Eracle had no claims to the throne. Robbed of his paternity, he was purchased as a slave by one of Roman Emperor Laïs's men. Friedrich Wolfzettel believes that *Eracle* is the quest of a boy's lineage, which he will ultimately find.²⁴² Eracle eventually became Emperor because divine grace was bestowed upon him and not because he was a noble son of Rome. His rise to Empire reminds us of the Byzantine practice of elected Emperors rooted in the fundamental democratic concept that all freemen may enjoy the same privileges:

L'auteur a choisi la tradition byzantine en ne se faisant pas faute de garder jusqu'aux détails apparemment incongrus d'une civilisation à première vue étrangère à l'Occident féodal. C'est que, d'une manière générale, le pouvoir des empereurs grecs n'était pas basé sur le principe Occidental de la succession dynastique, mais bien, comme d'ailleurs celui de l'Empire germanique, sur le principe de l'élection.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Eracle was conceived on silk cloth placed upon a carpet by an infertile couple, a reminder perhaps of a similar one used in the Greek liturgy service before the Transubstantiation of the bread and wine into Body and Blood of Christ.

²⁴² See Friedrich Wolfzettel, "La Recherche de l'Universel. Pour une nouvelle lecture des romans de Gautier d'Arras " *Cahiers de Civilisation médiévale Xe-XIIe siècles* 33:2 (1990): 120.

²⁴³ Ibid. 118.

Indeed, at the court of Laïs²⁴⁴, Eracle shined. He found the fastest horse for the Emperor, as well as the ideal stone that protected its bearer from fire, water or weapons. After a long search he also found Athenaïs, the most virtuous woman in the kingdom, fit to be empress. Gautier informed us of the girl's credentials. She was of good stock, virtuous, (2639-2640), and loyal (*Le dame croist molt en biauté/ Si aime honor et loiauté/* 2815-2816). He would later discover that she was a lettered woman, as she wrote her own notes:

Nul autre escrivain n'i apiele
Ne mais sen cors tant seulement
Si escrit sen comandement (4380-4382)

She was also beautiful, as Eracle himself carefully observed in a scene of a medieval beauty pageant where the young hero acted as the experienced judge despite his age.

Once again, the quest for Athenaïs reflected the practice of the bride-shows held in Byzantium. Indeed, Athenaïs was the perfect candidate for the position; she was educated, beautiful and a virgin. A second historical intertext thus enters our story: that of Emperor Theodosius, who, in 421, married a woman by the name of Athenaïs.²⁴⁵

Although Gautier made no formal mention of fictional Athenaïs's education, we could

²⁴⁴ The name Laïs is no doubt an attempt on Gautier's part to inscribe him in the classical tradition as an echo of Laius, father of Oedipus, who incidentally was challenged by another youth—Oedipus himself—deprived of his own nobility, because of unknown paternity.

²⁴⁵ Her name signals her place of descent, in line with the tradition of other female Byzantine characters (Thessala, Cypraine). Real life Athenaïs also had a rags-to-riches story. At the death of her erudite father, Athenaïs had been left with a small share of her family estate, and she eventually found her way to Constantinople, seeking the protection of her maternal aunt. There she was persuaded to seek an audience with the Augusta Pulcheria, Theodosius's sister, and true ruler behind her brother, in order to aid her in retrieving her rightful share. Bréhier describes the well-spoken girl as one of great beauty, grace and dignity. Athenaïs was also an exceptional candidate because of her rare education, well-versed in rhetoric, the masterpieces of ancient literature, philosophy, astronomy and geography. See Charles Diehl, *Byzantine Empresses*, trans. Harold Bell and Theresa de Kerpely. (New York, Knopf, 1963) 23.

safely expect the heroine to reflect the experience of the actual erudite Empress Athenaïs, in the tradition of Mélior and Romadanaple.

It was the young Eracle who acted as the pious middleman and selected the appropriate bride, making her Augusta and proprietor of many riches in her own right:

Et il m'est vis que c'est raisons
 Que me dame aut par mes maisons
 Par ses viles, par ses chastiaus
 Par ses manoirs qu'ele a mout biaux :
 Vera ses terres et se gent;
 Vera sen or et sen argent. (3079-3084)

No doubt, all the pomp and ritual were present at Athenaïs's wedding. Because of her election, a woman not born to royalty could be made to incarnate holiness and power. But Gautier did not go into great detail about the Augusta's coronation. He did not mention, for example, that before she was married to Laïs she was crowned Empress. This was the standard practice of Byzantium, and it was of particular importance. According to the ritual, the Empress was invested with sovereign powers in her own right as God's choice. This sacred act functioned as a demonstration of equality between the Imperial couple, not yet wed. Then, unaccompanied by the Emperor, she presented herself to her subjects, receiving their prostrations and cheers: "God save the Augusta!"²⁴⁶ Given the use of the precise historical intertexts necessary for the production of this tale, it is likely that Gautier omitted the announcement of such a practice in his poem deliberately, as it might have seemed awkward and culturally unacceptable in the West. Gautier may not have wished to baffle or provoke the official

²⁴⁶ Diehl 17.

Western opinion about women and their jurisdictions, and therefore avoided the mention of anything remotely improper, although it was standard procedure in the Byzantine court. Listing the qualities of a Byzantine empress, especially her education, was one thing, but acknowledging her as God's choice, as the Frankish practice had been for kings only, was hubris, unimaginable within the Western social norms.

Despite Eracle's vouching for Athenais, Laïs confined his wife in a tower during his six-month absence. Her duties as Empress, however, obliged her to be present at an annual celebration, where youths competed at games and participated in dance and merriment.²⁴⁷ It was at the festivities that she became enamored with the harpist Paridès, who shared her affections. With the aid of an old woman, the lovers met, thus making Eracle intuitively aware of her indiscretion. Despite his initial desire to punish his wife, Laïs granted Athenais a divorce and agreed to have the lovers united. Gautier presented no greater originality as so far as he reiterated the official position of the clergy of his time that women were not to be trusted. The example of Helen of Troy and Paris served as prototype of this mentality, as the *Roman de Troie* informed us.²⁴⁸

In *Eracle*, Athenais's election and her erotic escapades were at the basis of Eracle's elevation: "L'élection d'Athenais est une sorte d'épiphanie de la vérité voulue

²⁴⁷ Diehl remarks that the public appearance of the Empress at such ceremonies was of great importance, and conducted with strict ritual. Routinely, the Augusta would appear at the side of her husband, where the crowd chanted: "Appear with thee Augustæ, o God-crowned Emperors", and again, "O Vasileus and thou glory of the Purple, come and enlighten your slaves and rejoice the hearts of your people", and again, "Come forth Empress of the Romans" (14).

²⁴⁸ In his selection of the lovers' names the author of *Eracle* created an amalgam of fact and legend. Paridès, according to Fourrier, was another name for Paris, of the Trojan War. Actually, Paridis was the genitive case of the name Paris, hellenized to Paridès, in an attempt to attribute a quasi-Byzantine feeling to the work (223).

par Dieu même, comme la mise à l'épreuve des dons magiques et l'ascension à la cour servent d'étapes à l'épiphanie du protagoniste élu".²⁴⁹ Her unchaste behavior, followed by the hero's knowledge of it and its subsequent report to the emperor, obligated the court to recognize his otherworldly distinctions and to exonerate him. In truth, it was after he brought Athenaïs to the Roman court that his true identity became known. After completing his spiritual journey, Eracle eventually established himself in Constantinople and embodied a new type of Imperial ideal. In her own way, Athenaïs aided Eracle in creating this novelty of a universal Emperor.

The theme of the hero's spiritual journey with the help of a Byzantine woman is also present in *Girart de Roussillon*. In this epic, the real objective of the hero appears not to become assimilated into King Charles Martel's community against which he had revolted, but to acquire a sense of inner peace and sainthood after a long series of adventures. In its hagiographic aspect, *Girart* resembles *Eracle*; it is, nevertheless, an example of another genre, describing the male-dominated epic universe.

At the heart of the conflict appeared two sisters, Elissent and Berthe, daughters of the Byzantine Emperor and promised fiancées, the former to Girart, and the latter (and oldest) to Charles Martel. Several French intertexts concerning the princesses' names may be identified. In the case of Elissent, we are reminded of the epic *Ami et Amile*,²⁵⁰ where Charlemagne's daughter Belissent seduces a young knight because he

²⁴⁹ Wolfzettel 119.

²⁵⁰ See Micheline de Combarieu du Grès, *L'idéal humain et l'expérience morale chez les héros des chansons de geste - des origines à 1250* (Aix-en-Provence, Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2 tomes, 1979); Michel Zink, *Les voix de la conscience, Parole du poète et parole de Dieu dans la littérature médiévale* (Caen, Paradigme, 1992).

ignores her. Of initial dubious repute, the Frankish princess is later esteemed for her high moral value, agreeing to sacrifice her child for the salvation of her husband's friend. As for Berthe, *Girart* no doubt recalls the actual sainte Berthe (624-743 A.D.), model wife and mother, as well as founder of a monastery (a prototype for the fictional).²⁵¹ We are also reminded of another intertext of the famous epic *Berthe au grant pié*, both an historical and an imaginary figure.

The princesses served as a pretext to the declaration of war between Charles and Girart when the king fancied his vassal's fiancée and forced Girart to wed Berthe, revealing his political immaturity, as he did not hesitate to compromise his alliance with two immensely important persons: the Emperor of Constantinople, the most powerful sovereign of Christendom, and his vassal, who as compensation accepted Berthe's dowry although he received no imperial titles. The exchange of fiancées relieved Girart of his feudal duties towards his king. Once Charles did not honor his pact, even further provoking Girart by taking his land, Roussillon, a series of wars took place and Girart and Berthe were exiled. The couple led a life of penitence for twenty-two years, she as a seamstress, and he as a mineworker. With the intervention of Elissent, Charles and Girart reconciled and later came to a final confrontation, after Girart's only child was assassinated. The epic closes with Girart's imitation of his wife's saintly example at Vézelay, as he withdrew from worldly pleasures and donated his land to monasteries and to his cousin Fouque.

²⁵¹ See Paul Guérin, *Les Petits Bollandistes: Vies des Saints* (Paris, Bloud et Barral, 1882), Vol. 8; John Gilmary Shea, *Little Pictorial Lives of Saints* (New York, Benziger Brothers, 1878) 361-362.

Although the women of this characteristically non-misogynistic work were not present in the long battle scenes that occupied its central position, they were mostly responsible for the onset of the conflict, and completely liable for its peaceful resolution. In their dignified manner, they took charge. Micheline de Combarieu du Grès comments: "Les femmes sont indispensables à la vie et au salut de leurs maris, alors que la réciprocité n'est pas vraie. C'est grâce à elles que le monde féodal, organisé par les hommes et mené par eux à sa perte est réintroduit dans la paix et l'équilibre."²⁵² The poem opens with a procession at Charles's court at Reims. The Franks were interrupted by the Pope, who wished them to engage in a war led by the Roman Emperor of Constantinople, previously attacked by infidels. His plan presented multiple advantages: by engaging in such a war, an alliance between two Christian monarchies could be reinforced and a mutual enemy, the "Païen", would be confronted. The politics of the first Crusade were echoed in this first episode. Furthermore, Charles would realize his project of expansionism by marrying the Byzantine princess, thereby inheriting the titles and land of a powerful Orient. Charles did not hesitate to respond: (*La mulier et l'onore vuel e l'anfan!* /112).

The Byzantine Emperor invited the embassy into his castle, where he first preferred to dazzle them by creating rain within its walls, thus terrifying the Franks. At their wish to flee this frightening scene, the Emperor first continued his bizarre magical games ("jous estrains"), but then proved a graceful and generous host, exemplary of his people (XVII), and in admiration for his French guests (XV). Even though French-

²⁵² Micheline Combarieu de Grès, *L'Idéal humain et l'expérience morale chez les héros des*

Byzantine relations were ambiguous in this work, there appears to be grounds for mutual admiration. In the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, Byzantine Emperor Hugon's similar behavior led to a different outcome, by which the French knights almost annihilated Constantinople.

Berthe was finally presented to the embassy. She was a gifted woman, educated as was customary for her rank, as she had been groomed as heir to the throne of an Emperor's first born:

Sos paire li a fait les ars parar;
 Sat caudiu e gregeis e romencar,
 E latin e ebriu tot declarar.
 Entre sen e beltat e gent parlar. (237-240)

N'en vis une tan saive ne mels senade;
 E est de toz bonz ars deuite e parade. (538-39)

It is surprising that the author refers to her knowledge of "gregeis", since Berthe was, after all, a Byzantine. Perhaps he is referring to the older forms of classical Greek and to literary genres, such as Greek rhetoric.

Elissent's description stressed only her physical beauty (258-261). Apparently, the princesses inherited their aging father's good looks, as well as his good sense and his wealth. The Byzantine monarch continued to shower his guests with magnificent gifts of exotic animals such as camels, elephants, lions, falcons and even flying dragons as bearers of the princesses' dowry. This act alluded to the women's equally exotic persona, rendering the future marriages all the more prestigious, and promising an opportunity for Western expansionism into the East of rarities and fascination.

At St. Denis, Charles asked to see the two princesses, and favored Elissent for her beauty. Berthe overheard Girart and Charles arguing over the king's decision to marry the former's fiancée. Humiliated in a hostile land, she cursed the boat and the sea that brought her to the land of the Franks, a classical image of a moribund hero. She felt completely forsaken of her honor and her country.

Despite Girart's outrage he was promised Berthe's riches, and wishing her no shame, he agreed to marry her and accept Roussillon as his territory, as promised by Charles. Slowly, Berthe won over the heart of Girart as an intelligent and educated woman. As in the case of *Florimont's* Romadanaple, the Byzantine heroine Berthe was able to inspire feelings of respect and love by way of her intellectual qualities.

At this point, it becomes difficult to establish which land Berthe was referring to when speaking of "her country", Roussillon or Constantinople, since she had been living as a Western Countess for several years. Berthe's Byzantine persona is steadily transformed ("Westernized") as we read on. On their way to Hungary, the couple's horses are stolen, forcing them to walk like simple people. A Byzantine Princess was thus reduced to the status of low-caste, laboring woman. Her humiliation and the loss of her riches eventually lead to her sainthood. She recommends that they live in penitence, as long as Charles is on their trail pursuing them.

The "Westernization" pattern is consistent in the persona of Elissent as well. The Byzantine Empress saw in Girart a fellow countryman, no longer considering herself as heir to her father's throne, but as the wife of Charles. Her nationality had shifted as she identified with her position as Empress of the West. Indeed, this transformation of the princesses was an important development of their status and their perception of

identity²⁵³. Thirty years after having left their father's court, such an evolution and claim would seem natural. Elissent showed no hesitation to help Girart; actually she felt she had the authority and the right to manipulate the situation. To the anger of Charles's men, she persuaded the king to pardon her brother-in-law; the king yielded to her authority (*La reine, segner, me fai aicon/ 8026*). Few occasions hinted at the queen's former Byzantine identity, as when she donned her Porphyry dress, in order to coerce her husband into honoring his promises; she was, after all, a Porphyrogenita princess. But Elissent was also a powerful maternal figure for her subjects, as Girart's cousin Fouque remarked (*El reine nos est en liu de maire/ 9311*). Indeed, Elissent proved to be the matriarch of the kingdom. Her wish to maintain peace was honored by Fouque, and her careful strategy and collaboration with the clergy were essential to convince the king.

The epic concludes with the sainthood of Berthe. Once she had contributed her belongings to the poor, she worked at night with the help of a pilgrim to build a monastery. Girart, ignorant of his wife's activity, received word that she had engaged in an extramarital affair with this pilgrim. The rumor deeply surprised him, as he reflected on Berthe's exceptional qualities as a wife (9659-9667). Berthe's virtues were mentioned one final time in the last episode. Constantinople was not explicitly alluded to since the opening scenes, but it re-appeared at its closing for purposes of narrative continuity. Berthe's "Westernized" image would suddenly, if only briefly, assume its Byzantine allure, as if the poet decided to remind his audience of the opening scenes.

²⁵³ I do not believe, however, that it comes as a shock; their Western-sounding names, as well as the intertexts behind them, anticipate this development.

Recent criticism has viewed Elissent and Berthe as having an important, yet limited, role in the narrative: " Elissent et Berthe sont absentes dans la plus grande partie du récit des guerres entre Girart et Charles; elles semblent néanmoins jouer un rôle important au début et au dénouement de l'histoire[...] Elissent, devenue impératrice imposante intervient auprès du roi pour le réconcilier avec Girart, tandis que Berthe, devenue une sainte non moins impressionnante, intervient auprès de Dieu pour réconcilier Girart avec son créateur."²⁵⁴ Indeed, as opposed to their flawed husbands, Elissent and Berthe carried themselves in ways that would befit a king or a saint. In fact, if we are to accept that the two sisters were actually complements to one another, we might conclude that in their fusion, a powerful prototype emerged, namely that of Caesaropapism, especially given their Byzantine heritage. The sisters' perfect, albeit stylized, comportment reflected the image of the priest-king of the Byzantine court, skilled at being an authority for political as well as religious issues. The two sisters represent two different ideals, Berthe of a spiritual saintly nature, and Elissent closer to the imperial. As daughters of a magician king, who in reality recalled the Byzantine monarch as "Cosmocrator", a Christ-like figure with absolute jurisdiction in both Church and State, Berthe and Elissent each inherited a fraction of their father's authority, dividing his power in two parts. In addition to this symbolic inheritance of power, Elissent and Berthe may be seen as echoes of two actual sisters in Byzantium who

²⁵⁴ Simon Gaunt, "Le Pouvoir d'achat des femmes dans *Girart de Roussillon*". *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale Xe-XIIIe siècles*, 33 :4 (1990) 306.

shared the imperial throne, Zoe and Theodora.²⁵⁵ Although the author of *Girart*, might not have known the specifics, the simultaneous reign of two sisters on the Byzantine throne was no doubt interesting, if not scandalous to the West, who saw it as impossible for the supreme office to be filled by a woman. These personages had been taken from their historical frame, and chiseled to fit the French feudal and epic context, hence merging Byzantine and Frankish cultures.

The East-West connection was indeed promoted through the marriage of Charles to the princess of Constantinople in the spirit of Western expansionism into the East. Berthe and Elissent were the means through which genres were fused in this work. They introduced romance elements into an epic, only to end in a type of hagiographical edification. But while the real issue of the male confrontation in other epics (such as the *Prise d' Orale*) was not the possession of the most beautiful woman but rather the acquisition of the land and wealth she inherited, in *Girart* the conquest of Elissent was not based on her fortune but in the prestige of beholding an ideal beauty. By keeping Elissent, Charles affirmed his authority over Girart and his prestige as the better candidate for her. Therefore, the women became the measure by which the same competition was judged by displacing the nature of the conflict and modifying it from

²⁵⁵ In 1028, one century before the appearance of *Girart*, Zoe the Porphyrogeneta, heir to the Macedonian throne, shared the position with her sister Theodora. Initially sole ruler, Zoe took three husbands and adopted a son while handing her power to all these men. After many tribulations, she called her sister Theodora, a nun, to the throne, and shared with her the title Basilissa. This term was "employed to express not merely a title of honour, but the concept of a woman at the pinnacle of political power". The personalities and the physique of Berthe and Elissent bear resemblance to Theodora and Zoe respectively. Like Elissent, Zoe was beautiful, generous, elegant; unlike Elissent, Zoe was described as frivolous, extravagant and silly. Theodora, though younger than Zoe, shared many of Berthe's qualities. She was pious, wise, and kind; unlike Berthe, Theodora was unattractive and possessed leadership qualities. See Diehl, 137-173.

the sidelines, which was no meager feat. In fact, the exchanges between men became null and void because of Charles' s treachery, and anticipated Girart's revolt.

The queen Elissent was viewed as the mother of her faithful subjects and as a respected ruler: "Elle est le porte-parole- elle, une femme- de la communauté politique, c'est- à- dire du royaume et de l'empire."²⁵⁶ By distributing imperial riches and glories to Girart and others, Elissent assumed the immense responsibility of rebuilding a kingdom poorly handled by Charles. Berthe's authority was of a completely different nature. Oddly, the influence she exercised over Girart was generated from her education and her humility. She decided to love a man she was not promised to, and to abandon a role she was destined for to her sister. "Berthe, la douce et la silencieuse, et Elissent, l'ardente et l'audacieuse", comments Labbé.²⁵⁷

If Elissent provided an allure of sensuality to the poem, Berthe proved her intellectual counterpart. A great source of spiritual strength, she managed to survive the most difficult circumstances, and adapt to extremely dismal conditions in support of her husband, despite her noble heritage. Berthe encouraged and provided spiritual guidance for Girart, finding equilibrium for herself and her spouse in her journey to sainthood.

The exemplary women of *Girart* were thus present even when they were silent and invisible. While they may be viewed as mediators in a masculine world, it is they who held the standard by which their men were prompted to act and were eventually

²⁵⁶ Micheline de Combarieu du Grès, "Le Personnage d'Elissent dans *Girart de Roussillon*", *Studia Occitanica*. ed. Hans-Erich Keller (Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 1986) 30.

²⁵⁷ Alain Labbé, "La Comtesse Berthe dans *Girart de Roussillon* : l'amour et la vie d'une femme", *Charlemagne in the North*, eds. Philip E. Bennette, Anne Elizabeth Cobbs, Graham A. Runnals. (Edinburgh, Société Rencevals, 1993) 323.

judged. Berthe and Elissent were complementary representations of a unique imperial icon, Byzantine at its core. Despite the author's allusions to their acquired Western identities, their distinct roles in the epic were a resounding echo of their Byzantine heritage.

In *Cligès*, two different types of Byzantine empresses appear: one was Greek born, the other, "naturalized". Chrétien commenced his tale by introducing the patriarchal figure of Alexander, whose name alone had made him a prime example for largesse, wealth and courage. Although Chrétien's Alexander was present only in an early episode and thus not fully developed, we could see him as the ideal starting point of a lineage, which produced fit successors to his empire. At his side sat the empress, also portrayed in nondescript terms, but valuable to the story for a special reason: the production of male heirs:

Empereriz ot cointe et noble
Don l'emperere ot deus enfanz. (50-51)

Chrétien marked the Empress's name by calling her Tantalus, in which Phillippe Walter found traces of Tantalus, a "victime d'un supplice célèbre, lié à l'histoire de Pélopes que Chrétien a mise en roman",²⁵⁸ no doubt an allusion to the classical tradition. Tantalus and Alexander had two sons: Alexander, the eldest, and Alis. There were obvious connections between the names: Alexander's eldest son bore his own name, and all three men's names began with the syllable "Al", while the Empress was not absent

²⁵⁸ Walter 1139.

from this onomastic symbolism, as her name encompassed that of her younger son's.²⁵⁹ Chrétien remembered the Alexander tradition, but also alluded to contemporary Byzantium, where Emperors by the name Alexius, a probable precursor to "Alis", were common.²⁶⁰ Tantalus was, therefore, part of this lineage, assuming a role as matriarch, but as a mere image of her husband:

Alixandres ot non li pere
Et Tantalus ot non la mere. (59-60)

After her presentation as "mater", imperial wife and heir to the Alexander tradition herself, Tantalus no longer appeared in the story. The next Byzantine Empress that we hear of is Fénice, initially her younger son's wife, and later her grandson's lover and subsequent lawful spouse. Fénice was introduced into the plot after Alis's usurpation of the throne at the death of Alexander the senior. Alis's older brother had decided to permit him to remain Emperor, provided he promised never to marry, and to devolve his succession to Cligès. At first the promise was honored, but soon Alis's consuls insisted that he take a wife, worthy of the title of Empress.

Et sage et bele et cointe noble
Qui dame iert de Costantinoble. (2631-2632)

The ideal woman fitting this description was the daughter of the German Emperor who would also guarantee political advantages for the Byzantines. The

²⁵⁹ "Alis" is, nevertheless, a recollection of the Alexander legend only in part. His subsequent usurpation of the throne from brother Alexander and, later, from his nephew Cligès, suggested that he was only partly able to do the job. Cligès, younger Alexander's son, would have to rectify the situation and punish his unjust uncle.

²⁶⁰ There is also another potential dimension: Alis sounds strangely like Aalis, which is a version of a woman's name in Old French, with alternative forms Adelais, Adeliz, or Aliz. Was this coincidence to imply that Alis was effeminate in nature? Certainly, his masculinity was questionable, as he was unable to perform sexually, because of Thessala's magic potion.

Empires of East and West could greatly benefit from this union (reminiscent of the Manuel-Bertha and Otto-Theophano alliances) if only there were no obstacle, namely the Duke of Saxony to whom the princess Fénice had been promised. Eventually, Cligès defeated the forces of the Duke, and, albeit enamored with his future aunt, handed Fénice over to his uncle, Alis.

As a true-to-form courtly romance, *Cligès* is about an adulterous relationship between Cligès and Fénice. Echoes of the Tristan legend may be found here, in the love triangle Tristan-Iseut-Marc, as indicated in the text itself. In several much-quoted lines, the new Empress announced that she did not wish to become another Iseut between two men:

Ja ne m'i porroie accorder
A la vie qu'Isolz mena
Amors en li trop vilena
Que ses cuers fu a un entiers
Et ses cors fu a deus rentiers. (3132-3136)

While Fénice decided not to share her body with her husband she knew that her land would not fall into the consul's hands either. According to Karen Pratt, there is a "symbolic connection between the Queen's body and the Kingdom [...] the Queen's adultery, sharing her body with two men, is bound to imply the lover's illicit claim to the political power tied to the land".²⁶¹ As long as Fénice refrained from engaging in sexual activity with both Cligès and Alis, neither of them had any real claims to her

²⁶¹ Karen Pratt, "The Image of the Queen in Old French Literature". *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College London, April 1995*. Ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1997) 256.

Kingdom.²⁶² In the land-body equation, the recently naturalized Byzantine bride maintained a conservative position, while in reality she intended to offer her body to the one who possessed her heart, with the prospect of handing over her land to her bed's "only tenant". Indeed, separated from her family and country, and in a "vulnerable and isolated position" (Pratt 244) Fénice sought refuge and comfort with Cligès.

Although Fénice was not a Byzantine princess by birth²⁶³, her name may be examined as a symbol of her "Byzantification". Her pan-Western and especially her Hellenistic heritage might be implied in her name, recalling the phoenix bird, to be later a "Christianized" symbol.²⁶⁴ The bird was noted for its otherworldly ethereal qualities, its connection to fire, and its uniqueness. According to myth, the phoenix, an ethereal being, is reborn out of its ashes without sexual union and from the consuming rays of the Sun and dew (Miguet 952). This bird would ideally live in a paradisiacal setting, such as the one created by the architect Jehan when he constructed his tower to shield the lovers from worldly troubles. The phoenix is also connected to fire; after the trial by fire imposed upon Fénice by the doctors of Salerno, who were suspicious of her "false" death, the Empress emerged unharmed and awakened from the "dead" with the aid of nurse Thessala's potion. Last, the bird was unique; Fénice's beauty was thus praised:

²⁶² As Pratt pointed out, this body-land analogy was also present in *Eracle*, when Laïs granted Athenaïs a divorce but gave her no land to hand over to Paridès. They had to live off the former's paternal inheritance with no chance of Athenaïs conferring sovereignty upon her new husband. Pratt 255.

²⁶³ There are different types of Byzantine princesses: 1) porphyrogenitae, 2) of noble Byzantine blood, 3) of foreign noble blood, 4) women selected in bride-shows and brought to Constantinople as potential Augustae.

²⁶⁴ Marie Miguet, *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes*, ed. Pierre Brunel (London and New York, Routledge, 1993) 950.

Fenyce ot la pucele a non:
 Ce ne fu mie sanz reison,
 Car si con fenix li oisiax
 Est sor toz les autres plus biax,
 Ne estre n'an pot c'uns ansamble,
 Aussi Fenyce ce me sanble,
 N'ot de biauté nule paroille. (2707-2713)

This type of exemplary beauty, as Miguet put it, "encouraged eroticization" (955), pointing to the allure of an eroticized Orient.

Yet, despite her otherworldliness and the rich Christian and Hellenistic tradition behind her name, Chrétien informed his readers that Fénice would be remembered not for her loyalty to her lover, but rather for her unfaithfulness to Alis. For this reason, she would be locked up in the gynaeceum, as a reminder of duped emperors and of the true nature of women, deceitful at their core. The "official" position of twelfth-century France was reflected at the excipit of the work, ending on a note of clerical misogyny. As a woman and as a (new) Byzantine, Fénice could not be reckoned with without suspicion, and her physical confinement rendered her forever inaccessible to the West.

B. Byzantine Wise Women.

While the fate of Fénice was made known, one might wonder of the whereabouts of another woman essential to the plot, her nurse, Thessala. In all probability, she joined her imperial mistress in the gynaeceum, as a healer of the palace. It is worth noting that a princess of the West should be brought up by a Greek nurse. A Greek governess, referred to as a "wise woman", had been involved in the upbringing of Berthe in *Girart de Roussillon*, but that was normal for a Byzantine princess. Cypraine had raised Romadanaple in *Florimont*, but that, too, appeared expected. In *Cligès*, a female

magician from the Plains of Thessaly in central Greece, famous for its agricultural products, special brand of silk, its horses²⁶⁵ and its magic,²⁶⁶ traveled to Germany through the known itinerary from the mysterious Orient to the West in order to offer her valuable services. Thessaly was indeed famous for being home to magicians:

Por ce fu Thessala clamee
 Qu'ele fu de Tessalle nec,
 Ou sont faites les deablies
 Anseigniees et establies. (2987-90)

Chrétien borrows the cliché of magical Thessaly from his literary predecessors:

"Lucius, the hero of Apuleius' novel, *Metamorphoses*, traveled to Thessaly in order to study witchcraft, because Thessaly was traditionally considered the country of witches."²⁶⁷ Lucan's *Pharsalia*, evoking the Thessalian town of Pharsala, also referred to witchcraft: "Moreover, the earth of Thessaly produces poisonous herbs in the mountains, and the rocks feel it when the magicians sing their deadly spells. Many plants grow there that may compel the gods and the woman who came from Colchis [Médée] picked in Thessalian country many herbs that she did not bring along."²⁶⁸

Chrétien made the obvious statement that Thessala's name was but an indication of her place of birth. This might be viewed as another act of Western "othering" by

²⁶⁵ Catherine Croizy-Naquet, *Thebès, Troie at Carthage. Poétique de la ville dans le roman antique du XIIIe siècle*. (Geneva, Slatkine, 1994) 284.

²⁶⁶ See Julio Caro Baroja. "Magic and Religion in the Classical World", *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, Ed. Max Marwick. (Penguin Harmondsworth, 1970) "Initially Caria (in Asia Minor) seems to have been the center of the Hecate cult [a moon goddess present at the life and death of a person], but it also existed in Thessaly. This is particularly interesting because Thessaly was always known for its witches." (71) Baroja attributes sexual significance to the personage of Hecate who was also believed to be the mother of Medea and Circe.

²⁶⁷ Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) 113.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 195.

naming a foreigner with a nickname that shows indifference to, or perhaps even ignorance of the person's actual name (perhaps Hecate, an archetypal Greek witch?). The exotic individual was desired solely for the heritage she transferred (2984-2992). It is, however, also common for French medieval fiction writers to create their sorcerers from certain place names, for instance Dame Calabre in the swan-knight legend. This way, the place of the practice of magic acquires as much significance as the sorceress.

Indeed Thessala was a precious asset for Fénice. She was assigned several roles, influencing the vulnerable princess so long as she was kept in her care. Secondly, Thessala was Fénice's personal sorceress. Three times she concocted potions for the sake of Fénice, once administering the drink to Alis so that he might be duped into believing that he had sexual encounters with the empress, a second time to Fénice, in order to make her appear ill, and a third time – more impressively, again to Fénice, to aid her in feigning her death, only to be "resurrected" hours after her burial. In each of these cases, Thessala demonstrated her mastery of the art of illusion. She used her powers to bring about death or the illusion of it. As a true witch, she was familiar with the proximity and manipulation of death. "Nigromance" or divination/communication with the dead was a specialty of all the "magicians" we have met: the Byzantine Emperor in *Girart*, Mélior in *Partonopeus*, Hugon in the *Pèlerinage*, Médée in *Le Roman de Troie*, the sage Floquart in *Florimont*. In *Cligès*, Thessala brought death upon her mistress not as an act of evil, but in her effort to protect her from an unfortunate fate. Baroja speaks of witches' *techne*, their science to manufacture love potions and bring on

death.²⁶⁹ The acquisition of technical know-how as well as folk wisdom was due in part to a witch's old age.²⁷⁰

As a woman, spiritually inferior to men and thus prone to interactions with suspicious forces, and as a Byzantine, Thessala made the perfect witch. Indeed, she reflected a practice of some older women of her day but by no means with the sanction of the Byzantine Church.²⁷¹ However, as a wise woman, it is more likely that Thessala alluded to the pagan practice of Classical times since official Byzantine canons banned magic as an act of heresy or, even, treason.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Op.cit. 73.

²⁷⁰ There are, however, instances of younger, or rather ageless witches such as Médée or Mélior. In post-menopausal women, the ill humors that could no longer be discharged monthly were responsible for their alleged communications with demonic forces. Older Byzantine men in the *Pèlerinage* and *Girart* were also seen possessing such powers as magician-kings, typically Oriental, but also as effeminate Byzantines, who mastered the arts of women. This was a far cry from the Franks, ready to engage in military action after the Byzantine Emperors' obscure behavior.

²⁷¹ John Chrysostom's firm words reflected the official attitude. He warned his people of amulets, charms and witches: "You do not supply yourself with amulets and incantations, and yet you let into your house foolish old hags" (cited in Marie Theres Fögen "Balsamon on Magic: From Roman Secular Law to Byzantine Canon Law", *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire [Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995] 105).

²⁷² Fögen 114. Diane Purkiss believes that contacts between the Celts and the Greeks of Antiquity introduced Greek nymphs and other magic female creatures to the ancestors of barbaric Europe. Furthermore, remnants of pagan Greek magic were still alive in medieval Byzantine milieus, to be later adopted by the Franks. See *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 11-51.

Besides being a witch, Thessala was also a healer (3002-3015). Once again, magic and medicine were inseparable in the persona of this Byzantine wise woman.²⁷³ As Croizy-Naquet puts it, "Les médecins ne créent pas, mais usent portant d'une science quelque peu magique, et recourent à des substances ou des produits orientaux [...] En général, les médecins sont désignés avec une information sur leur nationalité ou leur identité".²⁷⁴ Generally speaking, Byzantine physicians were admired by the Franks.²⁷⁵ However, the Byzantines themselves did not at all view their knowledge of Medicine as "Oriental", or deriving from Arab sources, but rather from Hippocrates and Aristotle on one hand, and from the Greek Church Fathers on the other.²⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Byzantine doctors were respected in the West because of the level of learning in Constantinople,

²⁷³ I find William L. Minkowski's article "Women Healers in the Middle Ages. Selected Aspects of their History" (*American Journal of Public Health* 82:2 [1992] 288-295) to be particularly enlightening, especially concerning cases in the West. Minkowski claims that "healing was a natural responsibility for mothers [in this case guardians] or wives" (288) Since Western women could not become doctors, they worked as herbalists, midwives, surgeons, nurses, and empirics, using home remedies, purges and bleeding with a dose of botanicals and, at times, charlatanism. Incantations and amulets were also elements useful to their practice. Very often, nuns performed acts of charity by offering their services to the sick. "French women, says Minkowski, studied medicine with private physician tutors to become good Samaritans" (289) Nurses were looked upon with a rather condescending fashion while their services were rather limited to offering basic necessities to the needy. "Medications were derived from botanicals and prepared as lotions, potions, or clysters (enemas)" 290. Also used for healing purposes were plants, oils, vinegars and wine, treating medical problems such as toothaches, gout, affections of the brain, and other vital organs (291). Gynecology and obstetrics were the object of midwives, often poor and illiterate women, referring only difficult cases to doctors. Diagnostic techniques included urine examination [see Thessala], and touching of the body. Certainly, midwifery and witchcraft were strongly connected, and many midwives were blamed for the birth of stillborn infants. They were also viewed as malevolent creatures in their involvement with contraception, abortion, and symptom relief (295). While the general attitudes toward charlatans and women applied to Byzantium as well, we remarked that universities were open to women in Byzantium to study medicine. Hardly seen as competitors to male physicians, women studied Hippocrates and Aristotle, and practiced medicine on other women and children. They also worked in hospitals, although they were paid half the salary of men.

²⁷⁴ Op. cit. 288.

²⁷⁵ In Oswei Temkin's *Byzantine Medicine, Tradition and Empiricism* (*Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16: 1962), it is noted that "the Frankish physician Roevalis cured a boy by operating as he had once seen the physicians act in the city of Constantinople (115).

the easy access to ancient literature, and the superior hospital care. Byzantine Thessala served as a prime example and proved a much more skillful "doctor" than her Western male colleagues of Salerno, a Byzantine city famous for its medical school based on knowledge of the four humors and astrology.²⁷⁷ Her sex, her age, as well as her *techne* made her an ideal companion and protector of the Byzantine empress.

In *Florimont*, Cypraine's name alone may situate her in the tradition of Thessala. Indeed, like Thessala, Cypraine is a wise woman echoing by name the toponym of a Byzantine territory known for its mystical powers. Furthermore, the fact that she was from an island (Nicosia, Cyprus) also raised suspicions as to the content of the education she offered to the young princess, recalling the sorceress Iseut, also an islander (in her case, Ireland), as was the lady of the Ylle Celee in the same work. As a rule, "the island evokes ambivalence and the shifting nature of the location, but it is also a closed narcissistic space, symbolically linked to the feminine, because it is surrounded by water".²⁷⁸ At the time of the Second Crusade, which corresponded chronologically with the appearance of *Cligès*, Cyprus was really an unknown entity, distant and mysterious, where magicians may have populated the exotic land. Furthermore, it was homeland to Aphrodite, goddess of love and fertility. The education offered to Romadanaple by Cypraine might in fact have to do with her "familiarity" with the magical healing powers

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 215

²⁷⁷ See Edward J. Kealy. *Medieval Medicus* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981) esp. Chapter 1.

²⁷⁸ See Lydia Gaborit, Yveline Guesdon, Mriam Boutrolle-Caporal, "Witches", *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes*, ed. Pierre Brunel (London and New York, Routledge, 1993), 1167

of love. With the help of Romadanaple's universal education, Florimont became infatuated with the princess and eventually cured of his folly and loss of identity.²⁷⁹ Although no mention is explicitly made of Romadanaple's "magic powers", one may suspect that her "liberal arts" curriculum must have included elements of "nigromance" that her literary sister Mélior had boasted of.

Another wise woman knowledgeable about the ways of love is the old woman in *Eracle*. Experienced old women were made confidantes and masterminds of female ruse and ill advice. They were the sly middle person like the "meretrix ovidienne", as Fourier points out.²⁸⁰ Paridès confessed his love for the Empress to an old woman, who each year delivered a basket of cherries to the sovereign for the feast of Saint John. The old woman informed Athenaïs of Paridès's feelings, and in response the empress wrote him a note, instructing him to dig a hole before the old woman's house, and to fill it with water. She would arrange to fall inside this hole, providing her an excuse to remain inside the house where she could secretly meet him. As bearer of the fruit, the old woman aligned herself with ancient magical traditions. In *Eracle*, for the usual apple

²⁷⁹ When Romadanaple first meets Florimont, he calls himself "Pauvre Perdu", a madman lamenting the loss of his fairy-like "amie". Romadanaple's love restored his wits, and his name.

²⁸⁰ Fourier 268.

imagery was substituted the basket of cherries²⁸¹, smaller in size than the former, but similar in round shape and red color, which makes both of these fruit sexually charged in medieval lore.²⁸² In *Eracle*, cherries were presented to the Empress by the old woman along with an erotic message from Paridès on the eve of Saint John, that is on June 21st, a day marked by the summer solstice, a moment of particular mystical connotations. On this day secret erotic communications were made possible between lovers, implying the expected abandon of the latter to their passions under the influence of the moon, which governed the gathering of plants, imbued with special powers during that night: "Le Précurseur était associé à la lune et les cueillettes d'herbes à la Saint Jean avaient lieu avant le lever du soleil, à la veille de la fête, et donc sous influence lunaire".²⁸³

²⁸¹ The apple metaphor was not, nevertheless, neglected. Diehl tells the story of the Phrygian Apple, associated with the personality of historical Eudocia. Legend has it that one day as Theodosius was walking in the street, a man handed him a huge Phrygian Apple as a sign of his loyalty. The Emperor gave this apple to his wife Eudocia out of his great passion for her, and in turn she handed it to Theodosius's friend Paulinus, with whom she engaged in an adulterous affair. Finally, Paulinus, not knowing that Eudocia had received the apple from her husband, imagined that this exotic fruit would please the Emperor, so he presented it to him as a gift. Theodosius confronted Eudocia with this discovery, and after her initial refusal the Empress admitted the truth, and retired to Jerusalem to lead an ascetic life. Paulinus was assassinated, and at this news Eudocia arranged a conspiracy against her husband. There is a parallel between the personae of Paris, Paridès and Paulinus. The use of the apple reappeared in the Paris/Helen story. In this case, the golden apple of discord from the garden of Hesperides was sent to Paris to give to the most beautiful goddess. He selected Venus, and as his prize he requested the love of Helen. The golden apple also appeared in the *Roman de Troie*, this time bearing encrypted messages in its Greek letters. Apple imagery was related to the sacred and the quasi-mystical, as well as to life, death, and immortality in *Ami et Amile*.

With regard to cherries, according to Pliny, their origin is interestingly "exotic", since their arrival in the West in around 74 B.C. was attributed to Lucullus, who brought them from ancient Greek city of Kerasous in the Pontus area, hence their name. See Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1956-63).

²⁸² On apple and other fruit symbolism in Greek antiquity, see Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge and London, Harvard University Press, 1999). In *Cligès*, the pear replaced the apple. See my Chapter 4.

²⁸³ Francesca Canadé Sautman, *Religion du quotidien* (Olschki, 1995) 66.

While these three Byzantine wise women occupied a significant position in the works I studied, their cases were not unique. Mélior confessed that she owed her knowledge of magic to her older aunts, veterans of the art who taught her well. In her despair, Berthe turned to her Byzantine nurse for consolation, as her profound words deserved high reverence:

E denant a ses piez magistre grive;
Non [a] une tant saive ne melz escrive (408-409)

Berthe was certain to receive sound advice from her Greek governess, as her wisdom as well as her writing skills were exceptional. In all of the cases, however, Byzantine nurses functioned as exemplary caregivers, educators, mentors, and confidantes of their empresses, willing to provide them with necessary knowledge and services—at time of a dubious nature- in order to promote their interests.

C. A Few Revolutionaries.

After the Salerno doctors beat, bled and poured led onto the hands of the Empress Fénice in their attempt to disprove her death, something strange happened. A mob of furious Byzantine women entered the palace and attacked the doctors (6000-6032). They then proceeded to cover Fénice's body with a shroud brought from Syria. This unique episode, as Chrétien himself notes, is not a fictional concoction. *Cligès* was composed in 1176, and the author may well have borrowed from the history of Byzantium in 1042. Chrétien may have been familiar with the women's revolution against the Emperor Michael V, adopted son of Empress Zoe, perhaps through a Latin translation of a Greek chronicle of the event. The Emperor had Zoe exiled to a convent so that he might

possess the sole rule of the Empire. The women of Byzantium, poor and noble alike, revolted against this abuse of power and injustice towards the heir of the Macedonian dynasty. The chronicler Zonaras remarked in his work *Chronographia*: "Et les femmes [...] Comment raconter cela à ceux qui ne le savent pas? Pour ma part, j'en ai vu un grand nombre que personne jusque-là n'avait aperçues hors de leurs gynécées, paraître en public, criant, se battant la poitrine et se lamentant d'une manière terrible sur les malheurs de l'impératrice".²⁸⁴ Diehl also remarked: "The women, in particular, showed intense excitement and filled the streets with their cries: 'We don't want the caulker to be our Emperor, we want the lawful heiress, our mother Zoe!'"²⁸⁵ The mob pillaged the city, attacked Michael V, and Zoe was brought back to the palace. Despite her tumultuous love affairs and her unfaithfulness to her husbands (see Fénice), Zoe was supported by her female subjects: "C'est une révolution politique plutôt que sociale" claims Ciggaar,²⁸⁶ implying that the riot consisting of women really had the ideal of Empire in mind, protecting its legitimacy.

A century later, in 1174, Eleanor of Aquitaine also found herself in captivity, exiled by her husband in Winchester. Ciggaar wonders if this similarity is not a ploy on Chrétien's part as Eleanor's protégé: "Veut-il stimuler les dames françaises à prendre pareille initiative et suivre l'exemple byzantin, car la Grèce eut le premier renom de

²⁸⁴ Cited in Krijnie Ciggaar. "Encore une fois Chrétien de Troyes et la " matière byzantine " : la révolution des femmes au palais de Constantinople". *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale Xe- XIIe siècles*. 38: 3, 1995, 270.

²⁸⁵ Diehl 153

²⁸⁶ Op. cit. 270.

chevalerie et de science?"²⁸⁷ It appears likely that Chrétien used this episode of Byzantine women taking charge of a political crisis to resolve the crisis in his own Western world. Far from being an episode of fantasy and farce where women were not to be taken seriously, Chrétien upheld this exemplary action of initiative and bravery on the part of Byzantine women.

The mob of Byzantine women represents the decisive voice of the people, who dared to speak out and rescue the female sovereign of an Empire in turmoil. Chrétien used myth, legend, and history as sources for his tale; from their unique union emerged strong female characters of social conscience, technical know-how, and great depth.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. 271.

CHAPTER 4

Byzantine Architecture and the Esoteric Other

A. The Desire for *Chevalerie* and *Clergie*.

As the French knights of the *Pèlerinage* made their way back to saint Denis with the protection of relics from Jerusalem, they stopped before the city of Constantinople to bear witness to a strange sight. The Byzantine Emperor, in violation of actual court protocol, was paradoxically seen alone pushing a golden plough and irrigating his land. Agricultural symbolism is indeed very important in the portrayal of the Byzantine Emperor in this work of medieval French literature. Before allowing the Franks to enter his realm and to gaze upon his imperial space, Emperor Hugon wished to demonstrate his role in his world as patriarch, founder, and master builder. This act, imbued with esotericism, can be linked to a foundation myth,²⁸⁸ whereby a king is responsible for the Creation of his Kingdom, symbolically planting his seed of mystical power and knowledge, and leaving behind lasting traces of his dynamic presence.²⁸⁹ Within the urban setting of Constantinople, buildings, and not crops, would become the outcome of this fertile foundational process.

In this light, as architect of his Empire, Hugon no longer participates in the dominant discourse of othering that makes him "exotic", but rather to a non-dominant

²⁸⁸ François Delpech, "Rite, légende, mythe et société : fondations et fondateurs dans la tradition folklorique de la péninsule ibérique". *Medieval Folklore*, 1 (1991) 10–56.

²⁸⁹ See Eugene Vance, "Semiotics and Power: Relics, Icons, and the *Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*", *The Romanic Review* 79, 1988.

discourse of the esoteric, the carefully veiled and inaccessible, leading to the most obscure arcana of a knowledge that is profoundly sacred and symbolic. In this chapter, I hope to show how, in certain specific texts, the desire for the exotic shifts to the desire for the hermetic through esoteric architectural symbolism.

Constantinople was indeed the ideal urban space where hermeticism could be cultivated, and where the Byzantine architect was praised for his knowledge and skill. Byzantine buildings-- whether grandiose edifices, kingly dwellings or glorious places of worship-- as well as artistry—in the production, for instance, of automata or sculptures-- were often admired by the Franks. While in works such as *Partonopeus de Blois*, *Eracle*, and Clari's *Conquête de Constantinople*, Byzantine architecture was what defined a beautiful and prosperous city, in the *Pèlerinage*, and especially *Cligès*, Constantinople became a city reputed for the esoteric symbolism of its architecture. In the *Roman d'Alexandre*, esotericism is carefully nuanced, as the pagan army of the hero is portrayed as transmitters of Greek, the language of true knowledge, inaccessible to most Franks.

The importance of knowledge is inherent to that of esotericism. To the Western Franks, the natural birthplace of the former was the East, from where it gradually migrated westward. Chrétien de Troyes is very clear on the direction of this *translatio studii* and *imperii*:

Ce nos ont nostre livre apris
 Qu'an Grece ot de chevalerie
 Le premier los et de clergie.
 Puis vint chevalerie a Rome
 Et de la clergie la some,
 Qui or est an France venue. (*Cligès* 30-35)

It is noteworthy that this *clergie*, this collection of profound knowledge traveling from East to West, is paralleled by an equally unidirectional desire of the West to appropriate the wisdom of the East. In the *Pèlerinage*, the Franks were forced to travel to Jerusalem, a city whose spiritual wealth and number of quasi-magical, otherworldly relics surpassed those of Constantinople, in order to become endowed with the mystical knowledge of the former, and to compete with the Byzantines.

Consequently, the contention between the two cultures moved to the plane of religious control. The Franks' need for the mystical relics of Jerusalem, their eagerness to outshine the Byzantines in matters of war, in fact camouflaged their desire to control religious orthodoxy in Byzantium, and by extension in the entire *oecumene*. It appears very likely that Church politics involving the submission of the Eastern Church to the Western Pope are echoed in this *chanson de geste*. By means of the "borrowed" knowledge of the foremost sacred city of Christianity and by the subsequent enlisting of Christ on their side in the age-old feud with Byzantium, the Franks used esoteric knowledge as a tool for conquest and appropriation of an advanced culture, as well as religious domination over the Byzantine Church. In their haste to receive the knowledge of the East, but also to place Byzantium under the religious hegemony of the Pope of Rome, the Franks fast-forwarded the slow process of *translatio*, by physically migrating to the source of mystical knowledge itself.

Yet, feelings of cultural inferiority were not easily dismissed by the Franks of the *Pèlerinage*, despite their possession of the relics of Jerusalem. Once inside the palace of Hugon, they marveled at the mysteries, which seemingly surpassed their own newly acquired knowledge. These mysteries came in multiple forms, ranging from a

magical spinning palace, to talking bronze statues, but they shared a common characteristic: an invitation to the piercing, bewildered and covetous gaze of the Franks. No doubt, behind the mask of magic, the Franks recognized Byzantine riches as part of a message that combined city/power, rendering them not merely envious, but tempting them to fantasize about the actual appropriation of such an impressive collection of finery. Judging by the architectural opulence of Constantinople, the Franks were able to speculate about the economic significance that the conquest of the city would guarantee. Furthermore, the Franks' possession of the material wealth of the attractive imperial city would shift dynamics, releasing them from their gaze as culturally inferiors, and redeeming them as conquerors, whose desire for controlling the Other had been fulfilled. In this respect, both *chevalerie* and *clergie* would pass on to the ever increasingly powerful Franks.

B. Byzantine Esotericism.

Thus, as Robert Ousterhout points out, "a city's economic conditions, as well as its aesthetic expression, were placed in the capable hands of a knowledgeable architect".²⁹⁰ Architects and carpenters were under the protection of the Cappadocian-Byzantine saint Blasius, whose cult was particularly popular in twelfth-century

²⁹⁰ Robert Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999) 29.

France.²⁹¹ This saint was iconographically represented as grasping his throat, a symbolic gesture of recognition adopted among the members of the hermetic Masonic Brotherhood, calling one another to the "Order". If we are to accept Paul Naudon's thesis²⁹² that Freemasonry first emerged in the later part of the twelfth century, we may then read the portrayal of architectural dimensions of the Byzantine Other in a completely new light, namely, that of esotericism. Even if Freemasonry was not practiced in twelfth century Byzantium, the Byzantines were good candidates to become the fictional representation of this new mystical practice for various reasons.

Indeed, the assignment of esoteric characteristics to the Byzantines was in part due to their hagiography, an area of neutrality in the East/ West feud. Besides Blasius, another saint known to be associated with Freemasonry was Andrew, the legendary builder of the Eastern capitol, Constantinople. Represented by the cross of his martyrdom in the shape of an X, "l'initiale des trois mots grecs, Koré, Krusé, Kronos, signifiant l'Or, le Creuset et le Temps, les trios facteurs du Grand Oeuvre"²⁹³, Andrew was connected to a Creation myth, somehow reflecting the pagan Golden Age. In addition, the Byzantines (or, as the Franks called them, the "Grieu") seemed naturally familiar with the mystical, given their pagan heritage, which attributed to the god

²⁹¹ See Claude Gaignebet, *A Plus Hault Sens: L'Esotérisme Spirituel et Charnel de Rabelais*, Tomes I, II (Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986), esp, I 41, 99-108, 183-233-448; II 33-72, 185-204. According to legend, the third-century bishop Blasius lived in a cave with wild animals, where a woman brought her son, who was choking on a fish bone, in search of a miracle. Indeed, the boy was saved and Blasius promised to protect all those with throat ailments.

²⁹² Paul Naudon, *Les Loges de Saint-Jean et la Philosophie Esotérique de la Connaissance* (Paris, Dervy Livres, 1957).

²⁹³ Ibid 101.

Hermes the epithet "Psychopompe", or soul-guider, a principle essential to *hermeticism*.²⁹⁴ Furthermore, Byzantines could be connected with hermeticism because of the large number of revealing manuscripts in their libraries, brought back to Florence and possibly France by way of Mediterranean trade routes. According to W. Kirk MacNulty, "These manuscripts included the writings of Plato and a number of neo-platonic works from the second and third centuries AD".²⁹⁵ Aspects of Hellenised Judaism and mysticism, to summarize MacNulty, presenting the cosmos and applying divine laws in astrological terms, were the main traits of these works. Greek translations of the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus, formerly believed to be a contemporary of Moses, were also found. These texts exonerate man in his Edenic state, and therefore act as precursors to Platonic and eventually Christian philosophy. They also suggest that the plan of a building is a microcosmic indication of the universe.

The twelfth-century French authors of my corpus connect the Byzantine architectural element with the mystical, yet they make no explicit mention of Masonic practices; rather, they leave discrete traces by referencing names, edifices and objects, all symbolic and meaningful to the craft of Freemasonry.²⁹⁶ For example, Masonic

²⁹⁴ The notion of hermeticism is closely related to that of esotericism insofar as they both necessitate concealment. Esotericism implies a restriction of specific knowledge to an elit group sworn in confidentiality to honor its secrets, while hermeticism suggests knowledge of the occult. See <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=esoteric>, and <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=hermetic>.

²⁹⁵ See W. Kirk MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman: A Search for the Spiritual Essence of Craft Free-masonry* (London and New York, Arkana, 1988) 6. Although MacNulty finds evidence of such works in the Medici court of the fifteenth century, a much earlier familiarization with these texts on the part of the West, owing to its mercantile activities in full blossom in Constantinople by the twelfth century, would be highly possible.

²⁹⁶ This is not to imply that the writers themselves belonged to the Freemasons, or were even familiar with their practices *per se*. I suggest that the French texts reflect Biblical and pagan hermetic traditions as they had been adopted by Freemasonry, whose appearance was, incidentally, contemporary to these texts.

symbolism in *Eracle* may be detected in the mention of the magic stone. This was the stone upon which Eracle partly based his premise for social ascension; it was the primary, the foundational elements upon which the hero metaphorically built his empire. Indeed, in Freemasonry there are Three Immovable Jewels,²⁹⁷ which provide psychological development, initially personal and then trans-personal in nature.²⁹⁸ While Eracle's distinction of the ideal stones was accorded of Divine Grace, it was through his personal humility, followed by his trans-personal interactions with Lais and Athenaïs that he gained recognition and was eventually elevated to the highest degree of Empire.

C. Jehan, the Byzantine Freemason.

No text has more profound Masonic references than that of Chrétien's *Cligès*. In this work, we are introduced to the architect Jehan the Geometer, a serf and confidant of the young prince, sought out for his expertise and his discretion. Jehan appeared as a *deus ex machina*, just in time to provide his technical know-how in the arts of carpentry and architecture. From him, Cligès ordered a coffin of extraordinary properties, allowing his beloved Fénice to be able to breathe while enclosed within. Master of many arts, Jehan went beyond his call of duty and, as his accomplice, invited Cligès to his painting and sculpture atelier. He then proceeded to guide him to a remote area of Constantinople, in order to show off his secret, most prized, project: a wondrous tower, magnificent in its intricacy, its beauty and its comfort, whose chambers were

²⁹⁷ Let us not forget that the number "3" is also important in *Eracle*. The hero was exceptional because of his three virtues, one of which involved the magic stone.

²⁹⁸ MacNulty 49.

reminiscent of the *salle aux images* in the *Tristan* tradition to the learned reader. This would become the ideal hideaway for the illicit lovers. Cligès seemed tempted:

D'une chanbre en autre traverse,
 Tant que tot cuide avoir veu ;
 Si li a molt la torz pleu,
 Et dit que molt est boene et bele:
 Bien i sera sa dameisele
 Toz les jorz que ele vivra
 Que ja nus hon ne l'i savra. (5548-5554)

The tower seemed too good to refuse, complete with all luxuries, including Roman-style baths with hot water.²⁹⁹

Tex ostex est boens a tel oste,
 Qu'il i a chambres et estuves
 Et eve chaude par les cuves
 Qui vient par conduit desoz terre. (5610-5613)

The most astonishing feature of this architectural marvel was, however, its secret door and window, mysteriously hidden within an unbreakable wall, which led to an underground atelier seen only by Jehan himself:

Sire, fet-il, huis ne fenestre
 N'est hom qui cest mur seost ;
 Et cuidiezvos que l'en peust
 An nul guise trespasser
 Sanz anpirier et sanz quasser ? (5586-5590)

²⁹⁹ Although the supply of hot water was the result of a complicated system of burning coals and a hydraulic device, the storage of water was difficult after the collapse of the ancient aqueduct system in Constantinople. Private institutions collected and stored water at times beneath tombs. Since Jehan's tower was located in the outskirts of Constantinople, the secret underground room would likely have given him access to such water storage. See Ousterhout, *op.cit.*, 15.

Such a wall would indeed have been an accomplishment, since Byzantine walls were extremely thick, as was also the case of glass. In this work, the dweller of the tower could "vanish" into the wall without being perceived, as if a phantom.

Indeed, the tower, the secret door, and especially the characters' names are indicative of Masonic esotericism. Even before the appearance of Jehan, Chrétien makes mention of Solomon, whose wife deceived him by feigning her death, as Fénice was also accused of doing. King Solomon's Temple bears major Masonic connotations, reflecting Kabbalistic hermeticism.³⁰⁰ The Temple is an archetypal reflection of the cosmos and of the psyche laboring to reach knowledge. King Solomon, initiator of the endeavor to construct such an edifice, is highly esteemed by the Freemasons, who place him on the highest echelon of their hierarchical ladder, thus referring to him as their "Worshipful Master".³⁰¹ This symbolic ladder consists of seven steps, reflecting the quadrivium and trivium of medieval learning, geometry³⁰² being a particularly important component of the former. Consequently, the epithet "Geometer" given to Jehan had mystical implications, placing him on the third step from the top, beneath Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre, who was said to have functioned under the instructions of Solomon. Jehan was to be associated with Hiram Abiff, the master architect, indeed positioned on the third step of the ladder.

³⁰⁰ See Alex Horne, *King Solomon's Temple in Masonic Tradition* (London, The Aquarian Press, 1972), esp. 50-63.

³⁰¹ MacNulty 97.

³⁰² In the Kabbalistic tradition, Geometry is the means "by which the relative existence comes into existence." (MacNulty 12).

Jehan's name was no accident either. Philippe Walter associates Jehan the Geometer with the deity Janus:

"Il ne peut être dissocié de la figure de Janus, le personnage biffons, maître des portes (en latin *januae*), qui regardent dans les deux opposées du temps : le passé et le future. Chez les romains les collèges de fabriciens consacraient les deux fêtes solstices de l'année à Janus. Dans le calendrier chrétien les solstices correspondaient aux deux Jean : le 24 juin (nativité de saint Jean-Baptiste) et le 27 décembre (la saint Jean l'Evangéliste). Le saint patron de l'Architecture suggère sans-doute l'idéal philosophico-hermétique sur lequel repose *Cligès*"³⁰³

In his informative work, *Symbolisme Maçonnique et Tradition Chrétienne*, Jean Tourniac studied this connection between Janus, John the Evangelist and John the Baptist, and underlined the existence of bird emblems for the two Johns.³⁰⁴ For his famous "cry in the desert", the Baptist was associated with the rooster, a bird incidentally sacred to Hermes as well. The Evangelist, on the other hand, is iconographically portrayed as an eagle, soaring in the skies as the sun after the winter solstice. This bird represented the ideal of Empire, especially in the case of Byzantium, since it was Constantine himself who transported the eagle-emblem from Rome to Constantinople.³⁰⁵ The actions of Chrétien's Jehan were, in fact, indicative of his loyalty

³⁰³ Chrétien de Troyes, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Philippe Walter (Paris, Garnier- Flammarion), 1121. Gaignebet claims that the veneration of Blasius as patron saint of architecture was more particular to Paris.

³⁰⁴ Jean Tourniac, *Symbolisme Maçonnique et Tradition Chrétienne* (Paris, Dervy Livres, 1965) 84.

³⁰⁵ The two-headed eagle is a known symbol of Byzantium, especially after the Comnenian dynasty. The two heads looking in opposite directions represent the union of East and West, recalling the older Roman and the current Eastern physiognomy of Byzantium. See also Touriac 99.

to two things: his (hermetic) craft, symbolized by the rooster, and his prince, symbolized by the eagle, whom he wished to initiate into his secret society.

The selection of Fénice's name extends the bird symbolism of Freemasonry.

Fénice, reborn in the garden after feigning death, indeed recalls the phoenix bird:

Fenyce ot la pucele a non
 Ce ne fu mie sanz raison,
 Car si con fenix li oisiax
 Est sor les autres plus biax,
 Ne estre n'en pot l'uns ansamble,
 Ausi Fenyce, ce me sanble,
 N'ot de biauté nul paroille (2707-13)

Fénice is the personification of rebirth, as the magic bird is reborn from its own ashes, thus transcending Time. Philippe Walter comments: "Le singulier destin mythique du phénix fait précisément de lui un témoin privilégié du Temps: il domine les trois phases temporelles. Il appartient d'abord au passé puisqu'il est censé résider en Orient, dans un lieu qui fait celui du Paradis. Il appartient également au présent, puisqu'il vit chaque jour de l'année de toutes les années; il domine enfin l'avenir, parce qu'il sait indéfiniment se reproduire lui-même."³⁰⁶ In terms of Masonic representation, "Le Phoenix correspond bien en alchimie au soufre rouge des Sages qui représente le principe de la fixité individuelle au milieu du monde et, en ésotérisme, l'immortalité acquise à l'Adepté dont l'initiation est en accord avec l'impulsion du Grand Architecte".³⁰⁷ The color of the phoenix is red, connoting the flame that transforms black decay into white purity.³⁰⁸ This internal fire of the phoenix sets it ablaze while encouraging it to find knowledge by way

³⁰⁶ Chrétien de Troyes, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Philippe Walter (Paris, Garnier-Flammarion) 1123

³⁰⁷ Edmond Delcamp, *La Montée Vers l'Orient* (Paris, Dervy Livres, 1975) 165.

of reason. Precisely, it is through self-sacrifice (and torture) that Fénice forsakes her husband's unwelcome advances, in order to seek the affections and the carnal "knowledge" of her beloved Cligès in her quest for happiness.

Besides his name, Jehan may be viewed as an esoteric character because of his actual production. Out of all of his works, his greatest accomplishment was that of his tower. Towers are commonplace in the texts that I study. Villehardouin and Clari often speak of their admiration for the fortified towers of Constantinople; Athenaïs is held captive in her imperial tower by her husband in *Eracle*; even Florence has a near-death experience in her Roman tower, modeled after the Byzantine in *Florence de Rome*. Yet, the tower of Jehan bears particular significance, if we are to consider its unique structure. Viewed in concentric circles, the garden encompassed the tower, which in turn encompassed hidden passages. We might detect a movement towards the center from the outer visible structure moving inwards towards the most secretive³⁰⁹. The spiraling concentric circles also bring to mind the tower of Babel, another Old Testament edifice of Masonic symbolism. Once again, Gaignebet associates saint Blasius (from the Greek βλαισός, crooked-legged, or limping) with this building of crooked, or incomprehensible speech.³¹⁰ Furthermore, Jehan's tower functioned as a tomb for Fénice. Here, she was

³⁰⁸ Ibid 166.

³⁰⁹ Walter 1122.

³¹⁰ Gaignebet I 448.

put to rest inside her special coffin³¹¹, only to be reborn in glorious surroundings, and to enjoy an adjacent heavenly garden. Indeed, its circular shape may imply such a role: "...le cercle délimite une aire d'action magique et convient particulièrement aux cultes infernaux, chthoniens et par suite au temple funéraire, au tombeau".³¹² However, the circle is also indicative of the sun and the moon, the latter bearer of mystical messages, and by means of his celestial paintings, Jehan managed to transform the circular tomb into a heavenly setting.

The paradisiacal imagery was maintained once the tower's "inhabitants" went through its magic door. Doors have a particular importance. Alex Horne addresses this question of the doors in Solomon's Temple in Masonic Catechism. He quotes a passage:

Q. what meant ye golden dore of ye temple Qr [where] they went in to the sanctum sanctorum

A. it was another type of Christ who is ye door ye way and the truth and ye life by whome and in whom all ye elect entreth into heaven³¹³

The door to Jehan's tower turned love-nest was a passage to an Edenic state. But as the tower of Babel brought no contentment to its incomprehensible beholders, so, too, Fénicé would only experience temporary happiness in her magnificent surroundings. Built in the outskirts of Constantinople, the tower was hidden, and so were its secret prairie and orchard, protected by high walls. This garden was practically a type of closed

³¹¹ The coffin imagery brings to mind a Masonic initiation ritual, whereby an apprentice lays on the floor, covered by a cloth, as if inside a coffin, and is subsequently "awakened" from the dead, recalling the myth of Hiram's murder, the first architect (see Gaignebet, II 194-195). It appears strange that a woman should assume this role in *Cligès*, given the exclusivity of male participation in Freemasonry.

³¹² Naudon 123.

³¹³ Horne 60.

Paradise on earth, where the lovers enjoyed an adulterous affair for over a year. Chrétien's garden reminds us of the Garden of Eden, abundant in fruit and flowers, in the center of which there is a tree, "une ente", implying Oriental imagery of calm and voluptuousness. When Fénice was awakened by a pear falling on her head during her sleep under the only tree, we are reminded of the lover's sexual encounters: "La poire est un symbole sexuel parfois doté d'une connotation obscène. Il est probable qu'ici la poire a une signification érotique et souligne la dimension charnelle de l'amour."³¹⁴ The pear appears as the fruit of the "ente", a tree, in this heavenly setting on the fringe of Constantinople: "L'ente du Paradis d'amour est tout d'abord comme l'Arbre de la Genèse, symbole de fertilité et d'amour fécond", Lucie Polak remarks.³¹⁵ The "ente" is the tree under which Fénice makes her love nest. But an "ente" is also a graft, a botanical intermarriage of two separate plants, implying the initial separation of the two lovers soon to be united.

Since the phoenix is a bird of paradise we would expect its nest to be located on a fig tree and not a pear tree. Polak is in agreement with Huguette Legros, and sees sexual connotations in a pear, belonging to a tradition of pear trees through which wives deceive their husbands.³¹⁶ The pear tree thus becomes transposed to the tree of the fall from Eden, which was in Fénice's case a false Paradise to begin with since it functioned as her place of imprisonment. Certainly, it may be argued that Chrétien replaced the pear

³¹⁴ Huguette Legros, "Du Verger Royal au Jardin de l'Amour: Mort et Transfiguration du locus amoenus d'après *Tristan de Béroul et Cligès*". *Vergers et Jardins dans le monde médiéval* (Provence, Publications de CUER MA, Université de Provence, 1990) 229.

³¹⁵ Lucie Polak. "Cligès, Fénice et l'arbre d'amour", *Romania* 93:3 (1972) 305

with the apple tree, the latter symbolic of erotic powers. Chrétien introduces this biblical imagery as an intertext to his story, yet he is careful to distinguish Eve's story from that of Fénice. To the latter, he assigns the pear, erotic insofar as it is a (juicy) fruit with seeds, yet not quite an apple, neither in color nor in shape.³¹⁷

Finally, with regard to Jehan the Geometer, it is interesting to note that an actual tenth-century Byzantine theologian and poet by the name of Ioannes Geometres in fact existed and was active during the reign of Emperor Nicephoros Focas.³¹⁸ There is little doubt that Chrétien was familiar with Ioannes's work, indeed a renowned poet of his day. In addition to his collections of hymns to the Virgin Mary, Ioannes wrote *Progymnasmata* (literally, preliminary exercises), where he spoke extensively of his own gardens in his Letters. Even though Ioannes was not associated with the construction of actual towers or palaces, he did, nevertheless, provide ample descriptions of Byzantine gardens. These gardens were modeled on their Arab counterparts and were referred to as "παράδεισος", or Paradise.³¹⁹ According to Antony Littlewood, "The Byzantine tradition is usually a fusion of romantic accounts from Homer and the descriptions of

³¹⁶ Polak 310-313.

³¹⁷ I have studied the role of the apple in my chapter on Byzantine women.

³¹⁸ It is interesting to note that Ioannes Geometres also included three encomia of the apple in his collection of works, the first two of which may be studied in the context of our works (Littlewood, *Progymnasmata*, 10-30). In the first, the poet intended to hand the fruit to a friend as a gift. He also spoke of the metamorphosis of a maiden into such a tree; in the second, Ioannes dealt with the erotic connotations of the apple. Apples as gifts, as aphrodisiacs, as well as the "orb of dominion", as held by the statue of Justinian in Constantinople, were also present in Gautier d'Arras's *Eracle*, contemporary of Chrétien, or in the *Roman de Troie*, also as a symbol of the global Empire, due to its sphericity.

³¹⁹ Charles Barber, "Reading the Garden in Byzantium: Nature and Sexuality", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 16 (1992) 2-3.

eschatological paradises, usually Orphic, Pythagorean or, later, Christian".³²⁰ This may be viewed as yet another connection of the Byzantine persona to the esoteric. Although Ioannes spoke of his personal garden of great beauty, climate and fecundity, centrally located in Constantinople,³²¹ Littlewood believes that he was in fact referring to an imperial estate and a formal garden,³²² nothing short of a terrestrial Paradise, complete with aromatic flowers, singing swallows, and a wondrous quality. Indeed, such was the garden that the serf Jehan surrounded his tower with in *Cligès*. In the *Progymnasmata*, there is also mention of high walls: "The wall is primarily a barrier against [climatological] excesses of nature",³²³ claims Barber. Nature's elements were in perfect equilibrium in this controlled garden, much like fictional Jehan's was. And yet, a striking change of Chrétien's was the replacement of the actual Byzantine nobleman and poet Ioannes Geometres with the architect serf Jehan. In keeping with the hermeticism of the Freemasons' tradition, Chrétien, too, remained evasive and secretive about the true identity of his serf, reserving the literary intertext to a learned few among his French audience (Eleanor of Aquitaine?), who might have been familiar with Byzantine scholarship.

³²⁰ Antony Littlewood, *The Progymnasmata of Ioannes Geometres* (Amsterdam, Adolf M. Hakkert, 1972) 46.

³²¹ The *topos* of the center reappears. Ioannes's house is at the center of Constantinople, which is the center of the Earth, hence the wonderful climate of his garden. We may see an echo of the representation of Constantinople as the navel of the Earth in the Asia Minor map, as I mention in Chapter 4.

³²² Antony Littlewood, "The Scholarship of Byzantine Gardens", *Byzantine Garden Culture*, eds. Antony Littlewood, Henry Maguire, Joachim Wolscheke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, 2002) 3.

³²³ Barber 9.

Chrétien's Jehan the Geometer was primarily heir to an age-long tradition of builders, ranging from the mythological to the actual. His attention to detail and his complex structures recalled the pyramids of the Pharaohs. They, too, had magnificently painted walls, luxurious artifacts, and secret passages in their well-protected tombs. But, after all, Jehan was a twelfth-century Byzantine, and probably had similar professional experiences with his Byzantine peers. The architect/ artist of his day often built specific structures such as towers with particular forms in mind. It was generally understood that meaning lay within the form, an observation also prevalent in the Masonic tradition. Chrétien portrayed Jehan as an educated man, perhaps recalling the earlier centuries of the Empire, whose builders studied Euclid and Archimedes, according the Greek and Roman tradition, as states Robert Ousterhout.³²⁴ Initially, architects were well trained and highly regarded, enjoying a certain high social standing. They were commonly referred to as "μηχανικός", or engineer. This had been the case of Anthemios and Isidoros, renowned builders of the Saint Sophia, the latter a professor of Geometry and Mechanics, the former a mathematician. After the seventh century, a distinction between "μηχανικός" and "αρχιτέκτων" was made. The architect possessed technical know-how, but little academic background. Therefore, contemporaries of Chrétien would realistically have limited, if any, knowledge of the quadrivium, further putting the epithet "Geometer" into question. By the twelfth century, no mention of praise to architects was made, and the "αρχιτέκτων" was demoted to head mason, or to head carpenter, and was included among the poor. In fact, Jehan was a serf, and it seems

³²⁴ Ousterhout 39.

strange that he possessed such a luxurious tower before bestowing it to his beloved, albeit menacing, master.³²⁵ In an age where the intimation of heresy was to be feared, might this tower have been a code for Masonic Temple? In any case, by providing an outstanding work of art to Cligès, Jehan's freedom was to become his reward.³²⁶

Although Jehan would not likely have had any theoretical knowledge of Mathematics, he was a skilled and talented builder who possessed his own workshop. Chrétien is merging old and new traditions in Byzantium, where the social status and the erudition of architects went from being impressive to becoming quite humble. Jehan might have been the head of his own guild, combining arts such as carpentry and masonry, terms which were used interchangeably after the tenth century in Byzantium, and which were protected by the same saint Blasisus in France.

Byzantine masons of the twelfth century drew upon practical experience and adapted to the requirements of the location, function and decoration.³²⁷ Jehan's tower

³²⁵ Cligès practically blackmails Jehan into constructing the special coffin, by means of belittlement.

Tu es mes sers, je suis tes sire
 Car je te puis dener ou vandre
 Et ton cors et ton avoir prandre
 Come la chose qui est moie. (5476-5479)

³²⁶ While this fits a Western feudal model, twelfth century Byzantine architects often went without pay. At times, they received no wages, or they were paid eventually by townspeople who donated money to the process of church building. Unlike Cligès, who received Jehan's tower as a gift, no doubt after long years of the serf's savings:

Avoit Jehanz ferte une tor,
 S'i ot par molt grant san pené (5538-39)

most Byzantine rulers served as patrons, and commissioned buildings from architects. The more lavish the endeavor, the grater the benefactor's prestige, and even haughtiness. The Emperor Justinian, was notorious for his unlimited budgets (Ousterhout 43).

³²⁷ Ousterhout 58.

was constructed in a way to guarantee concealment as a hideaway from the exterior gardens, thus profiting from the physical surroundings. It was also ornately decorated to create an illusion of Heaven on Earth, with the signs of the Zodiac and beautiful celestial images.³²⁸ Yet, his excellence in building might well have lacked real scientific blueprinting. The measurements were done by ropes "in accord with God's plan."³²⁹ on the construction site. This attitude reflected the general consensus, that the Cosmos was ultimately in God's hands, that His judgment was to be trusted, and that celestial communications were being handed down to the architect by the supreme Creator, the First Builder in Masonic tradition. The builder's role was to materialize God's will by applying human know-how. Creation itself dictated the necessities and specificities of each plan, and the blueprint was accomplished by chance, as long as it respected the familiar form.

The study of older Byzantine buildings, which constituted the grand prototype of Byzantine architecture, must have proven useful for Jehan, providing him with the "blueprints" he needed. The objective was not innovation, but adherence to a familiar standardized plan. Chrétien's insistence on Jehan's uniqueness may point to a recent innovating spiritual expression of esotericism, aiming to magnify the extraordinary and somewhat incomprehensible situation of the protagonists.

The materials used to construct edifices such as Jehan's tower most likely consisted of expensive items, such as marble, that had been recycled and reused since

³²⁸ This type of decoration as the reflection of the Cosmos is repeated in *Alexandre*, in the description of the hero's tent.

³²⁹ Ousterhout 60.

pagan Roman times. By far, the most reusable items included impressive multi-colored marble columns, which had long served as status symbols. But despite the destructive practice, the re-usage of ancient materials established a connection of Byzantium with its past, placing the Empire in an unbreakable chain that architects helped preserve. Paradoxically, in their arrogant assumption that the past architectural accomplishments of the Empire were at their disposal, the Byzantines profited from the resources, but also the mythology of the past, thus elevating its treasures to legendary proportions. For example, the ancient marble, jasper and porphyry in the columns of the Saint Sophia had presumably medicinal properties, according to Clari's account (*Conquête* LXXXV), curing dangerous kidney ailments. Hence, the desire of the Franks to possess these Byzantine accomplishments were also attempts on their part to claim the Other's History of an important, unbreakable tradition, rich in mystical significance.

D. Byzantine Buildings.

1. Inscribed Columns.

The appearance (and reappearance) of Greek columns was also a staple in the representation of the Byzantine esoteric. In fact, the Corinthian Order was associated with the Science of Geometry (the third step of the hierarchal ladder), while the Doric Order was connected to Music (the second step), and the Ionic Order referred to Astronomy (the first step).³³⁰ According to Gaignebet, prior to the great Flood, three brothers, a mason, a musician, and a blacksmith, recorded their knowledge for future

³³⁰ MacNulty 97.

generations on two pillars of marble and brick. One of these pillars was found by Hermes, who taught the knowledge inscribed upon it to mankind.³³¹ In another obscure narrative, Gaignebet claims that a man referred to as Grecus had been working on the Temple of Solomon before coming to France and teaching the art of masonry to Charles Martel. From these texts, he concluded that Grecus could be identified with Amon, son of master builder Hiram, who recovered the two columns of knowledge, Boaz ("knowledge", moon) and Jakin ("force", sun), and then placed them in the Temple of Solomon.³³² Once again, the Temple of Solomon with its two columns serves as a Masonic symbol. Boaz refers to the saint Blasius tradition, while Jakin is connected to saint Jacques, another saint of Freemasonry. This saint was particularly venerated by those on pilgrimage (the famous pilgrimage of Saint Jacques of Compostella), but he also evoked holy water to alchemists (if we recall the snail, or "coquille saint-Jacques").³³³ The path of Saint Jacques was the Milky Way, already familiar to Greek heroes in search of Zeus. In Masonic terms, the saint's way is a starry path of Light, accessible to an elite in quest of knowledge.³³⁴

In his description of the Temple of Solomon, fourth-century theologian Eusebius makes special reference to the two brass pillars of the edifice, supposedly "gilded with pure gold"³³⁵ and reminiscent of the two pillars Herodotus said to have seen at the

³³¹ Gaignebet I XXVI.

³³² Gaignebet I XXVII- XXVIII.

³³³ Naudon 103.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Horne 51.

Temple of Hercules in Tyre. Delcamp also sees the connection between the two sets of pillars, but believes that the latter represent " l'ésotérisme occidental par opposition à celui d'un lointain Orient [...] nous possédons en notre monde méditerranéen tous les moyens d'accéder à une forme de sagesse.[...] Héraklès est l'affirmation de la supériorité de la pensée grecque."³³⁶ The *Roman d'Alexandre* makes mention of this East/ West distinction by means of the famous pillars (Branch I, 97), while a later miniature illustrates Alexander assisting at the erection of an inscribed column, reminiscent of the pre-Flood pillars.³³⁷

Another Greek inscription appears at the end of *Alexandre*. According to the narrative, after the hero's death, many cities by the name of Alexandria were founded throughout the kingdom. Upon the walls of one of these cities was an inscription consisting of the first five letters of the Greek alphabet: Α Β Γ Δ Ε, which the author claims he is capable of interpreting:

Por coi fist ces letres vos sai bien a dire.
 Qu' Alixandres, qui fu de tout le monde sire,
 Du lignage Jovis-et si fu de sa tire,
 Se cil fu dieus en cile, cist ne fu mie pire-,
 Douze cités fonda; letres i fist escrire (Branch IV, 1598-1602).

The author professes to comprehend the encrypted message of the wall (Αλέξανδρος Βασιλεύς Γενεάς Διός Έχτισε), in his effort to penetrate the Greek world of mystical knowledge and to claim his inclusion within a secretive society. It is noteworthy that the

³³⁶ Delcamp 106.

³³⁷ Claude Gaignebet, *Art profane et religion populaire au moyen âge* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1985) 228.

first, the third, and the fifth letters of the inscription have particular hermetic significance (the numbers 1, 3 and 5 also being of importance). The Greek A connotes the eternity of God, while Γ means universal life and fecundity. Finally, the Greek E, visible on the temple at Delphi, represented the sun-god, or divine knowledge.³³⁸ Thus, this inscription might have implied the eternal life and wisdom of Alexander, who in many ways strived to attain divinity status.

Besides *Alexandre*, columns bearing mystical codes in Byzantium are to be found in Clari. In his description of the marvels of Constantinople, the chronicler was particularly impressed by two gigantic columns, upon which hermits resided. On the exterior of these columns were encrypted pictograms, prophesizing the fall of the city to the Franks, shown in ships with ladders. Letters on these ships warned that a short-haired people with iron sword would come from the West to conquer Constantinople. The Byzantines themselves, puzzled as to the meaning of the columns, were quick to decipher the code, henceforth mutilating the Venetians, as soon as they saw them debarking their ships from their ladders. Villehardouin also spoke of a prophetic column. As he interpreted the pictogram, a man with the dress of the Emperor would be thrown off the tallest column of the city; indeed, Murzuphlus was executed in such a fashion. Another inscription read that a blond king of the West would walk victoriously through the Golden Gate of Constantinople. Yet another claimed that after three emperors by the name of Alexius ruled Byzantium, the empire would fall into foreign hands. Of course, these accounts were most likely fabrications of Villehardouin, in his desire to justify Western

³³⁸ Naudon 141-142.

colonization tactics as part of a divine plan. His ability to "read" the encrypted signs did not endow him with abilities of a mystical nature, but rather reinforced the official Western position of anti-Byzantine propaganda.

2. *The Palace.*

Columns and towers were not exclusive in their connection to the Temple of Solomon and to the Masonic tradition. The Byzantine palace was also a place of the esoteric. As object of Western fascination and absolute symbol of the Eastern imperial cult, the Byzantine palace was of an almost otherworldly, heavenly nature. In *Le Grand palais de Constantinople et le Livre des cérémonies*³³⁹, Jean Ebersolt provides us with an accurate and precise image of the imperial dwelling, initiated by Constantine the Great. I shall provide some historical specifications, before examining how they were transformed by fiction, in order to fit the parameters dictated by the esoteric Other.

The Byzantine palace was a highly complex structure, composed of a system of domed buildings, courts, stairways, doors and galleries, while covering a vast surface. The Emperor himself resided in the *Augusteion*. From there, he had direct access to most other structures within the greater palace, as well as major monuments, such as the Megnaura (the "Great Breeze"), otherwise known as the summer palace, from which the view of the Bosphorus was spectacular. The distinction between winter and summer palace was modeled after an Indian counterpart, according to Ebersolt (164), that of King Gundapor, thus suggesting its Eastern tradition. In Byzantium, churches inside the palace structure distinguished it from its Indian prototype. After the iconoclast

controversy, palaces were modeled after sixth-century Byzantine churches, with ample decorations of a religious character, not excluding the enthroned Emperor's representation in the company of Christ.

By the tenth century, the imperial palace had become a Byzantine microcosm, a city within a city, forum of complicated intrigues that filled the lives of the Byzantine courtiers. Great walls protected it and it hosted elaborate ceremonies, providing comforts and luxuries to its dwellers and its guests. Immense reception areas existed close to the Emperor's quarters, often equipped with tables and chairs. Impressive riches and valuable artifacts and artwork, either hanging on walls or placed in special exhibition areas were to be found. Mosaics on walls and ceilings were also favored, as in the Emperor's apartments, especially rich in purple (or pertaining to the imperial) tapestries and furnishings (176). Doors were usually fabricated of precious materials—silver, bronze, or ivory. Tables were laminated with gold or silver, beds covered with expensive cloths and tapestries, as were the beds of Mélior, Médée, Alexander, and Charlemagne in the *Pèlerinage*. Images of the autocrat surrounded by his family members and his generals constituted typical official art and were proof of imperial stability. In these instances, the Emperor and his entourage stood in comparison to Christ as the central figure, surrounded by his angels.

The celestial imagery of the historical Byzantine palace was reflected in French twelfth and early thirteenth-century writings. Embellished with tales of magic, Constantinople's palaces were places of enchantment, mysticism, and esotericism. They

³³⁹ Jean Ebersolt, *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Cérémonies* (Paris, Leroux,

were also recognized as monuments of great workmanship. Despite his anti-Byzantine stance, Odo of Deuil appeared objective in his description of the palace of *Blachernae* and its surroundings:

In that place [i.e. the Arm of saint George] the Palace of Blachernae, although having foundations laid on low ground, achieves eminence through excellent construction and elegance and, because of its surroundings on three sides, affords its inhabitants the triple pleasure of looking out upon sea, fields, and city. Its exterior is of almost matchless beauty, but its interior surpasses anything that I can say about it. Throughout it is decorated elaborately with gold and a great variety of colors, and the floor is marble, paved with cunning workmanship; and I do not know whether the exquisite art or the exceedingly valuable stuffs endows it with more beauty or value. The third side of the city's triangle includes fields, but is fortified with towers and double walls which extend for about two miles from the sea to the palace. This wall is not very strong, and it possesses no lofty towers; but the city puts its crust, I think, in the size of its population and the long period of peace which it has enjoyed. Below the walls lies open land, cultivated by plow and hoe, which contains gardens that the citizens all kinds of vegetables. From the outside underground conduits flow in, bringing the city an abundance of sweet water. (Book Four, 65).

The Palace of Blachernae became indeed the most described and visited in Constantinople. Adjacent to the Church of Mary of Blachernae, it became the preferred imperial dwelling of the Comneni dynasty. Built by Alexius I in 1118, the new palace had many advantages. It was smaller and more efficient than the older enormous one, and its locale made it easier to defend it, being situated on the outskirts of the city and closer to the harbor. Representations of the exploits of Manuel Comnenus and of his ancestors were frequent, adding to the opulence of a palace already rich in columns,

1910).

thrones gilded with precious stones, and relics. Odo's description of the palace and its surroundings is echoed in a passage of *Partonopeus*:

Li palais sont trestot d'un grant,
 Ainc n'avoit veu de tex tant.
 Il sont trestot poli marbrin ;
 Li un vermel, li autre ver ;
 Qui dedens est ne crient yver.
 Li un blanc et li autre noir,
 Molt furent fait par grant savoir
 Et sont trestot covert enson
 De tuiles paintes et de plon ;
 Sor les pomiaus sont li lion
 Et li aiglet et li dragon
 Et ymages d'autre figure
 Qui sanblent vives par nature,
 Totes couvertes de fin or ;
 Par grant savoir le fisent Mor.
 Li pegnon des palais trestuit,
 Qui reluisent contre le nuit,
 Devers le rue sont torne
 Et sont d'or massis aorne.
 La veries entailles motes,
 D'or et d'argent couvertes totes. (831-852).

The Byzantine palace was thus a terrestrial representation of the Cosmos. Decorative and colorful art, animal figures, luxurious mosaics and shimmering rooftops of the castle in the *Partonopeus* romance known by the name *Chief d'Oire* (reminiscent of "or" for "gold") bore witness to its "Orientalized" décor and constituted a *topos* which combined representation of the Creation with the supernatural, all in an opulent mode. Thus, the textual orientalizing of the Byzantine palace, with its immense wealth and finery, would produce a discursive strategy of controlling it, and eventually usurping the power manifest within it.

Colored and bright mosaics and marble were also part of the décor of splendor the Byzantine palace.³⁴⁰ In actual palaces, the Emperors' personal preferences reflected the use of light and color within the kingly edifice. Justinian favored paintings with scenes of the imperial family's life, decorated with gold, silver and multi-colored precious stones. Fictional accounts of stones of as sources of light also exist. In the *Pèlerinage*, the room of Charlemagne and his peers is well lit by means of a stone called an "escarboucle" or a carbuncle; Partonopeus also kept an escarboucle in order to see in his dark surroundings. This gem (called *λυχνίτης* by the Byzantines) was ruby red in color, and gradually turned to the color of burning coal, when held up to the sun. This transformation of black matter to pure light through the working of fire is connected to the esoteric practice of alchemy.

In *Girart de Roussillon*, the shimmering colorful lights of the jeweled palatial walls blurred the vision of the Franks.³⁴¹ In fact, they believed to have had a metaphysical experience, outside the norms of Nature, and quite close to the godly. In medieval sensitivity, God was perceived "as lumen",³⁴² as the sun, itself full of Masonic connotations. In this epic, the poet deliberately avoided any exotic description of Constantinople and its palaces, automata and magic excluded, but described in detail the

³⁴⁰ Ebersolt 169.

³⁴¹ See Alain Labbé, "Couleurs et lumières du palais dans *Girart de Roussillon*", *Les Couleurs au Moyen Age*:24 (1988) 171-200. See also Alain Labbé, "Les 'Jeux étranges' de l'empereur byzantin dans *Girart de Roussillon*", *De l'étranger à l'étrange ou la Conjoinyure de la Merveille*, (CUER MA, Université de Provence, 1988) 256-273.

³⁴² Eco 47.

Western palace, echoing the Oriental prototype. Alain Labbé³⁴³ believes that the Orient of reverie or of pilgrim imagination is at work in the portrayal of Western monarch's dwelling:

Fors au maistre portau de Roussillon,
 A destre, con on intre, ac un perron ;
 Fait une genelee tau d'environ
 De quel sunt li pirar e l'estelon
 Tuit obrat a seldoine, neis li cebron;
 Les croutes e les voutes de mer leiton.
 Ainqui disne Girrorz son aurion,
 Tau mil de sa maisnade tot environ
 De quel sun ob aufreis lor auchoton
 E sunt de vermeil paille lor tubion. (LI 722-731).

Labbé argues that vague images of an imaginary Byzantine Orient are manifest. Reference was made to the brilliance of mosaics and the abundance of color that reminds us of stones and marble used in Byzantine architecture. And while the brilliance of these stones reflects the very essence, not of Byzantine (at least not directly), but of Western sovereignty (Labbé 177), usage of the marble recalls Roman and Byzantine architecture, providing a "classical" context and a chronologically remote point of reference for the epic, perhaps with the objective of suggesting a mystical connection with Byzantium. The Eastern-like palace of Orléans is repeated, this time including the image of an enclosed garden and animals, a clear Byzantine model, according to Labbé :

Tous deux [les animaux] sont à mettre en rapport avec les automates qui ornaient les palais et les jardins de Constantinople [...] Déployée autour de la majestueuse silhouette du pin, arbre royal par excellence dans l'épopée, étendu sur un pavement de cristal plus fabuleux qu'Oriental, c'est tout un grand plan de luxe des palais du basileus que l'on a directement transporté, sans

³⁴³ Alain Labbé, "Couleurs et lumières du palais dans Girart de Roussillon" 175.

aucune transposition, dans l'enceinte du palais d'Orléans. Ce transfert d'images, resplendissantes d'or et de pierreries, est aussi le transfert, au bénéfice du monarque d'Occident, du prestige de ces complexes machineries, attributs du souverain - cosmocrator dans l'Empire d'Orient. (180)

The Byzantine palace and garden constitute a point of reference, a kind of generic model for their Western counterparts. By claiming similarity, the Western monarch increases his prestige. In this respect, fusion between East and West has been accomplished, with the implication of the latter's intent to adopt the former's architectural and technical know-how.

There is mention of the Byzantine palace in *Girart*, when the Franks are invited inside the basileus's dwelling, in order for the two parties to discuss the matter of the Franks' protection while the Byzantines were under attack. In *Laisse XVIII*, the Byzantine Emperor appears to magically command the weather inside the palace, provoking extreme fear among his guests:

Comencent lor afaires a mentever
 Et il lor fait ses jous estrains veder,
 E a ses nigromanz tanpez plover,
 E signes per samblances granz aparer.
 E quant lor a pavor fait sostener,
 Si fai autres merveilles par art mover,
 E jous corteis perviz, leus a sofrer,
 C'uns non sat mout trosc' au demain au ser.
 Les persones sunt granz e lor saber,
 Que n'i volent per rien mais remaner.
 Et quant voit nes pout plus per gin tener,
 Si fait molt bonement tot lor plazer. (211-222)

The fear felt by the Franks was caused by their misunderstanding and increased by their fascination in the face of an apparently magical occurrence. They did not know it, but they were witnessing Byzantine automata and the maneuvers of a Solomon-type

Wise Man and Master magician. In fact the wisdom of the emperor complemented the splendor of the palace. In another article,³⁴⁴ Louis Labbé supports the notion that Byzantines were skilled technicians and used hydraulic mechanisms that they inherited from the Hellenistic era, to later pass them on to the Islamic and eventually the Western world. These animal-shaped and other automata add to the theme of the splendid palace equipment and décor:

Les automates semblent assez largement utilisés dans le décor des palais et les jardins byzantins, en particulier comme ornement des fontaines, dont ils animaient les jeux d'eau de groupes variés- animaux réalistes ou fantastiques, baigneurs, guerriers ou musiciens- qui formaient de véritables "tableaux vivants".³⁴⁵

The most impressive of the automata was the imperial throne, called the "throne of Solomon", which was ceremoniously elevated during the reception of ambassadors in keeping with Solomon's esteemed position. Clari believed that the imperial throne magically transformed into emperors all those who sat in it. In the *De Ceremoniis*, the throne is described as being heavily ornamented by trees and singing birds, roaring lions and moving beasts.³⁴⁶ The singing bird-in-tree motif, according to Brett, was either Byzantine or Abbasid (478) and it functioned on the principle of air being forced out of a narrow orifice, the beak of the bird. Water flowed into a vase and from it into an air-tight base. The air escaped from this as the water pours in through a narrow pipe, making the bird to "sing" or to turn in different directions. The "tree" was a golden

³⁴⁴ Alain Labbé, "Jeux Etranges de l'empereur Byzantin dans *Girart de Roussillon*", 258..

³⁴⁵ Ibid 260.

³⁴⁶ See Gerard Brett, "Automata in the Byzantine 'throne of Solomon'", *Speculum* XXIX, 477-487

plane, reminiscent of the plane, which stood in the city of Susa described by Herodotus (482). The throne of Solomon was also adorned by roaring lions, and was referred to in our epic. Built in 835 for the Emperor Theophilus, the throne was a vital part of Byzantine ceremonial and etiquette. As ambassadors would prostrate themselves in front of the monarch, an invisible mechanism made birds sing, lions roar and move their tail, and the entire throne would become elevated as a sign of Byzantine imperial majesty and otherworldliness.

Although the poet of *Girart* made brief mention of the Western sojourn in the Byzantine palace, the *Pèlerinage* poet spared us no detail. The scenes of a marvelous elevated throne, of rain inside the palatial confines, and of animals performing on command were repeated. Byzantine Emperor Hugon was seated on a canopied throne, similar to what Clari witnessed as the imperial chariot went through the Golden Gate. Lucie Polak found traces of a ceremonial tent of Oriental kings, explaining that some Byzantine ciboria and thrones show both a dome structure as well as a tent. This throne was suspended from two mules, in keeping with the throne of Solomon portrayal, but also suggesting an Oriental tradition: "By portable thrones (such as King Hugon's) born aloft by animals- and also often wheeled- may derive from other iconographic tradition: the representation of Sassanian art of the throne/ chariot of the sun and moon gods, to which the air-borne throne of Alexander also belongs. [...] The Byzantine throne of

Solomon is heir to both these traditions, which, if correct, would represent a nice example of Byzantine syncretism".³⁴⁷

It has been suggested that "Hugon was really living in a mythological solar palace connected with sun-worship".³⁴⁸ Indeed, as a palace of cosmic connotations, there were astrological signs everywhere within it. Other than the zodiac signs, there were also other numerous things that came in sets of twelve, a particularly important number for Freemasons. This appeared to be the number of the peers themselves and their beds. Schauch studied the significance of the number twelve in Byzantine buildings, and she believes that it corresponds to the twelve apostles, the twelve months of the year, the twelve winds, and the twelve points of the compass.³⁴⁹ Once again, we may distinguish a Masonic link with the symbolic object of the compass, as well as the wind, referring to the Spirit, and therefore, connected to saint Blasius.

The description of Hugon's palace interior was elaborate. The furniture was entirely of gold, the hall adorned with an azure border. A silver column stood in the center and hundreds of marble columns were also to be found, as well as two statues of children with trumpets. Polak explains such imagery as being a part of palace halls where the *Porphyrogenitus* ("born in the purple room", an Emperor born to reigning Emperors) held elaborate banquets with fabulous treasures spread out to be seen by

³⁴⁷ Lucie Polak, "Charlemagne and the Marvels of Constantinople", *The Medieval Alexandre and Romance Epic*, 161.

³⁴⁸ Margaret Schlauch, "The Palace of Hugon de Constantinople", *Speculum*:7 (1932) 501.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 503.

visitors.³⁵⁰ She further comments on the unexplainable to the dumbfounded Franks- the sounding of the trumpets, the singing of the mechanical birds and especially the indoor storm and the rotation of the palace on the columns (Laisse XXI). Initially the wind slowly rises, making the trumpeters perform, then the storm becomes more violent, and the palace pillars rotate quickly. As in *Girart*, fear overcomes the Franks, and any initial sign of good will and hospitality and generosity of the Byzantines is turned into suspicion and desire for revenge. The *Pèlerinage* is not as benign as the *Girart*, and the automata exemplify once more the cunning of the descendants of Ulysses. But what appeared ill-intended and perhaps even demoniacal to the Franks can easily be explained if we look at the geography of Constantinople. Surrounded by water, the city is accustomed to breeze (the "Megnaura" itself suggesting a great breeze), and the wind, which struck the towers acted as pipes and led to orifices in the statues, resulting in shrill sounds. Clari also mentioned the life-like statues of men and animals at the Hippodrome, which played "par enchantement". As for the turning palace, perhaps the poet is referring to the domed structures in Byzantium, representative of the Cosmos and the authority of the autocrat, which may in fact have been turning, due to a revolving floor by "means of a shaft concealed in the central column, like a millstone" (Polak 164). Even the presence of an underground horizontal windmill imported from Persia to grind corn has been suggested (Polak 164). The palace of the Persian Chosroès was echoed, according to Polak (165), who sees striking similarities between the two palaces, as attested in a citation of a ninth-century homily by Rabanus Maurus: a) a throne with a

³⁵⁰ Polak 162.

heaven comprising images of sun, moon and stars; b) water led on by pipes and made come down as rain; c) moving structures; d) thunder artificially produced. But however empirically explainable Polak finds these phenomena, they signaled the demonic to the Franks, who justified their future "gabs" as fair retribution for the Byzantine excess and mysterious behavior, undoubtedly seeing the Infidel Chosroès in the persona of Hugon, and considered his counterpart Heraclius as the righteous Charlemagne, champion against evil. The equation is an ambivalent one, for historical Heraclius entered Constantinople to hold the seat of fictitious Hugon. In the view of the Franks, however, Byzantine qualities were considered non-Christian and pertained to dubious goals. The saintly Heraclius, bearer of the holiest of relics and victorious in his battle with Chosroès is very much like Charlemagne in this respect.

A complete negativization of the non-Christian monarch's dwelling was to be found in *Eracle*. In this romance, the Persian king Chosroès created a false paradise because he had stolen a section of the True Cross from the Christians. This was an act of sacrilege; the pagan monarch wished to be equated to God:

u ciel qu'il ot fait d'or ouvrer,
 le millor qu'il pot recouvrer,
 seoit et disoit qu'il ert seus,
 qu'estre lui seul n'estoit nus deus. (5853-56)

Instead of recreating paradise, Chosroès, deprived of Solomon's virtues, was condemned to defeat since he obtained the Cross by evil means. This type of malice was only befitting to his "pagan" religion. The Persian monarch decided to recreate a kind of paradise on Earth with the help of the magical properties of the Holy Cross, complete with a divine throne, riches, and even his own sky, all within a tower, where he made

rain and thunder appear. This type of suspicious behavior, however, was seen as the works of a demonic force, since it was attributed to a non-Christian personage. Chosroès's religious alterity lay at the heart of his failure to achieve the symbolic status of Master Builder. On the contrary, he created a type of anti-paradise: "Loin d'esquisser un reflet de la cours divine, la salle qu'il agence avec soin constitue un véritablement anti-paradis."³⁵¹ It was up to Eracle, a Christian ruler, to restore the Holy Cross and to humble the pagan king for the profanation of this sacred Christian relic.

We have thus observed that in the representation of Byzantine architecture, another model of Otherness is visible. Unlike the negativization characteristic in the rhetoric of Crusade propaganda, this Otherness pertains to the extremely remote, the incomprehensible, the esoteric. As bearers of an ancient legacy of hermeticism, and as a deeply mystical medieval culture, several Byzantines of my corpus are portrayed as paving the way for, or even as practicing Freemasonry. Such was the case of Chrétien's Jehan the Geometer, an exceptionally skilled serf, with remarkable architectural accomplishments. True to the canons of Masonic secrecy, Chrétien hides his character's particularity behind an actual Ioannes Geometres, a tenth century Byzantine poet, also obsessed with landscaping, but by no means linked to the mystical, except, perhaps, for his composition of hymns to the Virgin.

Certainly, Masonic symbols are abundant in our texts. There are symbolic names, birds, stones, edifices, shimmering lights, and gestures in several places. There is also mention of apocryphal writing in Greek, esoteric because it could only be "deciphered"

³⁵¹ Claude Roussel. "Le Paradis des rois païens", *Le Moyen Age* 89:2 (1983) 221.

by a limited few. By virtue of their connection to this baffling system of codes and symbols, the Byzantines were "othered" in yet another way.

CONCLUSION

The representation of the Byzantine persona in all of the *genres* of my thesis, in its most benign form, is primarily an engaging attempt on the part of the Franks to explore interfaces, cultural commonalities and differences between Byzantine East and Latin West. Yet, while some models of the Other, the Exotic, and the Oriental are visible, situating Byzantium in the uncomfortable position of being the object under scrutiny and being perceived as the realm of limits between binaries, the question of the portrayal of Byzantium is actually much more complicated.

A conscious ambivalent attitude in this portrayal is commonplace. The Byzantines may not necessarily be viewed as ominous Others, seen as surrogates or as substitutes for Saracens, who are normally treated as the archetypal Other in medieval French literature. Nevertheless, their presence is connected to an ambiguous moral disposition. They are, after all, at the fringe of an enemy Muslim world, but they are also at the crossroads of civilizations and epochs, of paganism and Christianity. Furthermore, as Church history informs us, they are divided by heresies, and especially after the official schism of 1054, they no longer answer to the Pope of Rome. Despite the insistence on the part of the Byzantines on calling themselves *Romaioi* and divorcing themselves from all pagan practices of antiquity, in the collective memory of the Franks, they remained Greeks, or "Grieu" or "Grezois" or "Grijeis", mostly pejorative terms recalling their literary ancestor, cunning Ulysses. In fact, as *Partonopeus* and the *Roman de Troie* attest to, the Franks, as descendants of the Trojans, may well justify their hatred

and their antagonism towards the Byzantines based on historical reasons, and could see the latter as their natural enemies.

Despite their attempts to question Byzantine practices, often casting them in a negative light, the Franks could not forget that the Byzantines were not entirely Other. They shared a common Christian heritage and the same religious preoccupations with the Franks. Besides spiritual matters, the two siblings faced similar threats from the outside world. In *Girart de Roussillon*, for example, the Byzantine emperor summoned the French king Charles Martel to come to his aid when in imminent danger because of the approaching "Paian". After initial attempts at impressing the Franks, the Byzantine autocrat gave his lands as well as his beloved daughters, Berthe and Elissent, in marriage to Girart and Charles as proof of the common destiny of the two worlds.

While the Byzantines were not entirely Other to the Franks, they were, nevertheless, exotic. A great ambivalence is also inherent to this term. It infers a positive notion of the remote, and also beautiful, interesting, mysterious. Concealment and impenetrability are important elements of the exotic, as many of its features and its inhabitants are veiled, thus peaking the curiosity of the observant "I" and inviting voyeurism. Such is the case of Byzantine princess Mélior in *Partonopeus de Blois* and of Romadanaple in *Florimont*. But the exotic also implies something not worthy of long reflection; rather, it is to be looked upon rather superficially and kept at a distance, as a guilty pleasure. By maintaining such a distance, the Franks were able to refrain from engaging emotionally in their voyeuristic tendencies in Byzantium, while all their fantasies and desires of sexual and material appropriation were to go unpunished.

As an exotic and, therefore, beautiful place, Byzantium was also suspect and prone to flawed behavior. In the Middle Ages, beauty was a dangerous notion, implying the corrupt and the corporeal, a realm far less privileged than the spiritual.³⁵² Indeed, Byzantium was "flawed" in its excess of material goods. In fact, it did not hesitate to flaunt them in front of a needy Crusading army as portrayed in Villehardouin, or to French soldiers in Constantinople, as shown in epics such as *Antioche*, the *Pèlerinage*, and *Girart*, or to innocent abducted youths such as the one in *Partonopeus*. In all three *genres*, the chronicle, the epic and the romance, the tendencies of the Franks are to gaze upon and then to fantasize about appropriation of the wealth and the finery of Byzantium, but in all three cases they act upon their fascination differently. Villehardouin recounts the political deceptions wrought by the Byzantine emperor, and so justifies the elevated animosity between the two factions; further, the Frankish army was never permitted to enter the coveted city of Constantinople. Villehardouin omits many details and distorts others, but somehow justifies the sack of Constantinople as a natural outcome of Byzantine haughtiness. *Antioche* explicitly tells of the First Crusade, and here, too, we have rationalization of a deprived Frankish army with reasons to loot. The other two aforementioned epics exaggerate Byzantine excess by connecting it to the supernatural, and in so doing, they justify their extreme bravado. In the romance, Partonopeus admires and fantasizes about the Byzantine city, but he transfers his desires

³⁵² The perception that the absence of physical beauty connoted the virtuous was still prevalent in the twelfth century. See Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1986). "During the period between Origen, who insisted upon the physical ugliness of Christ, and the thirteenth-century theologians who made of Christ a dazzling beautiful prototype for artistic images, there was a maturing of the Christian ethos and the birth of a theology of the things of earth". (116)

to his love interest, who, incidentally, is the sole appropriator of all the riches and the official bearer of power in Byzantium.

Thus, the Byzantine persona is cast as the relatively benign exotic, while not dismissing any Frankish project of domestication. This, too, is an essential notion. The authors of my corpus write about Byzantium, an Orientalized geographical, philosophical, political, cultural entity, in order to claim familiarity with it, and to eventually domesticate it. Indeed, Byzantium is "Oriental", in light of Said's theory, because it is an artificial construct, a projection of Western desires of conquest and colonialism.

Thus, on a historical level, tensions between Byzantines and Franks were the natural outcome of actual alliances gone bad. Further, Western colonies in the prosperous city of Constantinople were reason for alarm for the Byzantines, who saw their own mercantile activities diminishing because of special trading privileges accorded to the West. But on the level of representation, the East/ West conflict became gravely inflated and distorted, in order to serve specific purposes. Indeed, the Western project appeared to consist of nullifying the Byzantine image through the mechanics of "othering". Misunderstood aspects of Byzantine culture were readily dismissible as "devious", or "magical", or "diabolic" through the process of using a known referential system to the Franks, in the hope of controlling their Eastern peers.

Nevertheless, in all the negativity present in the representation of the Byzantine Other, we may find quite often a play between hostility and attraction. One can sense that the harshness of the Franks really masks their profound desire of things Byzantine, ranging from the sexual to the consumer-oriented. In the *Pèlerinage*, for example,

Oliver's plan to humiliate the Eastern princess by raping her and then lying to her father about the actual number of times the sexual act was performed became evocative of the violence committed against an Orientalized effeminate and soft Byzantium by a bold and crass Frankish West, thirsty for material objects that it had been lacking. In a characteristic scene, Byzantium dared not contradict the Western bravado and machismo, even in its most absurd and exaggerated pronouncements:

Li quens ne li fist la nuit mes que .xxx. feiz.
 Al matin, par sun l'albe, i est venuz li reis,
 E apelat sa fille, si li dist en requeit :
 "Dites mei, bele fille, ad le vus fait .c. feiz?"
 Cele li respunt: "Oil, sire reis". (726-730)

As an Oriental woman, the princess belonged to the realm of fantasy in the Westerner's mind. Raping her meant penetrating an impenetrable and desirable East, thereby securing access to her world of spinning palaces and talking statues, but also to her vast lands and her riches. In his frustration, the brutal Western knight symbolically punished the East for being unattainable and belittled its ruler for all his achievements. There are profound political undertones to this violent act in light of Franco-Byzantine relations. Byzantine lineage was undermined in the eyes of the king and his lawful female successor, and, by extension, the Western colonial project began to become manifest. It would reach its greatest magnitude during the Fourth Crusade, and Clari and especially Villehardouin, faithful to the Frankish diplomacy and agenda, would proudly record it.

The play between hostility and desire is apparent in other scenes as well. The more dangerous it becomes, the more enticing it gets. In fact, the rape of the princess

may be viewed as a result of the Emperor Hugon's flaunting of his wealth and magical powers to the exhausted Franks, on their way home from Jerusalem. Upon their arrival at Constantinople, the Franks find the Byzantines leisurely playing a game of chess. Like a daring player, Hugon also symbolically engages in a dangerous chess game, placing his dignity and his Empire at stake, on the one hand provoking the Westerners, while on the other hand forcing them to make good on their boastful words, by using the language of military conflict and weapons. Hugon chooses to walk the fine line between pleasure and danger, between impressing but also humiliating his Western guests.

At the core of the Byzantine/ Latin tension, as shown by the *Pèlerinage*, lies the back and forth movement of power and disempowerment. Hugon is especially powerful, because he possesses a unique *techne*. As Michel Foucault points out, "Political power always implied the possession of a certain type of knowledge [...] There couldn't be any knowledge without power; and there couldn't be any political power without the possession of a certain special knowledge [...] Knowledge of the gods, knowledge of the action that can be brought to bear on us by the gods- that whole magico-religious knowledge is present in the political function".³⁵³ By manifesting his absolute power as magician-king, or, by extension, as Byzantine "Cosmocrator" in the image of Christ, Hugon wished his performance to be a humbling experience for the Franks. By demonstrating his special knowledge of magic, he was successful in asserting his political power and his cultural superiority over the Franks. Thus, the text did not relegate Byzantine figures to mere passive victims in this struggle.

It appears that the romancer Gautier d'Arras did not neglect the image of the empowered Eastern ruler, as portrayed in contemporary twelfth-century epics. In *Eracle*, his reaction to Byzantine smugness brought on by knowledge was to remind and warn his French audience always to be on guard before so serious a menace as the Byzantines, since they were a culture on the boarder of the Muslim world and, therefore, prone to evil behavior. Gautier borrows the intertext from the epics, but he transfers the use of magical power to an archetypal foe and malevolent force, the Persian king Chosroès, who imitated his literary Christian counterparts by provoking the same type of bizarre weather phenomena within his palace. The story shows how Eracle, a Christian hero, forces the Persian to cease his provocative flaunting of strange powers because it baffled (and humbled) his men, then shatters his palace, defeats the evil Muslim, and eventually removes the Holy Cross from his possession. While distanced from the feudal world of the epic, *Eracle*, an edifying tale with implicit references to literary predecessors, is certainly not devoid of political innuendo. Gautier encourages his audience to cheer for the good Christian in this game of empowerment and disempowerment, but he also recalls Hugon and the anonymous Byzantine emperor in *Girart*, who, as mirror images of Chosroès, would not hesitate to steal holy symbols and power from the West, given the circumstances and the opportunity.

Like the Christian soldiers in *Eracle*, in the *Pèlerinage*, the response of the Franks was to naturally operate the shift in the exercise and the control of power and to

³⁵³ Michel Foucault, *Power*. Ed. James D. Faubion, Trans. Robert Hurley et als. (New York, The New Press, 2000) 31.

take matters into their own hands. Despite their lack of the Byzantine "savoir",³⁵⁴ they, too, had affinities with the world of religion, and they called upon Christ to aid them in their next to impossible feats. Their empowerment was complete by way of their military skill, thus behaving like the destructive characters of the Arthurian cycle, such as Sir Kay, who were imbued with the pagan magic of the Celtic world.

Indeed, these Franks were not the glory of the Latin Empire, but rather a powerful group, albeit flawed by echoes of paganism, forbidden to thrive because of their destructive energy. This ill fate appears in the realization of the gabs, which also resulted in the near annihilation of Constantinople. At the same time, by controlling the city's fate, the Franks removed power from Hugon, aided by their own secret weapon: the holy relics within their swords. There is an inherent contradiction in the coexistence of the pagan and the Christian in the comportment of the Franks. Haunted by the former, they maintained aspirations to reach the grandeur of the latter, as the Byzantines had once done before them in a different historical and cultural context.³⁵⁵ In this light, the *Pèlerinage* becomes an example of the Franks' will to Empire.

The notion of Empire and the desire of the Franks to appropriate it is central to the representation of the Byzantine Other. In fact, we may distinguish two different forms of Empire: the existing one in the East, and one in the making in the West. The interaction between the two is of profound political significance. In several works of my

³⁵⁴ Ibid xviii.

³⁵⁵ By this, I mean that the Byzantines' struggle to break away from paganism had taken place centuries prior to Franks'. Furthermore, the Celtic prototype, with all its warrior components and mystical dimensions, was not pertinent to the case of Eastern Christianity.

corpus, this interaction was demonstrated by acts of violence and the project of conquest and appropriation inherent to the Latin West's colonizing efforts, as the chronicles will attest.

Byzantine women are particularly important in this meeting and the "blending" of the two Empires, which comes as a result of reasonably peaceful familial alliances. In their presence, the representation of Byzantium in my corpus has produced its own textual transgressions. In fact, women stand out as inscriptions of difference in the discursive triangle Otherness/ Exoticism/ Orientalism. They became a primary example of what constituted the Byzantine Other, in so far as they were the bearers of absolute power that was unimaginable for their Western counterparts. Clearly, Byzantine women were essential in the transfer of imperial power, and, therefore, the acquisition of Empire. In *Partonopeus de Blois*, Mélior is autocrat of Byzantium in her own right, taking the initiative to choose her own husband, based on his caliber and (especially) his physique. In the case of *Girart*, while the initial behavior of the Byzantine emperor seemed as dubious as Hugon's, in this *chanson de geste*, a peaceful resolution is preferred, whereby immense lands are handed to the Byzantine princesses Berthe and Elissent as dowries, eventually to be transferred to the care of their Western husbands. Byzantine women possessed the necessary tools of knowledge for this transfer, deeming heroes such as Partonopeus, Eracle and Florimont worthy of their new imperial titles. In cases such as *Cligès's* Thessala the witch, women other than empresses support and provide the means for the empowerment and the social ascension of the principal hero and heroine. Cligès becomes emperor of Constantinople because he takes his uncle Alis's place; Alis is defeated only with the help of Thessala, the nurse of the empress

Fénice. Thus, my corpus attributes female power in Byzantium to profound knowledge, whether in matters of magic or otherwise.³⁵⁶

Another important inscription of difference was the Byzantine language of the esoteric. Indeed, this language of true knowledge was characteristic of the realm of the Byzantines insofar as they became transmitters of Greek, esoteric because it was less accessible to the West and because of the potential encoded mystical messages that it concealed. While the dominant discourse of othering the Byzantine exotic-- with all its connotations of the peripheral, the strange, the fragmented and the unidentifiable in the landscape of Byzantium and in the medieval *mappaemundi* -- remained the central point of interest throughout my thesis, at the same time, a non-dominant discourse addressing the Western desire for the esoteric, for what is furthest away from common perceptions and understandings of the Cosmos also surfaced in the interesting persona of the Byzantine architect. Through a highly complex display of meaningful symbols, authors such as Chrétien de Troyes attribute a different sort of knowledge to Byzantine architects, mystical in nature and reserved to a distinct few. Although we may not assume that all Byzantine monuments and edifices in the texts I examined resulted from such secret knowledge, it appears useful to note that many authors portrayed Byzantine and Greek buildings as works of special meaning. These buildings, rich in Byzantine heraldry such as two-headed eagles, were examples of aesthetic symmetry, pointing to the way of truth and light.³⁵⁷ Thus, the *Chambre des beautés* of the *Roman de Troie*,

³⁵⁶ I am referring to the knowledge of the medieval trivium and quadrivium.

³⁵⁷ Umberto Eco refers to the relation between craft and aesthetics in architecture, claiming that Masonic guilds used known symbols at the basis of their rituals. See pp.39-40.

with its unique materials in its construction and the persistent references to its four corners may be viewed as acquiring a cosmic dimension,³⁵⁸ the same may be said of the tent of Alexander, with its celestial paintings and its zodiac signs in the *Roman d'Alexandre*, as well as Jehan the Geometer's ornate and spiral tower in *Cligès*.

In spite of the elasticity of my corpus and the more or less accepted convention concerning the multiple aspects of difference of the Byzantine cultural persona within the works it comprises, it seems necessary to mention that the genre of hagiographical literature does not follow that identifiable pattern. In fact, by transcending the East/ West binary of the other genres, thus forming a third position, it appears to be the least likely to promote any anti-Byzantine sentiment among the French, while it recognizes a sort of spiritual kinship and commonality between the two worlds, thus echoing the Christian ideal of brotherhood. Folklore motifs, such as dragons, redeemed heroes, and mystical quests symbolically representing the triumph of Good versus Evil, had been "Christianized" both in the East as well as the West, and Eastern saints had been transplanted to the West either physically by means of their relics, or metaphysically, in the form of miraculous apparitions. In addition to this, the introduction of Byzantine saints to the Franks, Venetians, and Genoese was also successful because of their

³⁵⁸ The number four bears profound significance in the Middle Ages. It reflects the theory of *homo quadratus*, which views man as a microcosmic reflection of the four-cornered universe. It also refers to the four regions of the earth, the four elements, the four primary qualities, the four winds, the four conditions in the body, etc. Four was also the number of moral perfection. See Eco 35-36.

colonies in Byzantium, which openly embraced the veneration of the East's religious figures with great fervor.³⁵⁹

The purpose of hagiographers was to reach all Christian people across the entire political spectrum. Byzantine saints were frequently "adopted" by the Franks and saints' lives, as well as accounts of sacred relics or shrines located in popular pilgrimage destinations, such as Constantinople, were taken very seriously. Perhaps this is so because all these edifying tales take place in regions especially associated with the practice of ascetic virtues, such as the outskirts of Alexandria (Apollonia, Theodora), Egypt (Mary, Catherine, Anthony), Cappadocia (George, Blaisius), or Antioch (Ignatius, Margaret, Justina, Pelagia).³⁶⁰ Other Eastern saints that were venerated by the Westerners were Bartholomew, who preached the Gospel in the East, and Isidore, the patron saint of the island of Chios, which was a Genoese colony in the twelfth century. Jacobus de Voragine attests to the Eastern background of numerous saints in his *Golden Legend*, written around 1260.³⁶¹ In his collection of saints' lives, Voragine does not hesitate to demonstrate through etymological references the connection between the names of greatly venerated saints in the West with the Greek language. At times the saint was of Greek descent, such as the Athenian Dionysios Areopagite, known as Saint Denis, whose *Vita* was translated from Greek to Latin, and whose cult eventually became most popular in France, and foundational to the French monarchy. Other times,

³⁵⁹ See Siegrid Düll, "Armoiries et saints en tant que bornes coloniales en Romanie génoise", *Coloniser au Moyen Age*, ed. Michel Balard et Alain Ducellier (Paris, Armand Colin, 1995) 310-319.

³⁶⁰ See Stephen Wilson, *Saints and their Cults* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983).

he claims that learned Greek men would record famous saints' lives, such as the life of Saint Nicholas. Voragine also points out the readings of Greek apocryphal history while relating the moment of the exaltation of the Holy Cross and the "In hoc signo vinces" signal, as it was presented to Emperor Constantine. Finally, he alludes to the East/ West Church distinction in his tale of Saint Eusebius and the cleansing of the Arian heresy in the West, as Saint Athanasius had done in the East. But while the distinction is alluded to, it is only to demonstrate similarity in Church tactics rather than antagonism. Likewise, the artistic representation of saints in the West, with their heads bowed as a gesture of suffering and humility, does not necessarily reflect the Byzantine iconographic tradition, which portrays saints rather generically as extremely thin figures, thus de-emphasizing their corporeal side and stressing the spiritual³⁶². This difference in perspective, however, does not compromise the representation of the ideal of Christian virtue, common to both Latin and Byzantine worlds.

The works of my corpus have maintained this neutrality in the veneration of saints. A characteristic example is the *Chanson d'Antioche*. When the Crusaders of the First Crusade arrived on Byzantine soil to aid the Eastern Christians against Turkish assault, they were obligated to camp outside the walls of the city. The Turks stood nearby alert and ready to strike first. But divine Providence was not on their side:

Turs se cuident hebergier en une praerie

³⁶¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, ed. and trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993).

³⁶² See Ormande M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archeology* (London, Oxford University Press, 1911); Romilly J.H. Jenkins, "The Hellenistic Heritage in Byzantine Art", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 37-52; André Grabar, *Early Christian Art* (New York, 1968); Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993).

Saint Jorges, Saint Domistres lor font envaie
 Une si grans péor lor a Diex envoie,
 Qui li uns contre l'autre de l'ocirre s'escrie. (*Antioche*, XII)

Although George was a major foundational saint in the West as well as in the East, it is surprising to see how Byzantine Saint Demetrius, particularly venerated in the East as a soldier saint, was seen by the Franks as acting on their behalf in the presence of imminent threat. Richard's account takes place in an atmosphere of the marvelous and miraculous, as he envisions Byzantine saints physically residing and performing miracles on their soil, yet protecting all Christians alike.

Another example of equal Eastern and Western veneration of a sacred figure, namely that of the Virgin Mary, is demonstrated in the chronicles of Villehardouin and Clari.³⁶³ In these works, the Crusaders were amazed by the number of churches, monasteries and relics in Constantinople. Particularly impressive was the extreme veneration of the Virgin Mary, patron saint of the City. Steven Runciman traces the roots of this cult, seeing in it an evolution of the mystery religion of Isis and the Great Mother, after the contact of decaying Rome with the East in the early centuries of Christianity.³⁶⁴ This type of veneration was not unfamiliar to the Latins, as Larmat confirms: "La fin du douzième et du treizième siècle voient l'épanouissement du culte

³⁶³ The sentiment of religious commonality also appears in works of fiction. The Byzantine princess Mélior, for instance, appeals to the Virgin Mary in *Partonopeus de Blois*, thus announcing her common Christian heritage with the hero and dismissing any suspicion of sinister activity. In the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, the Franks are victorious over the Byzantines, because they possess relics given to them by the (Orthodox) Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the Greeks accept their defeat, because they venerate the same relics.

³⁶⁴ Runciman 18.

marial.³⁶⁵ Both Villehardouin and Clari speak extensively of the icon of the Virgin, which was perceived as the emblem of Constantinople, as the Emperor Murzuphle carried it in the streets along with his imperial banner. Clari is especially sensitive to the issue of the icon, which Murzuphle lost to the Latins, as he claims that the city was under its aegis. According to local legend, the icon of the Virgin was the first artistic representation to be made of her, and the Byzantines believed in its magic powers to protect their city. The veneration of this icon attests to the supposed omnipresence of the Virgin after whom Constantinople was occasionally named: "Jamais la Vierge n'a été aimée et vénérée avec plus de ferveur. Elle est devenue la reine du ciel et de la terre."³⁶⁶ I believe that this inscription of sameness in the cult of saints merits further investigation, indeed worthy of a future academic endeavor.

Apart this unique tendency, the general consensus in the French representation of the Byzantine Exotic is one of contradiction. Images of disdain and alterization are balanced by the quest for a desirable Orientalized Byzantium, admired for its beauty, and yet held responsible for its resulting arrogance. The sack and the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 was the evident outcome of these conflicting attitudes of the West towards Byzantium. But despite the Franks' will to Empire, History will teach us that the Latin State in the Byzantine East was relatively short-lived, and the Western project of expansionism rather unsuccessful. After a period of almost fifty-five years, the West lost its dominance in Byzantium in 1261, while the latter would never recover

³⁶⁵ Jean Larmat, "Sur quelques aspects de la religion chrétienne dans les chroniques de Villehardouin et de Clari", *Le Moyen Age*, 80: 3-4 (1974) 409

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 414.

from this most severe blow. In the remaining two centuries of the Byzantine Empire, only a shadow of the past remained, consistently diminishing as a new Empire, that of the Ottoman Turks, was on the rise. In retrospect, the impact of the complications due to East/ West rivalry could not fully be assessed until the sixteenth century, at the dawn of a new era.

Thus, for the West, Byzantium has always implied excessive complexity, impenetrability and intrigue. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 there was little affection on the part of the Latin West for Byzantium. The Renaissance maintained an interest in it only for its preservation of classical texts. During the seventeenth century, Louis XIV promoted Byzantine scholarship, aspiring to the prototype of the imperial monarch as the "sun-king". The eighteenth century, however, under the impetus of Voltaire and Montesquieu, quickly dismissed any illusion of Byzantine grandeur and saw in Byzantium a disgraceful religious history of decline and despotism. We notice a change in attitude with the "Decadent" movement of the second half of the nineteenth century, which appreciates the strangeness and remoteness of Byzantium. In recent years there has been a revival of things Byzantine in the Academy.³⁶⁷ Recent scholarship recognizes Western Europe's debt to Byzantium, which was first to face Muslim expansionism, to absorb the pressures of the Slavs, and to provide a trade route to the

³⁶⁷ An example of interest taken in such things was the 1997 exhibition at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art called "The Glory of Byzantium", which attracted countless people for several months. Through Christian and secular art emanating from all corners of the medieval world, visitors were able to trace an evolution in Byzantine mysticism and comprehend the politics, the commercial interactions and the intellectual preoccupations of the times. Currently, the exhibition entitled "Byzantium: Faith and Power" is also witnessing major success.

Far East. But this would be a far cry from the "Timeo Danaos"³⁶⁸ cliché still echoing from Virgil in Frankish ears.

³⁶⁸ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book 2, Line 48.

ILLUSTRATIONS

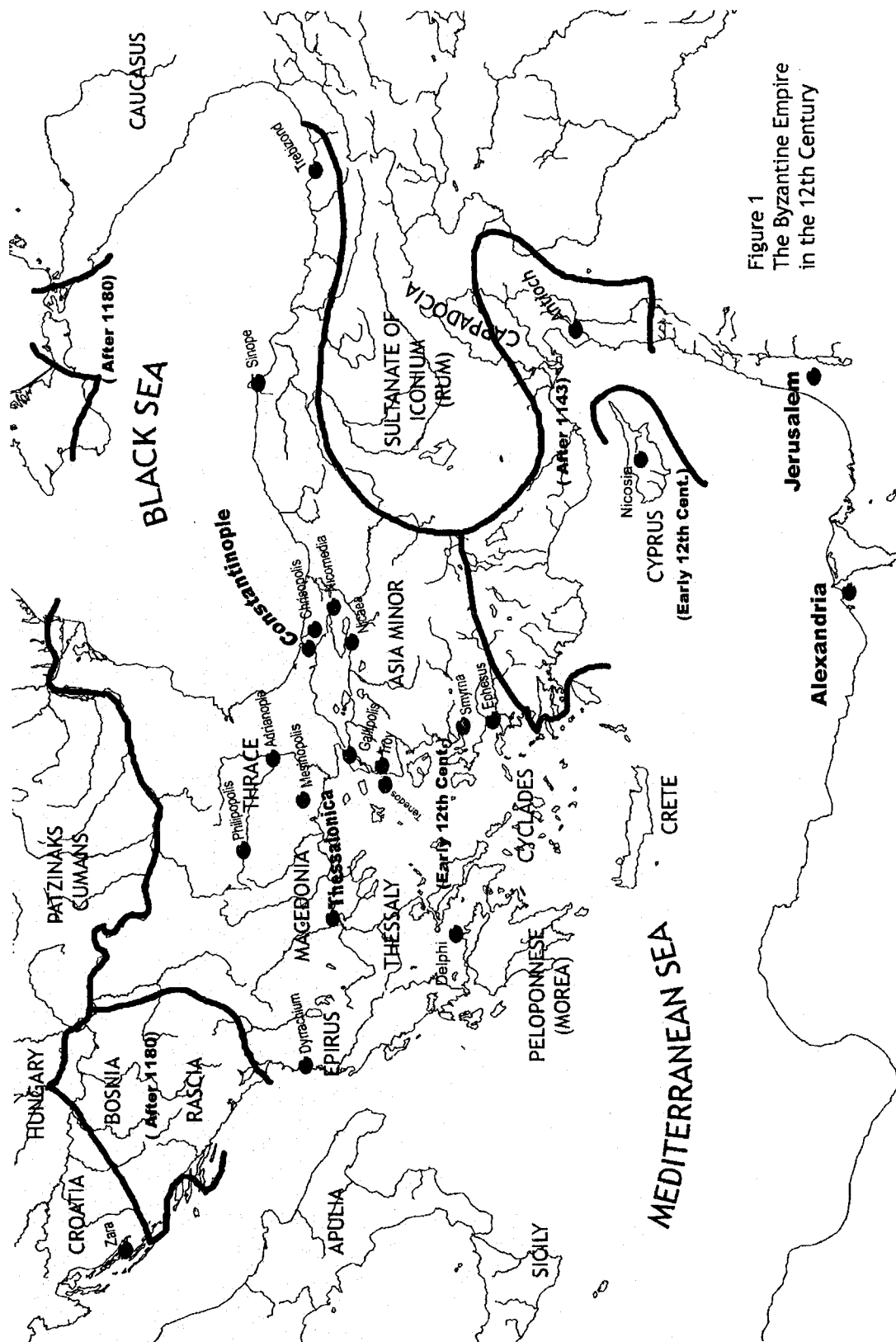


Figure 1
The Byzantine Empire
in the 12th Century

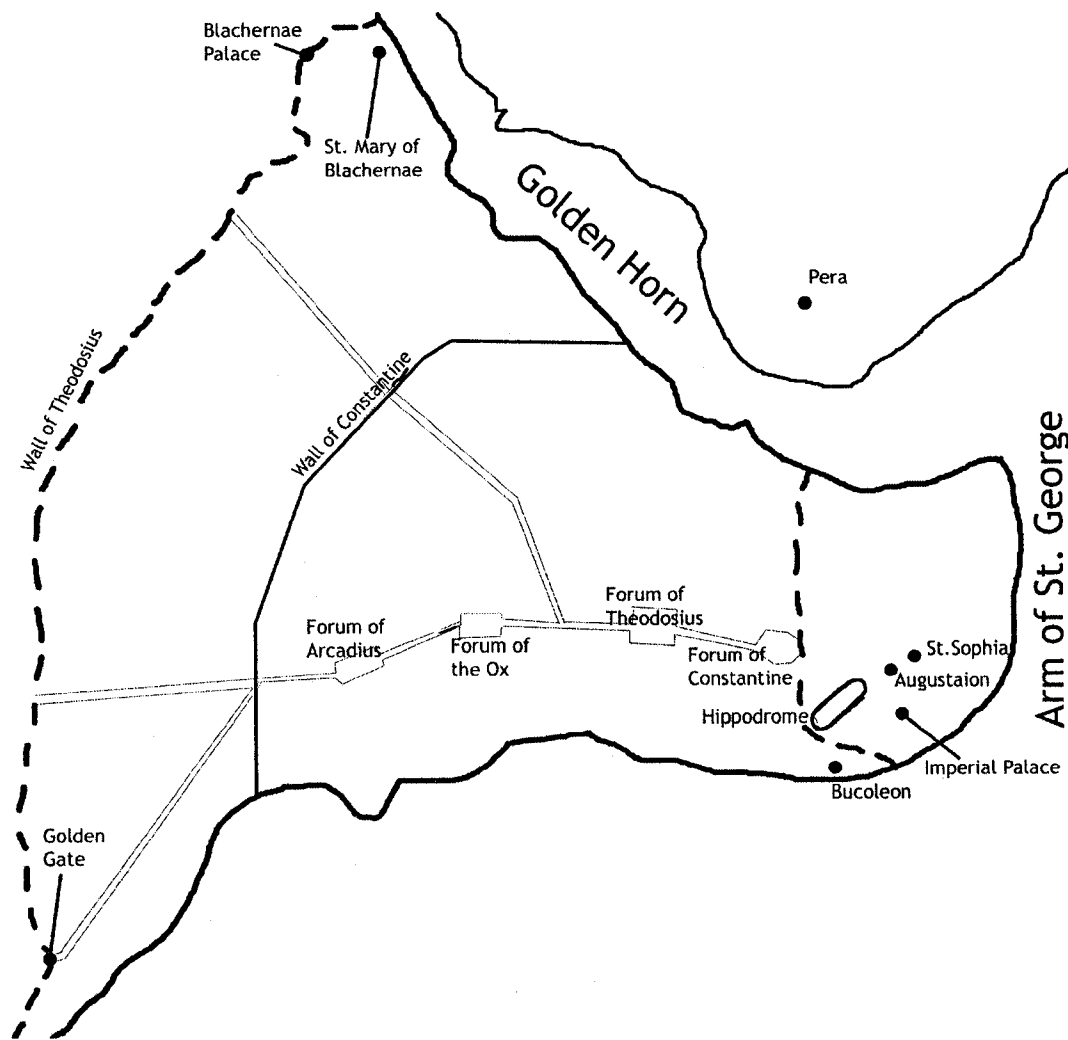


Figure 2
Constantinople in
The 12th Century

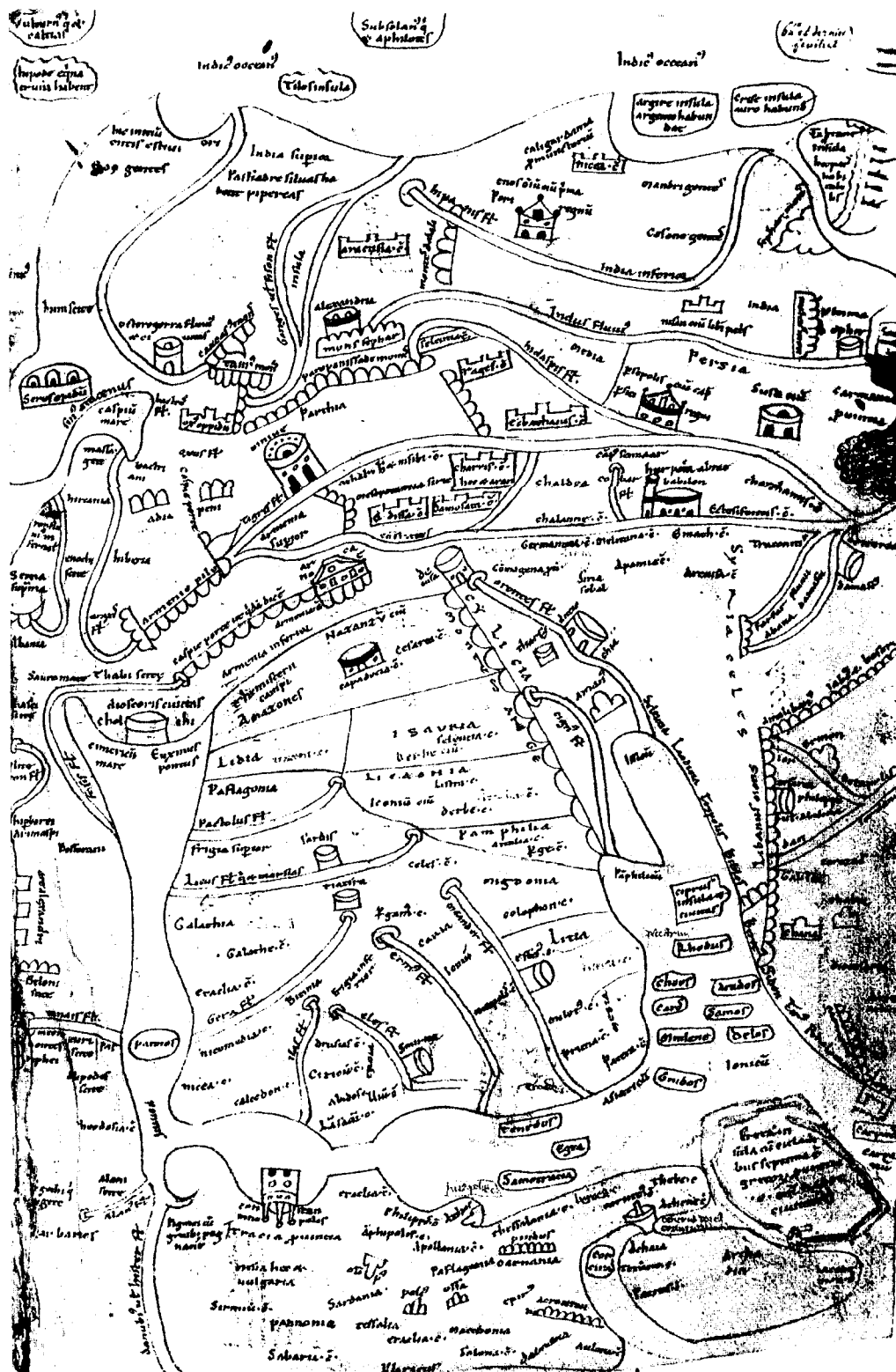


Figure 3
 Saint Jerome Map of Asia

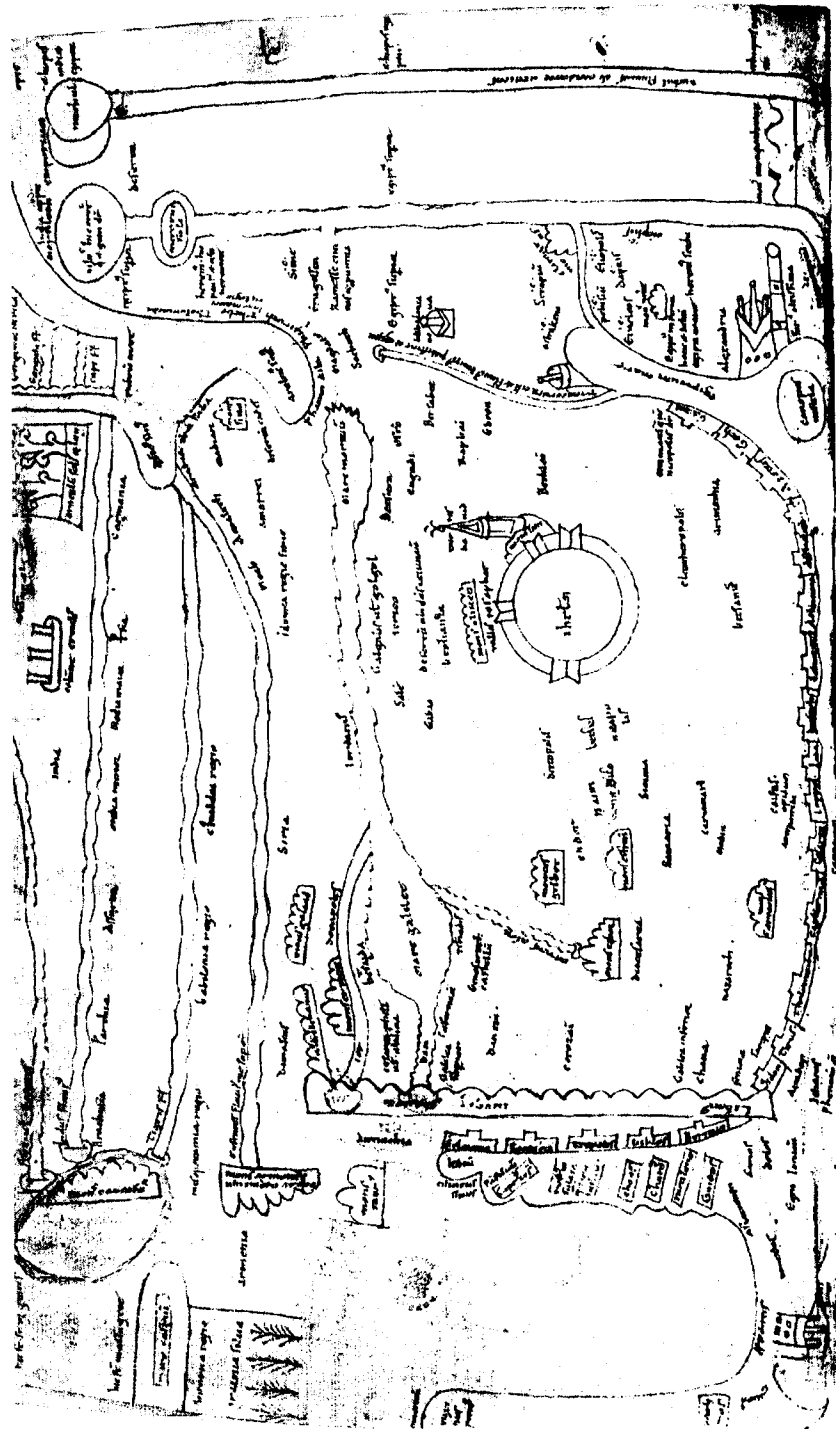


Figure 4
Saint Jerome Map
of Palestine

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