# Preface

## DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVES

In his *History of the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Fernand Braudel chides the king for not removing his capital, after the conquest of Portugal in 1580, nearer to the Atlantic. Instead of looking to the New World, where economic progress was to make fantastic leaps into the future, he preferred to concentrate his gaze on the old and decaying Mediterranean, and the struggle with France for the legacy of Charlemagne; or for the legacy of Constantine and Justinian with an Ottoman Empire already, after the death of Süleyman in 1566, touched by senility. Thus at the apogee of the *siglo de oro*, in the midst of its glories, Spain was already sentencing itself, because of its fixation upon the past, to a long decline, a contest with its neighbors to find a place in a museum basement.

Economic forecasters nowadays talk of the Pacific Rim, as a proof that America must shift its own old preoccupations with the Atlantic and Europe away towards the new technologies of the East, visible in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore. And what will happen if ever China harnesses the genius and energies of its billion people, amply attested for previous centuries by Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*, to economic development on a large scale? What revolutions will that provoke in the United States?

But all this has an unexpected corollary for the western segment of the Asiatic land-mass. If the twenty-first century is to witness such changes, a transformed and computerized East will again have something to offer as valuable as the spices and silks that once drew caravans to cross deserts and mountains, or that sent Marco Polo from Venice to the court of Kublai Khan. If Europe too is to want its share of the import and export of goods and ideas from and to the Pacific Rim, unless everything is to go tediously and lengthily by sea, Asian land routes will re-acquire their ancient and immense importance, and again the Mediterranean will become the crossroads between East and West.

It may be that a reformed Soviet Empire will try to profit from this trade, and that would give the "Third Rome" and its Byzantine tradition fresh impetus indeed. But that system, so prolific in and so wasteful of its talents, is always likely to present uncertainties and difficulties. If the main routes run south of the USSR, there is the problem of Iran. But whatever pattern of traffic emerges, a simple glance at the map of Asia shows the strategic importance in any such configuration of Turkey, already a candidate

for membership of the European Common Market. Touching the Balkans and Greece at Byzantium, the Soviet Union at Kars, Iran at Urmia, so close to Egypt and the Suez Canal and yet, with the advent of the Channel Tunnel, soon to enjoy direct rail links with London, suddenly its people may throw off the lethargy of centuries; and the imperial ambitions of the Ottomans, now transferred to the commercial realm, may no longer seem to them a dream from the past, but the hope and possibility of a new future.

In all this, Classical scholarship, apparently so remote and study-bound, has, as usual, its own most modern and relevant role of interpretation and comment, "orientation" on this occasion in its most literal sense, to play. The intrusion of the Turkish people into the Mediterranean world, linguistically documented at such exhaustive length by Gyula Moravscik in his *Byzantinoturcica*, resembles another intrusion; that of the Romans into the struggles of the Diadochi. Who could believe that history had reserved any part for the farmers and shepherds of Latium amid such Hellenistic sophistication? And yet, in hindsight, who played the imperial role with such distinction? The most fruitful and indeed the only possible relationship for a Greek thrown into the company of the Younger Scipio was that selected by Polybius: not to reject, but to try to understand why history had chosen this new people as the bearers of its future. In the case of Turkey, we too must seek to understand. No country or people long sustains the burden of empire without some gift or calling.

The Romans—it was a token of their genius—carried into their new future a great deal of Greek cultural baggage. Islam in its turn has not been indifferent to the achievement of Byzantium. Already the court of Baghdad had attracted translators of Greek texts into Arabic; of Aristotle and his commentator Themistius, for example; of Galen, Dioscorides, even of the New Testament. In the tenth century, the Turkish writer Alpharabius adapted Plato's *Republic* to Islamic ideas. The Ottoman Turks continued this respect for learning. In the Dolmabache Palace, a Western painting in the *salon d' attente* reserved for ambassadors before their reception by the Sultan shows the young Conqueror Mehmed II entering through the breach in the city walls accompanied certainly by his troops, but also by his aged and venerable spiritual adviser Aksemseddin. In another painting, Mehmed and Aksemseddin watch the transportation overland of the warships that entered the Golden Horn from the Sea of Marmara. Venetian artists like Gentile Bellini and Titian worked for Mehmed and Süleyman. The medal struck for the former, saluting the Conqueror as *Imperator*, is in the purest Roman tradition, and it is this tradition which, soon after 1453, the Venetian traveller Giacomo de' Languschi invokes when he calls the youthful Sultan "as avid of fame as Alexander of Macedon." At the religious level, a convergence of imagination between the dome of the Ulu Mosque at Erzurum (1150), itself in debt to Byzantine churches, and that of the chapel of the Santa Sindone in Turin by Guarini (1688–94) presents no longer a merely aesthetic problem but a delight and mystery.

The publication therefore of these articles about "Byzantium and its Legacy" as a theme issue of *Illinois Classical Studies* needs no apologetic explanation in a State increasingly conscious of its need for an international outlook and breadth. But they are of as great relevance to the Classicist also. The immense urgency of Byzantine studies—they form the single most important area of Classical scholarship in our time—is that Byzantium redefines our task as we abandon the twentieth century. What puzzles and seems "irrelevant" in fragments makes sense in a pattern of the whole. It is the context that clamors for attention. "Only connect."

Superficially, it might seem attractive to the student who thinks he has exhausted Virgil to find authors as yet largely untouched, fresh victims for the scholarly scalpel. This approach is quite wrong. "Despite its appeal as a largely untilled field of philology, what Mommsen saw in the Byzantine world was the essential continuity of Roman law and administration; that is to say precisely those aspects of Roman civilization that he understood better than anyone else" (Brian Croke). It is not to get away from Virgil that we turn to Byzantium, but to understand him better when we go back to him. And this principle applies to all our work. Our aim is not to wander aimlessly in the forest counting the leaves on the trees, but to draw the contours of the sacred wood.

Mommsen died in 1903. Is it too much to hope that his words will be heeded a century later, even though during the preparation of this issue news arrived that in Britain at least chairs of Byzantine studies are being short-sightedly left unfunded? Already in our time the great problem for the Classicist is to look beyond the temporary and transient to the continuing inheritance, and even to dare to recognize that some things, judged by this criterion, do not matter. It is evident how much passed from Byzantium to Russia, and as the Church celebrates the millennium of the conversion of Prince Vladimir how much more visible that debt will be. It is less evident how much passed to the Ottoman Empire. But even handkerchiefs are relevant here. When, in the illustrations to the *Chronicle of the Szigetvar Campaign* by Osman, we see a seated Süleyman receiving his vassal Stephen Zapolya in Belgrade in 1566 while holding his ceremonial handkerchief, must it not be understood that we have a modern version of consular diptychs issued under Theodoric and Justinian showing a seated Boethius or Areobindus holding the *mappa*, or of the gesture of the governor Flavius Palmatus, whose standing statue from the late fifth century A.D., now in the Museum at Aphrodisias, also holds a similar symbol of authority in its right hand? And that tradition is already described by Ennius before 269 B.C. for Romulus and Remus as they took the auspices at the very foundation of Rome, *veluti consul cum mittere signum volt.*

Mommsen was right, and he was right because he was a Classicist, and so had material at his fingertips for comparison. There is striking continuity between New Rome and Old. Domitian is already a Byzantine monarch, and Statius, who may well be called the first Byzantine poet, in

his *Silvae* offers the proof. *Fessis vix culmina prendas / visibus, auratique putes laquearia caeli* (IV. 2. 30–31) of Domitian's banqueting hall sounds like a Santa Sophia six centuries before Tralles and Anthemius. Statius' poem is entitled *Eucharisticon*. It is not surprising then that his imperial iconography should have contacts even with Pushkin.

Ibn Khaldun, the great philosopher and theorist of cyclic history, died before Byzantium fell, but its collapse would not have puzzled him. When on Tuesday, May 29, 1453, the praise of Allah was intoned for the first time by an imam in Hagia Sophia, Tursun Beg, an eyewitness, describes how Sultan Mehmed II advanced to survey the fallen city and the domes of its church (tr. Bernard Lewis):

> The Emperor of the World, having looked upon the strange and wondrous images and adornments that were on the concave inner surface, deigned to climb up to the convex outer surface, mounting as the spirit of God ascended to the fourth sphere of heaven. Looking down as he passed, from the battlements at each level, on to the marbled court below, he went up to the dome. When he saw the dependent buildings of this mighty structure fallen in ruin, he thought of the impermanence and instability of this world, and of its ultimate destruction. In sadness, a verse of his sweetness-diffusing utterance reached my humble ear, and remained engraved on the tablet of my heart:
>
> The spider is curtain-bearer in the Palace of Chosroes.
> The owl sounds the relief in the castle of Afrasiyab.

The Sultan was the heir of a long tradition. As the Younger Scipio in 146 B.C. watched the destruction of Carthage, he quoted in Greek from the prophecy of Menelaus in the fourth book of the *Iliad*:

ἔσσεται ἦμαρ ὅταν ποτ' ὀλώλῃ Ἴλιος ἱρή,
καὶ Πρίαμος, καὶ λαὸς ἐϋμμελίω Πριάμοιο.

Menelaus makes this prophecy because the Trojans have violated a solemn religious obligation, and the Romans continually struck this same theme in their anti-Carthaginian propaganda. *Punica fides* meant *Punica perfidia*. But did not Mehmed think of the Byzantines also as "infidels"?

History is a tale of blind men looking for a black cat in a darkened cellar. But the scholar's task is to emulate Thucydides and Ibn Khaldun, to throw light, to reveal patterns. This enterprise is fraught with difficulty, as Professor Cyril Mango and others have pointed out, stemming in part from the failure to see that Byzantine civilization is not a continuance of Hellenic, but of Hellenistic / Roman culture. Like Constantine, Justinian was a native speaker of Latin. The Byzantines were *Rhomaioi*, "Rum." The "great idea," as an increasing number of modern Byzantinists are telling us, is based on a great misapprehension.

D. V. Ainalov wrote at the beginning of this century on *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art* (Эллинистические Основы

Византийиского Искусства, Санкт Петербург, 1900). Classical antiquity is not a series of islands in a sea of decadence, but a seamless robe. In its shot-silk warp, the great urban centers of Alexandria and Byzantium focus complex, far-reaching, often "Hippodromic" and carnival patterns. Between these jewels is set Rome's mirror, refracting, altering, "contaminating." After them shine Kiev, Moscow, St. Petersburg, but also Istanbul. If only our students would begin to understand the panorama and the vision—the diachronic perspectives—they must have if Classical scholarship is to live—

> Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna
> legato con amore in un volume,
> ciò che per l'universo si squaderna.

Dante is central to European poetry, and both verbal reminiscence and ring composition show that the source and trigger of Dante's insight was Roman Virgil:

> Vagliami 'l lungo studio e 'l grand' **amore**
> ch m'ha fatto cercar lo tuo **volume.**

We cannnot raise our students to those heights quickly. But perhaps we can make a beginning. Perhaps with the aid of Byzantium we can widen their horizons rather than, as we do too often, bind them in nutshells and then count them—mock them—as kings of infinite space.

With this issue, my five-year Editorship of *Illinois Classical Studies* comes to an end. Of the 104 articles published during this time, 39 have been by authors whose affiliation either now or earlier has been with the University of Illinois. At a more personal level, and since this is the aim of all our endeavors, I have been delighted to include the work (in this order) of Peter Howell of Bedford and Royal Holloway Colleges, University of London; Paul Holberton of the Warburg Institute, University of London; John Dillon of Trinity College, Dublin; Radd Ehrman of Kent State University; and Julian Raby of the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, all former students of mine at different periods of my career.

Finally, I would like to thank all who have helped in any way: in particular Professor Nina Baym, Professor Edward Sullivan and the School of Humanities; Professor Clayton Dawson; the Editorial Committee; Mrs. M. E. Fryer for her cheerful and devoted service; and above all Frances Stickney Newman, without whose unceasing toil none of this would have been possible.

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