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An Accidental Scholar

Averil Cameron*

In this essay I reflect on my development as a scholar of late antiquity and Byzantium over many decades. I was a Classics undergraduate at Oxford in the late 1950s, and my subsequent history took me first to Glasgow, then to London as a professor and back to Oxford as the head of a college and a pro-vice-chancellor, with several stays in the United States along the way. I have been lucky enough to be able to follow my intellectual curiosity in numerous directions, but always as a historian, and especially as a historian curious about the history of religion.

Keywords: Oxford; late antiquity; Byzantium; orthodoxy; discourse

Our small terraced house in Leek, North Staffordshire, did not go in for books. We had a red one-volume encyclopaedia with a few color illustrations (I remember Raphael's Sistine Madonna), but the only history book I remember was *A Child's History of England* by Charles Dickens, a deeply Protestant narrative peopled by Good Queen Bess and Bloody Mary. I was sent by my parents to Sunday School at the local Church of England parish church, St Edward's, and later I used to play the piano there for hymns, and sometimes the organ at church. Like many of my generation I stopped going to church as a student, and it was the readings and music of the Christian year that stayed with me and left an abiding mark. But there was no church history in what we learned, and when much later I began to discover the actual history of early Christianity, it came as a revelation.

At my grammar school, a small local girls' high school with only three hundred pupils, I remember studying the Tudors, the French Revolution,

* Averil Cameron retired in 2010 as Professor of Late Antique and Byzantine History and Warden of Keble College, University of Oxford.

and nineteenth-century British history, but history was not one of my choices for A levels, the final school examinations. Instead I took English literature, Latin, and Music, all three through the influence of their respective teachers. Music was taught as an academic subject, with set works that included Brahms' Fourth Symphony and *The Magic Flute*, and the teacher was also my piano teacher, and tried to persuade me to go to music college like her. It was Muriel Telfer, the impressive head teacher, who came unannounced to our house and told my parents that I must go to university. My Latin teacher had been teaching me Greek during the lunch hour, and she also broadened my mind by lending me her own books; it was natural therefore to apply for Classics. No one from my family or my school had gone to Oxford, but the same teacher took me to a summer school in Greek led by John Pinsent of Liverpool University, and he told me I must go to Oxford and to Somerville College, so that is what I did. For all I knew about either, they might as well have been the moon.

In 1958 all Oxford colleges including Somerville were single sex, and women amounted only to a tiny proportion of the overall undergraduate body. The results of the entrance exam came by telegram, or rather, two telegrams, for I was offered a scholarship by Girton College, Cambridge as well as an exhibition by Somerville. An exhibition was less good than a scholarship, but influenced by John Pinsent's advice, I accepted it. I was entirely unaware of the uniqueness of the Oxford Classics course, officially called Literae Humaniores, but usually referred to as Greats. It was and is a four-year course, and it then consisted of five terms spent solely on classical languages and literature, followed by a tough set of exams known as Mods (Honour Moderations), after which ancient history and philosophy were studied together for seven more terms, with another tough set of examinations at the end. No concessions were made to those who like me had to catch up with the required standard of Greek. The male undergraduates who had come from public schools, that is, exclusive private boys' schools, were streaks ahead in their language skills and could often walk through Mods with virtually no extra work. Just as well I did not realise that at the time.

There were only four of us reading Classics at Somerville in my year, and the main mode of teaching was the weekly tutorial with two students and the tutor. We had to read all of Homer, all of Virgil, much of Cicero, and more, all in the original. Unseen translation was also important, and composition from English into Latin and Greek even more so. Literary critique of Latin and Greek texts played a far smaller part, and we were never given reading lists, as we were actively discouraged from reading secondary literature. Lectures (open to all students) were not compulsory and not

always relevant; most assumed the high importance of textual criticism, and when they did cover our set texts, they were often peppered with disparaging references to earlier editors, or still worse, ignorant Byzantines. I was sent by my tutor to the seminar held by Eduard Fraenkel, the Professor of Latin, which was uncompromising in this regard and very frightening, but which I now see acted as a marriage bureau not only for myself and Alan Cameron but also for the classicists Martin and Stephanie West, and Jasper and Miriam Griffin. I recognised that Fraenkel was the real thing and spent much time poring over his commentary on the *Agamemnon* and his book on Horace. I also learned everything I knew about Greek metre from his metre class, during which he would give extraordinary one-man performances of choruses from *The Frogs* and other plays of Aristophanes. One of the reasons I became and have remained a fan of Horace's *Odes* was because of their use of the complex Greek lyric metres we learned from Fraenkel.

For examinations we had to dress in subfusc (academic gown, and for women, cap, black jacket and skirt, white blouse, black tie, and black stockings), and after Mods we divided our time between ancient history with Isobel Henderson and philosophy with Elizabeth Anscombe and Philippa Foot. Philosophy included large amounts of Plato and Aristotle in the original, but also moral philosophy and logic, or perhaps better, epistemology, including the later works of Wittgenstein (Elizabeth Anscombe had translated his *Philosophical Investigations* from the German and was also his literary executor). As before, the teaching consisted of weekly essays discussed in tutorials, now usually two a week. Ancient (i.e. Greek and Roman) history was divided into periods, with essays focusing on specific problems such as the nature of Athenian imperialism or the reforms of the Gracchi. No teaching was offered for the sole examination paper containing wider questions, and I never studied any Hellenistic history, or Roman history before the second century BC or after the reign of Nero. I had little conception of wider historical methodology as such. I could in theory have gone to the History lectures being given on other periods, but that was not presented as an option, and instead the lectures that I did attend and that made the biggest impact on me were those given by the art historian Edgar Wind in the Oxford Playhouse, in which he talked about Michelangelo's sculptures and Raphael's *School of Athens* (curiously a large copy of which hung in the upstairs drawing room in the Lodgings at Keble when I arrived there in 1994). But I became extremely good at the critical analysis of specific texts, including historical sources, and indeed at Greek and Latin.

There were few openings in ancient history in the UK the time, and for a woman in Oxford only if a fellow in ancient history in the few

women's colleges were to retire. In any case I never imagined myself as an academic, and my impression is that many of my contemporaries at Somerville married after graduating and went into professions such as school teaching. I married Alan Cameron, a fellow Greats student and a very accomplished classicist, in the summer of 1962 after finals and went to live in Glasgow where he had taken up a lectureship in Latin (known there as Humanity). Somehow Glasgow University offered me a graduate scholarship of £400 a year to start a PhD, and I followed Alan in thinking that working on a later writer rather than a mainstream classical subject would be a good idea. Isobel Henderson suggested I consult the Byzantine historian Robert Browning, who was then a lecturer at University College London. He pointed me towards the late sixth-century Greek historian Agathias, and I started work on his *Histories*, drawing (in the then complete absence of any graduate classes or training) on my undergraduate experience of working on Thucydides and Herodotus. Henry Chalk was assigned to me as supervisor, as he had worked on the later Greek poet Nonnus, and he was kind, although we did not have a great deal to say to each other. Little had been written on Agathias's work, but Rudolf Keydell was working on the first critical edition, published in 1967, and I could find most of the relevant nineteenth-century dissertations in Glasgow's University library. Without distractions, I did much of the work within the first two years and finished it during 1964–65 in London when Alan moved to Bedford College in the University of London.

Being in Glasgow was a strong experience. Christian Fordyce, the Professor of Humanity, was a powerful figure in the University and lived with his wife in a large house with the address 2 The University, Glasgow. He had two collections, one of postmarks and the other of railway tickets, to which members of the department were expected to add when they could. As the wife of the newest lecturer I had a lowly status at Mrs Fordyce's tea parties and was positioned furthest from the fire, the only source of heating. Nor was Glasgow used to graduate students, especially female ones, as its best (male) classics graduates usually went on to Balliol with a Snell exhibition. But Classics at Glasgow was a lively environment, and there were visits to Edinburgh and meetings with classicists from other Scottish universities. We also got to know the Trossachs and the beautiful scenery near Glasgow, as well as the MacBrayne steamers that took us to the western isles and north to Oban and Fort William. I also had a role model close to home. Alan published his first articles in 1963, and the first of several major papers in the *Journal of Roman Studies* in the following year, when we also published our first joint article—an indication of the kind of conversations we were evidently having at home in our basement

flat in Athole Gardens.[1] Agathias composed classicising Greek epigrams as well as history, and collected epigrams by his friends in his *Cycle*, which was later incorporated into the Greek Anthology; given the expertise in Greek verse which Alan had developed since his schooldays we wrote about this too.[2]

Places and people have been my greatest influences, and I was to spend more than thirty years in London, from 1964 until 1994. Once there I met Arnaldo Momigliano for the first time. Despite having given me a scholarship, Glasgow University declared that I could not submit my PhD in absentia, and I had to reregister as a student in London. Momigliano had already been in contact with Alan and now indicated that he would be interested in being my supervisor. My experience as a student of Momigliano was the same as that of Anthony Grafton and others; we did not talk much about Agathias, but I too came to share the loyalty of those who attended the weekly seminars he gave at the Warburg Institute from 1967 onwards.[3] He and I would meet in the common room at University College, where he was always solicitous as to whether I was eating enough oranges or yoghourt. His conversation ranged from earlier scholarship unfamiliar to me to whatever historical problem he happened to be thinking about, and from there to personal impressions and observations. He was forthright in his opinions, and he wanted to know mine. Later there were regular letters from his London mansion flat in Hammersmith, where I visited him towards the end of his life, and blue airmail forms from Pisa or Chicago. He sent me to see Henry Chadwick in Oxford, though I was not sure at that stage what questions to ask him, and helped me to publish

1. Alan Cameron, "The Roman Friends of Ammianus," *Journal of Roman Studies,* 54 (1964), 15–28; Alan and Averil Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Late Empire," *Classical Quarterly,* 14 (1964), 316–28.

2. "The Cycle of Agathias," *Journal of Hellenic Studies,* 86 (1966), 6–25 (with Alan Cameron); "Further Thoughts on the Cycle of Agathias," *Journal of Hellenic Studies,* 87 (1967), 131 (with Alan Cameron); cf. also "Anth. Plan. 72: A Propaganda Poem from the Reign of Justin II," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies,* 13 (1966), 101–04 (with Alan Cameron); and Averil Cameron, "Erinna's Distaff," *Classical Quarterly,* n.s.19 (1969), 285–86. Alan's interest in the Greek Anthology and Greek epigrams (which also dated back to his schooldays) led to his books *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford, 1973) and *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes* (Oxford, 1993).

3. Anthony Grafton, "Arnaldo Momigliano: A Pupil's Notes," *The American Scholar,* 60.2 (1991), 235–41; and see Michael Crawford, "L'insegnamento di Arnaldo Momigliano in Gran Bretagna," in: Lellia Cracco Ruggini, ed., *Omaggio ad Arnaldo Momigliano. Storia e storiografia sul mondo antico* (Como, 1989), 27–41. See also Anthony Grafton, "Tell me a Story," *Tablet Magazine*, 1 September 2020; and Peter Brown's moving memoir, "Arnaldo Dante Momigliano, 1908–1987," *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 74 (1988), 405–42.

1970 Byzantine Studies Symposium "Byzantium and Sasanian Iran" Group Photo: Back row (standing) from left to right: Professor Irfan Shahid, A.D.H. Bivar, Averil Cameron, Philip Grierson, Professor Andrew Alföldi, Richard Ettinghausen, Professor Elias J. Bickerman; Front center (seated): Professor Richard Frye. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

my two long articles on the Sasanians and the Merovingians and my first book with the Clarendon Press, as well as putting me in the way of an invitation to speak at the annual Byzantine symposium at Dumbarton Oaks in 1970, where I was the only woman and the youngest speaker by several decades.[4] I submitted the thesis in 1966, and my examiners were Momigliano himself and Peter Brown, who was then a fellow of All Souls, Oxford; this was my first meeting with him, in the year before the publi-

4. "Agathias on the Sassanians," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers,* 23–24 (1969), 1–150; "Agathias on the Early Merovingians," *Annali della Scuola Normale di Pisa,* II.37 (1968), 95–140; *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970).

cation of his book on Augustine. The viva was held with just the three of us in a rather dismal classroom with old school desks and was more of a chat than an examination.

By then I had become an assistant lecturer in classics at King's College London, teaching classical languages and literature, but no ancient history and certainly nothing on the later Roman empire. In 1970, however, I was appointed as Reader in ancient history, succeeding the sole ancient historian, Howard Scullard, a gentle man who patiently endured the lack of appreciation for ancient history in the Classics Department. My teaching changed accordingly, and I now belonged to the History Department as well as Classics. I taught ancient history according to the University of London history syllabus, which meant long periods (until as late as AD 400 for Roman history, recently revised from AD 641) and lectures on political thought from Cicero to Augustine, with St. Paul and Eusebius along the way. It was during the years that followed, and especially through having to teach the Roman empire, that I really developed into a historian.

Before this something had happened that seems extraordinary in retrospect. Both Alan and I were invited to spend a year teaching in graduate school at Columbia University, New York, while Gilbert Highet—as it happened, himself a Scot who had gone from Glasgow University to Balliol College on a Snell exhibition in the early thirties—was on sabbatical. Both our departments agreed, even though I had joined King's College only two years before. The invitation was for the academic year 1967 to 1968, which proved to be the year of student strikes and anti-Vietnam protests, and the shootings of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. My first baby was also due just before we would need to travel and was late in coming. Gilbert Highet himself and the ultra-conservative William Calder III wrote to dissuade us from bringing him with us (Calder suggested leaving him with a "compliant aunt"), but I took him to New York at only four weeks old and began teaching very soon after. I taught graduate classes on Tacitus and Petronius, and one of my students was Froma Zeitlin, later of Princeton, who had returned to graduate school as her children started to grow up.[5] It was a momentous year. Anti-Vietnam war protests were going on, and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were very active; Columbia students were protesting about the university's

5. This resulted in two articles by myself, "Petronius and Plato," *Classical Quarterly,* n.s. 19 (1969), 367–70; "Myth and Meaning in Petronius: Some Modern Comparisons," *Latomu,s* 29 (1970), 397–425; a paper by Froma Zeitlin followed: "Romanus Petronius: A Study of the *Troiae Halosis* and the *Bellum Civile*," *Latomus* 30 (1971), 56–82.

policies and blockading the main buildings, and we had to teach our graduate classes in our apartment. I also encountered the early stages of second-wave feminism at the annual meeting of the American Philological Society in Atlanta, at which women classicists were talking of forming a women's caucus to press for inclusion on speakers' panels. We returned to England in the summer of 1968, soon after the May events in Paris, and when the Women's Liberation Movement in the UK was beginning to take shape. Living in New York and being in the U.S. had been a mind-bending experience and a challenging introduction to teaching in a very different university system.

The 1970s were a crucial decade for me. Arnaldo Momigliano retired from University College and was succeeded by Fergus Millar in 1976, and Keith Hopkins was professor of sociology at Brunel University just outside London. The weekly ancient history seminar at the Institute of Classical Studies brought ancient historians together from across London and outside. It was a fixture every Thursday (and still is), and under Fergus Millar it included graduate students and anyone who happened to be visiting and interested, but interventions by Hopkins sometimes transformed it into a gladiatorial contest. I had become interested in the four books of Latin hexameters written in Constantinople by the North African poet Corippus in praise of the Emperor Justin II, justifying his succession to Justinian in 565, and was working on an edition, translation, and commentary.[6] This work had been neglected by historians and also turned out to be extremely important for Byzantine art historians, for example with its description of the triumphal ceiling decoration in the palace and that on Justinian's funeral pall; it is also central for understanding the working of late antique panegyric. Alan was then working on his book on circus factions, and Corippus' poem contains a long section on the four factions and the ceremonial of the hippodrome and the consulship. It also contains a lengthy prayer to the Virgin put into the mouth of the Empress Sophia, and this set me off exploring the cult of the Virgin in the sixth century and earlier.[7]

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6. Corippus, *In laudem Iustini minoris libri quattuor* (London, 1976). I probably knew about Corippus because Frank Goodyear, of the Latin Department at Bedford College and known to me through Alan, and his friend David R. Shackleton Bailey were working on a critical edition of Corippus's other poem, the *Iohannis*; published in 1970, it approached the poem entirely as an opportunity for clever conjectures.

7. Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976); Averil Cameron, "Corippus's Poem on Justin II: A Terminus of Antique Art?," *Annali della Scuola Normale di Pisa,* III.5 (1975), 129–65; "The Empress Sophia," *Byzantion,* 45 (1975), 5–21; "The Early Religious Policies of Justin II," in: *The Orthodox Churches and the West*, ed. Derek Baker [Studies in Church History, 13] (Oxford, 1976), 51–68; "Early

However my teaching was focused on the Roman empire up to AD 400. A. H. M. Jones's *The Later Roman Empire* had come out in 1964, and the very different *The World of Late Antiquity* by Peter Brown in 1971. I reviewed *The World of Late Antiquity* and was not then sure about what was evidently a very original way of writing about the later Roman empire; I had not yet done enough wider historical reading to realise just how new it was, but I found it exhilarating.[8] The book almost completely bypassed the standard questions, demolished the issue of imperial decline by demonstrating the vibrancy of late antique culture, and introduced a far wider geographical perspective. It also drew on visual as well as textual evidence and invited readers to draw on their imagination to an extent that was completely unfamiliar.

I was by now reading major modern works including M. I. Rostovtzeff on the social and economic history of the Roman empire. Perry Anderson's Marxist *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* came out in 1974, and Keith Hopkins's insistence on the use of sociological and quantitative models and comparative history, especially the comparison between the Roman empire and Han China,[9] offered a further alternative to the standard interpretations. These differences led to culture wars between Keith Hopkins and Fergus Millar when Hopkins published a scathing review-article about Millar's large book, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1977) in the *Journal of Roman Studies* for 1978, accusing it of piling up facts and lacking the kind of larger-scale sociological thinking he advocated himself. By then I was a member of the editorial committee for the *Journal of Roman Studies*, and Millar himself was the Editor; I did not think the review article should have been published, but Millar felt he ought not to intervene. He in turn had written an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1977 which seemed to cast aspersions on the work of Momigliano, whom he had succeeded only months before, for which Momigliano never forgave him. All this was painful to watch and illustrated the deep differences that could exist between historians committed to competing ways of doing history. Some years later I became the Editor of the *Journal of Roman Studies* myself, and my years of involvement with the *Journal* both as Editor and as a member of the committee were among the

Byzantine Kaiserkritik: Two Case Histories," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies,* 3 (1977), 1–17; "The Theotokos in Sixth-century Constantinople," *Journal of Theological Studies,* n.s. 29 (1978), 79–108.

8. *English Historical Review,* 88 (1971), 116–17.

9. See his two books, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge, 1978) and *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge, 1983), especially the first. Hopkins had previously spent some time teaching at Hong Kong University.

most educative of my life. My duties also extended to overseeing the Roman Society's new monograph series, including Charlotte Roueché's *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (1989), which was followed a few years later by *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias* (1993). Between them they covered ground directly relevant to circus factions in late antiquity and to the wider issue of cities and the changing nature of urbanism which was central to the historical questions in which I was now engaged.

Late Roman archaeology had been developing since the 1970s, especially with the work of Italian archaeologists led by Andrea Carandini. John Hayes's *Late Roman Pottery*, published in 1972, now provided a secure dating system for the many thousands of pottery sherds found on Roman sites and made reliable stratigraphy possible. The UNESCO Save Carthage project of the 1970s brought seven teams of international archaeologists to the site of ancient Carthage, near the modern city of Tunis, among them one from the University of Michigan led by John Humphrey. He invited me, unusually, to visit while the excavations were going on with a view to writing about them from a historian's perspective at an early stage. This resulted in two visits to Tunisia during which I drove myself in the dig's old Peugeot to late Roman sites all over the country and got to know Edith Wightman and Colin Wells, who were leading the Canadian team. During my work on Agathias I had necessarily spent time on Procopius, whose history Agathias continued,[10] and as well as his account of the campaigns of Belisarius and his successors in the *Wars*, his *Buildings* has a detailed section on Carthage and the building activity that followed the Byzantine reconquest of North Africa from the Vandals in 534. I was able to explore the sites and the topography at first hand and could see for myself the signs of transition and remodelling in what had been typical Roman provincial cities as public buildings and spaces were built over or turned into churches, or where small settlements were fortified against attack. It was also an important lesson in how far textual sources can and cannot be used by archaeologists, particularly when as here with the *Buildings* the main text in question is actually a panegyric. Corippus's other lengthy hexameter poem was on the campaigns in North Africa of the Byzantine general John Troglita in the late 540s, and while this is much less rich in detail than the panegyric on Justin II, it was also useful for its topographic indications. I was also struck by the way in which the Justinianic reconquest was followed by the introduction of the Greek language and the gradual arrival in North Africa of the cults of eastern saints. My direct experience of excavation had otherwise

10. My first publication was an abridged translation of Procopius with introduction: Averil Cameron, *Procopius* (New York, 1967).

been limited to a very brief (and wet) spell at Verulamium (St. Albans) while still an undergraduate, and even though what I wrote at the time was necessarily provisional, these visits to Tunisia were important for me as well as memorable in themselves.[11] They stood me in very good stead later when I was involved, as I frequently was, as editor or author in dealing with urban change in the late antique period.

Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* was published in 1973, and unlike Momigliano I was drawn to the idea that history-writing was less a matter of finding objective truth about the past than of understanding the narratives created by historians themselves. By the time that White's collection, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation,* appeared in 1987, I had been further influenced by discussions with others in Princeton and by historical and anthropology seminars there, and by reading the earlier publications of Michel Foucault. Consciousness of the power of discourse and literary strategies to influence history lay behind my book on Procopius when it was published in 1985 and my Sather lectures in Berkeley in 1986. It has been an ongoing driver of much of my work since.

My interest in the role of the Virgin Mary in public and private piety in late antiquity led me to argue that this became more obvious during the later sixth century. Although Justinian's Hagia Sophia, finished in 537, had

11. The immediate result was my article "Byzantine Africa: the Literary Evidence," in: *University of Michigan, Excavations at Carthage VII*, ed. John Humphrey (Michigan, 1982), 29–62, followed by "Corippus's *Johannis*: Epic of Byzantine Africa," *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar,* 4 (1983), 167–80; "Gelimer's Laughter: the Case of Byzantine Africa," in: *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity*, ed. Frank M. Clover and R. Stephen Humphreys (Madison, Wisc., 1989), 171–90; and "The Byzantine Reconquest of North Africa and the Impact of Greek Culture," *Graeco-Arabica,* V (1993), 153–65. John Humphrey's own book, *Roman Circuses. Arenas for Chariot Racing* (London), was published in 1986. I returned to some of the theoretical issues much later in "Ideologies and Agendas in Late Antique Studies," in: *Late Antique Archaeology 1: Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, ed. Luke Lavan and William Bowden (Leiden, 2003), 3–21; to Vandal and Byzantine North Africa in: "Vandal and Byzantine Africa," in: *Cambridge Ancient History* XIV, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge, 2000), 552–69; and to Procopius's *Buildings* in: "Conclusion, *De Aedificiis*: le texte de Procope et les réalités," *Antiquité tardive,e* 8 (2000), 177–80. Yvette Duval's *Loca sanctorum Africae. Le culte des martyrs en Afrique du IVe au VIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Rome) also came out in 1982, and see Yves Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine, IVe–VIIe,* Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 314 (Rome, 2003). The discussion about the physical changes in late antique cities in North Africa and elsewhere has been ongoing: see Anna Leone, *Changing Townscapes in North Africa from Late Antiquity to the Arab Conquest* (Bari, 2007); *The End of the Pagan City. Religion, Economy and Urbanism in Late Antique North Africa* (Oxford, 2013).

no figural mosaics, the importance of Mary in the sixth-century liturgical hymns of Romanos, her depiction in apse mosaics, and the stories that attached to her in relation to the siege of Constantinople in 626 pointed to my mind in the same direction as the early indications of devotion to icons.[12] It has been argued in the past that the Akathistos hymn addressed to Mary that is still sung today in the Orthodox church was composed by Romanos, and its present opening is connected with the siege of 626, but I was persuaded by the argument of Leena Mari Peltomaa that the hymn itself belongs to the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon in 451,[13] and I was intrigued by the epithets for the Virgin so amply demonstrated there and in other Greek texts from the fifth century onwards.[14] My arguments about a religious change in the late sixth century were taken much further by Mischa Meier although countered by Cyril Mango. I continue to believe, against Leslie Brubaker, that it was from then onwards rather than a century later that icons became important.[15] The rise of icons also seemed

12. "The Theotokos in Sixth-century Constantinople," *Journal of Theological Studies,* n.s. 29 (1978), 79–108; "A Nativity Poem from the Sixth century AD," *Classical Philology,* 79 (1979), 222–32; "The Virgin's Robe," *Byzantion,* 49 (1979), 42–56; these came together in "Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-century Byzantium," *Past and Presen,t* 84 (1979), 3–35. Later I supervised the PhD thesis of Niki Tsironi dealing in particular with the ninth-century Marian homiletics of George of Nicomedia, on which see Niki Tsironi, "From Piety to Liturgy: the Cult of the Mother of God in the Middle Byzantine Era," in: *The Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan and Athens, 2000), 91–102, and I wrote more on Mary myself, especially in connection with conferences and exhibitions, where I became familiar with the important work of art historians including Maria Vassilaki and Annemarie Weyl Carr: see "The Early Cult of the Virgin," in: *The Mother of God*, 3–15; "The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Religious Development and Myth-making," in: *The Church and Mary*, ed. Robert Swanson [Studies in Church History 39] (Woodbridge, 2004), 1–21; "Introduction," in: *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Aldershot, 2004), xxvii–xxxii; "The Mother of God in Byzantium: Relics, Icons, Texts," in: *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Mary Cunningham (Farnham, 2011), 1–5. On Romanos, see now Thomas Arentzen, *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist* (Philadelphia, 2017), and more widely *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, ed. Thomas Arentzen and Mary B. Cunningham (Cambridge, 2019).

13. Leena Mari Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden, 2001).

14. Stephen Shoemaker has taken me to task and argued for earlier devotion to the Virgin, but the apocryphal texts on which he relies are hard to date securely; see for instance Stephen Shoemaker, *Mary in Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven, 2016).

15. Mischa Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians: Kontingenzverfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung im 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Göttingen, 2003), he has published a lot more recently with a similar argument; Cyril Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokoupolis," in: *Mother of God*, pp.17–25; Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, ca. 680–ca.850. A History* (Cambridge, 2011).

to me to be intimately connected with language and with the expression of theology in contemporary texts; I did not see texts and images as contrasting with each other, still less in conflict, and for me they went together.[16] It was logical for me if perhaps surprising to others that when my attention was caught by Procopius's failure to mention a miraculous image at Edessa whose discovery during the siege of 544 was described by Evagrius, I should devote my inaugural lecture as professor of ancient history at King's in 1980 to arguing against the persistent attempts to identify this (lost) object with the Shroud of Turin.[17] I soon found out that nothing would persuade the true believers in the Shroud's authenticity.

When I had the chance of a year's stay as a Visitor at the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton in 1977–78 I gave as my subject the book on Procopius that logically followed from the work I had done during my PhD,[18] but in practice I was thinking much more about the cult of the Virgin and gave the expected lecture on that subject instead. I had opted for the Institute over Dumbarton Oaks, with its wonderful library on Byzantium, because by now I was a single parent with two school-age children, and the Institute is ideal for visiting families.[19] It was an important stay. My horizons were broadened by Clifford Geertz's anthropology seminar and the Davis seminar in the History Department of the university, and I got to know and love the Firestone Library. It was to be the first of many later visits to Princeton. I also became aware of Michel Foucault and read *The Order of Things* as well as *Discipline and Punish*, though not yet the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, published in French in 1976. In the end my book on Procopius was not published until 1985, and it was hard to finish as I was by then more interested in other issues.[20]

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16. "The Language of Images: Icons and Christian Representation," in: *The Church and the Arts*, ed. Diana Wood [Studies in Church History 28] (Oxford, 1992), 1–42.

17. *The Sceptic and the Shroud* (King's College London, 1980); see "The History of the Image of Edessa: the Telling of a Story," *Okeanos. Festschrift I. Sevcenko* [Harvard Ukrainian Studies, 7] (1984), 80–94; and "The Mandylion and Byzantine Iconoclasm," in: *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation, Papers from a Colloquium held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf [Villa Spelman Colloquia, 6] (Bologna, 1998), 33–54.

18. As in: "The 'Scepticism' of Procopius," *Historia,* 15 (1966), 6–25.

19. As described recently by the French mathematician and winner of the Fields Medal Cédric Villani, in: *The Birth of a Theorem. A Mathematical Adventure* (Eng. trans. London, 2015). During their stay he and his family lived like us in Van Neumann Drive on the edge of the Institute housing complex.

20. *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1985). In some ways it certainly belongs to its time, for instance in its insistence on genre and as some might say its classicising approach, but the recent deluge of publications on Procopius has shown that the work I did

On my return I reviewed the two books on Constantine and his time by Timothy Barnes and wrote about Eusebius in a volume in honour of Arnaldo Momigliano.[21] Both Constantine and Eusebius proved to be continuing preoccupations: teaching Constantine as a special subject led to a long engagement with the subject and the period;[22] my later translation and commentary on Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* with Stuart G. Hall, my colleague in the Theology Department at King's College, took shape from an informal seminar with other London colleagues and was enriched by the experience of giving several lectures and other seminars in Berkeley and at the Collège de France in Paris during the 1980s.[23] I was also working with Judith Herrin on a publication arising from another seminar held at King's with Alan Cameron in 1974–76, and this came out in 1984.[24] Though the seminar was held in the Classics Department, this was a more Byzantine project. The *Parastaseis* is a puzzling text, seemingly a collection of notes (*parastaseis*) on places and monuments in Constantinople including late antique statuary, which we dated to the eighth century and which became part of the later work known as the *Patria*. It reveals a world in which the historical Constantine had become the subject of legend, and when people

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in the main more than fifty years ago still remains basic: see "Writing about Procopius Then and Now," in: *Procopius of Caesarea: Literary and Historical Interpretations*, ed. Christopher Lillington-Martin and Elodie Turquois (Milton Park, 2017), 13–25.

21. Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA, 1981); *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, MA, 1982); see "Constantinus christianius," *Journal of Roman Studies,* 73 (1983), 184–90; and "Eusebius of Caesarea and the Rethinking of History," in: *Tria Corda. Scritti in Onore di Arnaldo Momigliano*, ed. Emilio Gabba (Como, 1983), 71–88.

22. "Form and Meaning: the Vita Constantini and the Vita Antonii," in: *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000), 72–88; "The Reign of Constantine, AD 306–337," in *Cambridge Ancient History* XII, ed. Alan Bowman, Averil Cameron, and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge, 2005). 90–109; "Constantine and the Peace of the Church," *Cambridge History of Christianity* I, ed. Margaret Mitchell and Frances Young (Cambridge, 2006), 538–51; "Constantius and Constantine: An Exercise in Publicity," in: *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor*, ed. Elizabeth Hartley, Jane Hawkes and Martin Henig (York, 2006), 18–30; "Constantine and Christianity," ibid., 96–103; "Il potere di Costantino. Dimensioni e limiti del potere imperiale," in: *Costantino I. Enciclopedia Costantiniana sulla figura e l'immagine dell'imperatore del cosidetto Editto di Milano 313–2013* (Rome, 2013), I, 105–15.

23. "Eusebius's *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine," in: *Portraits: The Biographical in the Literature of the Empire*, ed. Simon Swain and Mark Edwards (Oxford, 1997), 245–74; *Eusebius, Life of Constantine* [Clarendon Ancient History Series] (Oxford, 1999) (with Stuart G. Hall).

24. *Constantinople in the Eighth Century. The* Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai, ed. Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin, in conjunction with Alan Cameron, Robin Cormack, and Charlotte Roueché [Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, 10] (Leiden, 1984).

could often provide only fanciful identifications of the late antique statuary that still stood in the city and which they invested with malignant powers. Our choice of subject fitted both the interest I had had in the city of Constantinople and Alan's work on chariot-racing and the hippodrome. He moved to a chair at Columbia University in New York in 1977, and the work on publication was undertaken by myself and Judith Herrin, but the idea that the *Parastaseis* was the work of a group of uneasy officials was his. We were insistent on the need to distinguish evidence from the *Parastaseis* from the later *Patria*, and our choice of text was prescient, in that Gilbert Dagron and Alexander Kazhdan each separately addressed the issue of the developing legends about Constantine in 1984 and 1987.[25] In the 1980s Alexander Kazhdan was grappling with the intellectual chasm between his previous academic life in Soviet Russia and the new conditions of Dumbarton Oaks and America.[26] He reviewed our book in detail in 1987;[27] subsequent publications have also moved the discussion on in various ways, but ours remains the only commentary on the *Parastaseis*.[28]

At the same time I was preparing my Sather lectures, due to be delivered at Berkeley in the spring semester of 1986 on the theme of Christianity and the rhetoric of empire.[29] I wanted to argue that the huge mass of writing produced by Christians especially from the fourth century onwards played an important role in the process of the gradual Christianization of the Roman empire. It was often said that few contemporaries would have been aware of

25. Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire* (Paris, 1984); Alexander P. Kazhdan, "'Constantin imaginaire': Byzantine Legends of the Ninth Century about Constantine the Great," *Byzantion,* 57 (1987), 196–250.

26. "In Search for the Heart of Byzantium," *Byzantion,* 51 (1981), 330–32; Alexander P. Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*: *An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, DC, 1982); Alexander Kazhdan and Anthony Cutler, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History," *Byzantion,* 52 (1982), 429–78. I was struck already by the aura of exoticism with which Byzantium was often surrounded: "Byzantium. The Exotic Mirage," *Times Higher Education Supplement,* 933, September 21, 1990, 13–15.

27. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift,* 40.2 (1987), 400–03.

28. Albrecht Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos* (Bonn, 1988); Liz James, "'Pray Not to Fall into Temptation and Be on Your Guard': Pagan Statues in Christian Constantinople," *Gesta*, 35, no. 1 (1996), 12–20; Benjamin Anderson, "Classified Knowledge: the Epistemology of Statuary in the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai,*" *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies,* 35 (2011), 1–19; Paolo Odorico, "Du recueil à l'invention du texte: le cas des *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai,*" *Byzantinische Zeitschrift,* 107.2 (2014), 755–84; Paroma Chatterjee, "Viewing the Unknown in Eighth-century Constantinople," *Gesta,* 56.2 (2017), 137–49.

29. *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire. The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991).

it, but I was struck by its sheer quantity,[30] as well as by the impact of regular preaching, and argued that it had effect because the writers attuned themselves to the rhetorical world of their time and were thus able to be persuasive. I also argued that the many apocryphal narratives and the mass of hagiographic writing and ascetic literature spoke to a thirst for stories and opened new imaginative possibilities in a society in the process of change. Imagination and fiction were as important as argument in the many-sided religious world of late antiquity and the Christian tendency towards stories, figurality (and indeed fiction) fitted well with my argument. I approached the subject chronologically and had to start by getting to grip with New Testament scholarship. I saw Christian writing as deeply connected with its social and political context, although my use of the term "totalizing discourse" in relation to the sixth century needed increasing modification as I began to concern myself with the seventh century and later. This fascination with Christian literature has continued to occupy me throughout my career.[31]

Arriving in Berkeley in a mild January from a cold grey England was a revelation, as were its coffee and sandwich culture, the urbanism of San Francisco, and the beauty and grandeur of the Pacific coastline. My graduate seminar on Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* included several members who went on to become well known academics themselves, but I missed overlapping with Peter Brown, who was then in Princeton. Nevertheless my book on Procopius had been published in the previous year in his then new series with the University of California Press, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage.[32] Our lives have gone in parallel or overlapped at different times, always in ways that were important for me.

In 1981 I had been a Summer Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks in steamy Washington and met Elizabeth Clark in one of the places on Wisconsin

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30. See also "Education and Literary Culture," in: *Cambridge Ancient History,* XIII , ed. Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge, 1997), 665–707.

31. "New Themes and Styles in Byzantine Literature, 7th-8th Centuries," in: Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Sources* (Princeton, 1992), 81–105; "New Themes and Styles in Later Greek Literature—a Title Revisited," in: *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity. Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Aldershot, 2006), 11–28; "New Themes and Styles Revisited Again: Literature, Theology and Social and Political Change," in: *New Themes, New Styles in the Eastern Mediterranean, Christian, Jewish and Islamic Encounters, 5th–8th Centuries*, ed. Hagit Amirav and Francesco Celia [Late Antique History and Religion, 16] (Leuven, 2017), 1–18.

32. *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London and Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985); see also "History as Text: Coping with Procopius," in: *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350–900*, ed. Christopher Holdsworth and T. Peter Wiseman (Exeter, 1986), 53–67.

Avenue. This proved the beginning of another lifetime friendship. In the next few years she published her early books on *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends* (1982), *Women in the Early Church* (1983), and the *Life of Melania* (1984). I had first become attuned to the theme of ancient women in 1967 during our year at Columbia, and in 1989 Amélie Kuhrt and I edited a volume arising from the ancient history seminar at the Institute of Classical Studies and containing chapters on women in a number of different ancient societies.[33] Elizabeth Clark's work reinforced my view of the centrality of discourse in forming attitudes and linked early Christian writings about the Virgin Mary with general attitudes to women in early Christianity. To this were added the tales about female saints like Thecla in the second- and third-century apocrypha and the often exotic lives of late antique female ascetic heroines like Pelagia or Mary of Egypt.[34] I was less interested in finding out about the actual lives of Christian women than in the sometimes extreme language used about them, which was itself connected with the broader issue of Christian asceticism. The same period saw the publication in English of the first three volumes of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*,[35] and Peter Brown was at work on *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, published in 1988. All this formed the background to my Sather lectures in 1986. I was drawn towards critics who were exploring asceticism in terms of the discourses of deconstruction and postmodernism,[36] and published an article on the textual representation of early Christian women in a collection I edited with the title *History as Text*.[37]

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33. *Images of Women in Antiquity* (London, 1989). Another seminar at King's College was on the *Life* of the patriarch Eutychius by Eustratius, an important source for the sixth century: "Eustratius's Life of the Patriarch Eutychius and the Fifth Ecumenical Council," in: *Kathegetria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey on her 80th Birthday*, ed. Julian Chrysostomides (Camberley, 1988), 225–47; "Models of the Past in the Late Sixth century: The *Life* of the Patriarch Eutychius," in: *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. Graham Clarke (Canberra, 1990), 205–23.

34. Pierre Petitmengin, *Pelagie la pénitente: metamorphoses d'une légende*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1981–84); Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert* (London, 1987); and Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Holy Women of the Christian Orient* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987)—all belonged to the 1980s.

35. See "Redrawing the Map: Christian Territory after Foucault," *Journal of Roman Studies,* 76 (1986), 266–71.

36. "Ascetic Closure and the End of Antiquity," in: *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York, 1995), 147–61.

37. "Virginity as Metaphor: Women and the Rhetoric of Early Christianity," in: *History as Text*, ed. Averil Cameron (London, 1989), 184–205; and see "Early Christianity and the Discourse of Female Desire," in: *Women in Ancient Societies. An Illusion of the Night*, ed. Susan Fischler, Leonie Archer, and Maria Wyke (Basingstoke, 1994), 152–68 (repr. with an

By now I was becoming interested in the emergence of Islam[38] and wanted to look more closely at the transition from the sixth century to the seventh and eighth; I was able to do so during a Wolfson Research Readership from the British Academy in the early 1990s during which I was able to visit many of the late antique sites in Israel and travel to Cyprus (Jordan was to come later). I was also reading the textual evidence on icons, much of it difficult to disentangle. Given my preoccupation with the power of discourse I was struck by the violence of the language used against rival Christian groups and Jews, not only in theological texts but also in chronicles and other writing; it raised broader questions of intolerance, [39] which have since been much taken up by others, and was a thread that ran through much of my work thereafter, extending to the nature of heresiological works as well as to an ongoing interest in how the Byzantines tried to establish and enforce orthodoxy.[40] This reading of Greek Christian texts also lay behind a contribution on dialogues and disputations in 1991. I was becoming more aware of the mass of late antique material in Syriac and already argued that

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"Afterword" in: *The Religious History of the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, ed. John A. North and Simon R.F. Price [Oxford Readings in Classical Studies] (Oxford, 2011), 505–30).

38. Especially after the conference held in Madison, Wisconsin in 1984, published as *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (n. 11). I went on to start the series Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam together with Lawrence I. Conrad and Geoffrey King, published by the Darwin Press, Princeton, and co-edited or edited three volumes of workshop papers: *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Sources* (Princeton, 1992) (with Lawrence I. Conrad); *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East II: Land Use and Settlement Patterns* (Princeton, 1994) (with Geoffrey R. D. King); *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East III: States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton: 1995). The sceptical *Hagarism* by Patricia Crone and Michael Cook had been published in 1977, and we were much engaged with the source problems for early Islam; a key later publication in the series was Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Analysis of the Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Islam* (Princeton, 1997).

39. "Apologetics in the Roman Empire—a Genre of Intolerance?" in: *"Humana sapit". Études d'Antiquité tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini*, ed. Jean-Michel Carrié and Rita Lizzi Testa [Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive, 3] (Paris-Turnhout, 2002), 219–27.

40. "The Jews in Seventh-century Palestine," *Scripta Classica Israelica*, 13 (1994), 75–93; "Texts as Weapons: Polemic in the Byzantine Dark Ages," in: *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. Alan Bowman and Greg Woolf (Cambridge, 1994), 198–215; "Byzantines and Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies,* 20 (1996), 249–74; "Blaming the Jews: the Seventh-century Invasions of Palestine in Context," *Travaux et Mémoires,* 14 (*Mélanges Gilbert Dagron*) (2002), 57–78; "Jews and Heretics—a Category Error?," in: *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen, 2003), 345–60; "How to Read Heresiology," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 33.3 (Fall 2003), 471–92; also in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies. Gender, Asceticism and Historiography*, ed. Dale Martin and Patricia Cox Miller (Durham, NC, 2005), 193–212.

the *Adversus Iudaeos* "debates" should be read in the context of a wider study of dialogues in Greek, to which I turned in earnest much later.[41]

I had often attended the annual Byzantine symposia founded by Anthony Bryer at Birmingham in 1967, and by 1983 I was chair of the British National Byzantine Committee. Bryer and I founded the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies in 1983 on the model of the Hellenic and Roman Societies, with Bryer as secretary, myself as chair, and Steven Runciman as President. I was happy enough to use the term Byzantine in my publications, and I wrote on the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* in 1987,[42] but I was not seen as a Byzantinist, for example by Donald Nicol, the Koraes Professor of Byzantine History, Language and Literature and head of the tiny department of Byzantine and Modern Greek at King's College. At the same time I had been impressed by the structuralist approach to late antiquity in Evelyne Patlagean's *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e–7e siècle* (Paris, 1977), which I had reviewed in *Past and Present*,[43] and was identifying myself more and more with the field of late antiquity as it developed after Peter Brown's *World of Late Antiquity*.

Both these concerns—late antiquity and Byzantium—carried forward into the 1990s, but the focus of my teaching changed for two reasons: first, the move away from the restrictive University of London syllabus taught until then in all its large constituent colleges, King's College included, and second, a decision at King's to develop the teaching of Byzantium. I became the founding director of the new Centre for Hellenic Studies and oversaw the establishment of the digital *Prosopography of the Byzantine Empire* at King's College. For the first time I began to teach courses on later periods and gave a second inaugural lecture on popular and academic attitudes to Byzantium.[44] As with late antiquity, I was interested in the

41. "Disputations, Polemical Literature and the Formation of Opinion in the Early Byzantine Period," in: *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East*, ed. Gerrit J. Reinink and Herman L. J. Vanstiphout [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 42] (Leuven, 1991), 91–108.

42. "The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies,*" in: *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. David Cannadine and Simon R. F. Price [Past and Present Publications] (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36

43. "Late Antiquity: the Total View," *Past and Present,* 88 (1980), 129–35.

44. *The Use and Abuse of Byzantium*, Inaugural Lecture, King's College London (1992); see "Byzance dans le débat sur l'Orientalisme," in: *Byzance et l'Europe, XVIe–XX siècle*, ed. Marie-France Auzépy (Paris, 2003), 227–42; and "Byzantium between East and West," in: *Présence de Byzance*, ed. Jean-Michel Spieser (Lausanne, 2007), 112–33.

ways in which Byzantium has been seen, and viewed it through the lens of Edward Said's conception of Orientalism. The question of how to approach Byzantium has been a continuing preoccupation ever since, and in 2008, after a lecture I had given at Princeton, I set out my feeling that when not exoticized, Byzantium tends to be absent or at least side-lined.[45] This provoked lively responses, and later I went on to set out some of the difficulties in approaching Byzantium and Byzantine culture in *Byzantine Matters*.[46] Moving into Byzantium proper from late antiquity took me into a very different academic milieu, and, although there are now many more Byzantinists, one which remains underdeveloped and prone to inherited and nationalist biases; I argued at the end of *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity* that Byzantinists would do well to pay more attention to late antiquity, and indeed the relation of late antiquity to that of Byzantine studies has become a key issue.[47] I have been more relaxed about periodization and nomenclature than some others because Byzantium was necessarily a hybrid. It grew out of the Roman empire, but with its very long history it was also medieval and had an inherited Greek culture and language. No state can stay the same for hundreds of years—Rome itself did not and neither did Byzantium nor the world around it.

Moving back to Oxford in 1994 to be the head of a college was a change of a different order altogether. From then until 2010 I was the Warden of Keble College, one of the largest colleges in the University of Oxford, and a college with an interesting history. I was its first woman head and one of the first three women elected in the same year to head former men's Oxford colleges. In my first year there was only one woman fellow, and I did my best in the next few years to bring in more. Being Warden was an absorbing and rewarding role that brought me close to the actual working of the University (which now has twenty-four thousand students, half of them graduates) in ways of which I had been entirely unaware as an undergraduate. It also gave me access to the extraordinary riches of the Bodleian Library and daily contact with academics and students in an equally extraordinary range of disciplines. The same curiosity

45. "The Absence of Byzantium," *Nea Hestia*, January 2008, 4–59 (in English and Greek).

46. *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton, 2014); "Thinking with Byzantium," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 21 (2011), 39–57; "Seeing Byzantium: A Personal Response," in: *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art. Papers from the Forty-first Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Courtauld Institute of Art and King's College, London, March 2009,* ed. Liz James and Antony Eastmond (Farnham, 2013), 311–18.

47. See "Late Antiquity and Byzantium—an Identity Problem," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies,* 40.1 (2016), 27–37.

that drove me to continue thinking and writing also now led me to seek to understand and where possible to influence the practices of an extremely complex institution. I was closely involved in the running of the University overall and in the relations between the central University and its then thirty-eight colleges. Being one of the three or four judges for the Wolfson History Prize, given for a significant but also accessible contribution to history, for which we had to assess up to two hundred books every year in all types and periods of history, was also an enjoyable and educative experience. In addition, I chaired the national committee dealing with changes to the fabric of English cathedrals and led a controversial review of the "Royal Peculiars" (Westminster Abbey, St George's Chapel, Windsor, the Chapel Royal, and the Chapels in the Tower of London and Hampton Court Palace).

Some Oxford roles I was assigned related to the way in which the history of the University was intertwined with that of the Church of England, for instance chairing the committees appointing "Select Preachers" to deliver the University Sermons,[48] or deciding who should be invited to give the regular Bampton lectures, founded in 1780 "to confirm and establish the Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics." Keble College itself was founded in 1870 to promote the aims of the Oxford Movement, which began from the Assize Sermon preached by John Keble in 1833 in the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, and portraits of John Keble and his friend John Henry Newman hang in its senior common room.[49] The Chapel at Keble is a masterpiece of Victorian Gothic architecture and decoration, and its greatest treasure is the original of *The Light of the World*, painted by the young Holman Hunt in 1853 and given to the College in 1873 by one of its many Tractarian benefactors. Keble's formal religious affiliation ended when it adopted new Statutes in 1969, but Oxford's remaining religious links are complex, and Keble College's role in the history of the Church of England is an important one. The College is still the patron of some sixty-five livings in the Church of England, and my duties sometimes included participating in the appointments of incumbents. I was surprised that no history of the College had been written, and

48. I gave the Sermon on the Grace of Humility, endowed in 1684 together with one on the Sin of Pride, and discussed the phenomenon of false humility: Averil Cameron, "On the Grace of Humility," *Theology*, March/April (1999), 97–104.

49. Newman "went over" to the Roman Catholic Church in 1845 and was the most prominent of several highly placed Tractarians to convert; this was a bitter blow to John Keble, and afterwards the only occasion on which he and Newman met was in 1866, when Keble was dying.

with Ian Archer I later set about editing an illustrated volume, *Keble Past and Present*, which came out in 2008. It was indeed a loss that after the move I did little course teaching, and it was often frustrating when committees and other duties kept me from seminars I really wanted to attend, but new interests and the outstanding doctoral students I was able to supervise were an ongoing joy.

The power of language to change history continued to intrigue me after I moved to Oxford. I was still struck by the vast amount written by Christians in the name of trying to establish correct belief and now also by the problem of reconciling written authorities and visual depictions (in art-historical terms the problem of text and image), the ways in which Byzantine religious art itself acted as an authoritative language, and the manner in which these habits of thought and language carried over into late antique and Byzantine thinking and writing about Judaism and Islam. Recent years have seen one of the great achievements of the last decades, the publication of new critical editions, translations, and commentaries on the acts of the major ecumenical councils, and this also raises the question of the relation of historical scholarship on late antiquity and Byzantium to traditional patristics. That was the theme of the lecture I gave at Duke University in 2002 in connection with the journal *Church History*, and of my address to the North American Patristic Society in Chicago in 2009, and I made it the subject of my Ptarmigan Lecture to the Faculty of Theology and Religion (formerly simply Theology) at Oxford in 2018.[50] I continued to insist on the need for historians to address the role played by Christian literature, to interpret this broadly, and to develop a better methodology for integrating it into historical writing on late antiquity and (especially) Byzantium. I see the often difficult reception of Byzantium within this frame: Byzantium is an idea, even a mirage, the term I used many years ago (above, n. 26), as we see in the many narratives constructed round it.[51] They

50. "Christian Literature and Church History," Duke University, 2002; "Not the End of the Affair: Discourse and Resistance in Late Antiquity," North American Patristic Society, Chicago, 2009; it was also the theme of my lecture on "Late Antiquity and Literature: What's the Problem?" at Elizabeth Clark's retirement conference at Duke in 2014; these remain unpublished, but see "Christian Literature and Christian History," in: *Enrico Norelli, Markion und der biblische Kanon, Averil Cameron, Christian Literature and Christian History*, *Hans-Lietzmann-Vorlesungen* 11/15 (Berlin, 2016), 29–53; and "Late Antiquity and Patristics: Partners or Rivals?," *Journal of Early Christian Studies,* 28.2 (2020), 283–302.

51. "Byzantinists and Others," in: *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean*, ed. Daniëlle Slootjes and Mariette Verhoeven (Leiden, 2019), 6–23; "Byzantium Now—Contested Territory or Excluded Middle?" *Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies,* 6 (2020), 91–111.

rely heavily on assumptions based on its visual art and the persistent appropriation of Byzantium in poetry and literature, including works by Yeats, French dramatists, and the prose of Edward Gibbon.

Can religion in late antiquity be reduced to "culture"?[52] That is a worry I have had about the way that the field of late antiquity has developed, especially in the United States. It was a breakthrough when in the 1960s Peter Brown chose to write a psychological and contextual study of St Augustine, and when a few years later Timothy Barnes wrote his (very different) Oxford doctoral thesis in ancient history on Tertullian, but without ever being a theologian myself I am convinced that historians cannot ignore theology; indeed Christian "theology" was itself the result of a historical process in which writing and interpretation were critical. I see the formulation of what was considered to be orthodox as part of this process, and the identification of heresy as a gradual exclusion of unacceptable or losing views. I do not take Christian dogma or patristic statements as given, and I believe that historians dealing with religious texts and religious developments in late antiquity must recognize that theology and theological scholarship cannot be regarded as wholly separate from what they are doing themselves. In 2015 Elizabeth Clark published a thoughtful paper in this journal with the title "From Patristics to History in the *Catholic Historical Review,"* in which she surveyed the coverage of book reviews in the journal over its century of history and documented the changes in the study of early Christian history that they represent. She distanced herself from theology, on the grounds that her article was focusing on history,[53] and she reviewed the shifts in approaches to the period of early Christianity and late antiquity, as well as the changes within the Roman Catholic church, especially in recent decades. Rhetoric makes only a brief appearance, but in an earlier contribution she pointed to a move in late antique or "late ancient" studies from the 1980s onwards from an approach based on social theory to one focusing on discourse and attention to literary theory,[54] an

52. "Culture Wars: Late Antiquity and Literature," in: Libera Curiositas. *Mélanges d'histoire romaine et d'Antiquité tardive offerts à Jean-Michel Carrié,* ed. Christel Freu, Sylvain Janniard, and Arthur Ripoli [Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive, 31] (Turnhout, 2016), 307–16.

53. Elizabeth A. Clark, "From Patristics to History in the *Catholic Historical Review,*" *The Catholic Historical Review,* 101.2 (2015), 27–71, on 32.

54. "From Patristics to History," 65–66; cf. Elizabeth A. Clark, "From Patristics to Early Christian Studies," in: *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford, 2008), 1–39; Clark herself made such a move with her books *Reading Renunciation* (Princeton, 1999) and *History, Theory, Text* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

approach that has been termed "the new intellectual history."[55] Yet when a historian moves from the analysis of a particular text or text to broader issues of historical change and the formation of a mainly Christian society, theology has to be part of the story. This is why for instance the phenomenon of iconoclasm in eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium (and its reappearance in the twelfth century) cannot be reduced simply to social factors or for that matter seen as only a matter of discourse.[56]

When I retired from Keble College in 2010 I accepted the invitation to become the chair of a new research centre, the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research, with the aim of raising funds to extend and consolidate the coverage of Byzantine studies in the University. At its inauguration I spoke on the theme "Was Byzantium an Orthodox Society?" questioning the assumptions that are routinely made and calling for a more critical approach. It was a theme that had already occupied me.[57] Rather than being a given, Byzantine Orthodoxy was painfully constructed over a long chronological period from early Christianity to late Byzantium, with many setbacks and false starts, and through highly contested processes. This was what I wanted to convey when in 2015 I accepted the challenge of writing a very short history of Byzantine Christianity (published in 2017 by SPCK). It was aimed at non-specialists, some of whom are attracted to Orthodoxy for romantic and often mistaken reasons, and while topics such as lay piety and daily life are indeed crucial, I wanted to explain the tortuous steps by which contemporaries formulated Orthodox doctrine as well as the highly political issues that remain today. Doctrine and verbal definitions were important in Byzantine Christianity, and the ecumenical councils were at their heart. Everyone was affected directly or indirectly by the outcomes and by the way they carried through into law, administration, and daily life.

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55. Review forum on Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn,* in: *Church History,* 74 (2005), 812–36, especially the comments by Mark Vessey.

56. Contrast Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* (above, n. 15) with Jaś Elsner, "Iconoclasm as Discourse: from Antiquity to Byzantium," *The Art Bulletin,* 94.3 (2012), 368–94.

57. "Enforcing Orthodoxy in Byzantium," in: *Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory [Studies in Church History, 43] (Woodbridge, 2007), 1–24; "Byzantium and the Limits of Orthodoxy," Raleigh Lecture in History, *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 154 (2008), 139–52; "The Violence of Orthodoxy," in: *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger Zellentin [Texte und Studien zum antike Judentum, 119] (Tübingen, 2008), 102–14; "The Cost of Orthodoxy," Second Dutch Annual Lecture in Patristics, 2011, *Church History and Religious Culture,* 93 (2013), 339–61; *Byzantine Matters*, 87-111.

I had been intrigued since the early 1990s by the choice of the dialogue form for polemical and catechetical works including the Christian "dialogues" with Jews known as the *Adversus Iudaeos* literature, and the related collections of questions and answers.[58] Such dialogues cover a vast range of literature in Greek (as well as Syriac and Latin) that continued until after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and which had never been studied together. I reacted against the idea expressed in Simon Goldhill's book *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity* (2009) and elsewhere that Christianity somehow shut down real dialogue and decided to approach these issues more directly, first by collecting the relevant material—not so simple a task as it may seem, since many of the Byzantine examples still require basic study, or even critical editions, and others are known only indirectly through other mentions, refutations, or translations into other languages. This led to lectures in Budapest, Princeton, Dumbarton Oaks, and Oxford. *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity* (Washington DC, 2014) resulted from the Haecker Lecture, a series of four given in Heidelberg in 2011.[59] *Arguing it Out* (Budapest, 2016), which drew on the part of this work that related to the twelfth century, in which I considered the debates between Latins and Orthodox, as well as Byzantine discussions with Jews and Muslims, resulted from my Natalie Zemon Davis lectures at the Central University, Budapest in 2014, given in the presence of Natalie herself, whom I had met and admired years before in Princeton.[60] There is still much to do, but meanwhile the *Adversus Iudaeos* texts and the questions and answers have received attention from other scholars, while a conference on dialogues held at Keble College in 2014 that ranged over the whole period from late antiquity to the end of Byzantium and beyond resulted in a comprehensive volume co-edited with Niels Gaul.[61] We opened up a vast field of mostly neglected writing in Greek and Syriac, and our conference and the collected volume attracted welcome attention to the subject and produced some original and important contributions.[62] These ostensibly sober

58. Above, n. 41; and see "Dialogues: A World of Imagination," in: *Dialogues and Disputes in Biblical Disguise*, ed. Peter Tóth (in press).

59. Published in German as *Dialog und Streitgespräch in der Spätantike,* The Haecker Lecture, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg 2011 [SpielRäume der Antike, 3] (Stuttgart, 2014).

60. I had visited the Central European University several times, and become friends with many people there; my former student Volker Menze is Associate Professor in the Department of Medieval Studies.

61. *Dialogues and Debate from Late Antiquity to Late Byzantium*, ed. with Niels Gaul (Milton Park, 2017).

62. Alberto Rigolio and Foteini Spingou, who worked with me on the project, have both published excellent studies: Foteini Spingou, "A Platonizing Dialogue from the Twelfth

records of actual conversations in fact took many different forms, from the highly literary or philosophical to the mundane, and are yet another example of the power of language to shape history.

Conclusion

As I look back, I see the importance of my early background at Oxford and in Classics. I had no clear pathways when I started out, and I realise that I have been lucky to have been able to follow where my curiosity led. It drew me towards late antiquity and then to Byzantium, and from classicising Greek texts to the Roman empire, literary theory, archaeology, art history and reception, and more.[63] Perhaps in retrospect I have gone in too many directions, but common threads are to be found not in data gathering but in the critical analysis of texts, a continuing interest in religion as a historical force, and the theory and practice of history.

While I have certainly written a good deal about Christianity in those periods and I have been President of the Ecclesiastical History Society and chair of the Directors of the Oxford Patristic Conference, I see myself as a historian of late antiquity and Byzantium in a wider sense. The historical role and development of religion, especially Christianity, have indeed occupied me since very early in my career, and as I moved forward chronologically into Byzantium I was confronted with more such issues. Nevertheless, I have seen them in a wider historical context rather than as discrete subjects in themselves;[64] it worries me that so many of the huge number of current publications on late antiquity focus almost exclusively on Christian texts.

Century. The *Logos* of Soterichos Panteugenos," in: *Dialogues and Debate*, 123–36; Alberto Rigolio, *Christians in Conversation: A Guide to Late Antique Dialogues in Greek and Syriac* (Oxford, 2019).

63. The *Festschrift* that I received in 2006 has the happy title *From Rome to Constantinople* (ed. Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leuven, 2006).

64. Broader reflections on historical method: "History and the Individuality of the Historian: the Interpretation of Late Antiquity," in *The Past before Us: The Challenges of Historiographies of Late Antiquity*, ed. Carole Straw and Richard Lim [Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité tardive, 54] (Paris, 2004), 23–31; "Nazaten van Byzantium," *Nexus,* 69 (2015), 126–40 (in Dutch) and "The Present in the Past and the Past in the Present," in: *The Past as Present: Essays in Honour of Guido Clemente*, ed. Giovanni Cecconi, Rita Lizzi Testa, and Arnaldo Marcone [Studi e Testi tardoantichi, 17] (Turnhout, 2019), 133–50; and see also "Christian Conversion in Late Antiquity—Some Issues," in: *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam and Beyond*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou and Neil McLynn, with Daniel Schwartz (Oxford, 2015), 3–21.

I belong to the academic system of the UK rather than that of North America, but my exposure to the latter has been an important influence. I did not have the experience of North American graduate school described by other contributors to this series, but of the places that have influenced me most I would place Columbia, Berkeley, Dumbarton Oaks and Princeton[65] alongside London and Oxford, and among my key personal connections Peter Brown (who also had an Oxford background, though very different from mine, and who shares in my debt to Arnaldo Momigliano) and Elizabeth Clark. Almost equally important have been the places and people I have got to know in lecture and conference visits over the years. An invisible hand has clearly also been at work at various points in my career. It has been a rich experience as step by step I pursued my curiosity where it led, and it is a main part of who I am.

65. Including further stays in Princeton, in 2005 as a Visiting Fellow in the Program in Hellenic Studies, in 2014 for the Faber lecture, and in 2018 to give the keynote lecture at the retirement conference for John Haldon.