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A STUDY OF THE PRESERVATION OF THE CLASSICAL TRADITION
IN THE EDUCATION, LANGUAGE, AND LITERATURE
OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

by

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A STUDY OF THE PRESERVATION OF THE CLASSICAL TRADITION
IN THE EDUCATION, LANGUAGE, AND LITERATURE
OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

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Western Michigan University, 1989

The medieval Byzantine world can be perceived as a cultural anomaly in the history of western civilization. During the entire course of its existence, those who endeavored to preserve the light of learning drew inspiration from the classical heritage of Greece and Rome. The education, literature, and language of Byzantium were modeled on what had been bequeathed by the classical world of centuries past.

This paper endeavors to examine the integral role played by the ancient pagan legacy in the curriculum that was followed in Byzantine schools; to illustrate the very potent influence exerted by Homer in the learning and literature of the Byzantine Empire, specifically as it was manifested in the Alexiad of Anna Comnena; and to discuss the Greek language as it both evolved and was hampered from freely developing during this era. Several examples of poetry from the early Byzantine period are included in this section in order to demonstrate that the pagan influence was slow to fade away in this very Christian milieu.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	
I.	INTRODUCTION..... 1
II.	EDUCATION IN BYZANTINE SOCIETY..... 3
III.	THE CURRICULUM AND ITS PROPONENTS..... 9
IV.	THE CO-EXISTENCE OF PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS..... 20
V.	THE PERVADING SPIRIT OF HOMER IN THE <u>ALEXIAD</u> OF ANNA COMNENA..... 30
VI.	THE GREEK LANGUAGE IN THE BYZANTINE PERIOD..... 49
CONCLUSION.....	71
ENDNOTES.....	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	80

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The historical and cultural era known as the Byzantine spanned more than a millenium. This period witnessed a myriad of social, linguistic, artistic, and religious changes.

Existing side-by-side with this cultural ferment was an ongoing mindfulness of the past and a tenacious devotion to the glories of the classical Greek world. This loyalty to the traditions of ancient Greece manifested itself in many aspects of medieval Byzantine life.

The Byzantine Empire from its early years was the inheritor of the rich tradition of the classical world. The inhabitants of the Empire were aware that they were the heirs of the literature, thought, and education of their Mediterranean predecessors. This was the source of their greatest pride, and they endeavored throughout the centuries of their Empire's existence to prove themselves worthy of such a glorious heritage, and to emulate as faithfully as possible the achievements of the ancient Greeks and Romans both.

It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate that the influence of classical antiquity was very much alive

in the culture, learning and literature of the Eastern Roman Empire and exerted far-reaching effects on each of these domains. This will be accomplished in the following manner: first, through a discussion of the educational legacy of the ancient classical world as it survived, at least during the earlier stages of the medieval epoch; second, through an examination of numerous quotations from the Homeric corpus which appear in The Alexiad of Anna Comnena (E.R.A. Sewter, trans., 1969)¹ and demonstrate that the influence of the master of the epic idiom was integral to this important historical and biographical work; and last, through a discussion of the Greek language during this period along with an analysis of several samples of Byzantine lyric poetry which demonstrate an adherence to ancient pagan mythological influence.

The next chapter of this study will consist of background material on the role and extent of education in the Byzantine Empire. In addition, some discussion of the interaction of pagan and Christian elements of learning will be included within this paper in an effort to round out the overall picture of this cultural and historical phenomenon known as the Byzantine world.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION IN BYZANTINE SOCIETY

Education constituted an important factor in the overall mindset of the people who inhabited the Byzantine Empire. It is, however, a complicated task to discuss the education that existed in the Empire. The first difficulty has to do with the great time span involved, which covered over one thousand years. Another factor which contributes to the difficulty of this topic is the fact that a resident of the Empire could have enjoyed an urban or a drastically different, urban lifestyle. In addition to these considerations, a "Byzantine" could have resided in any variety of places throughout the expanse of the Empire. (The "expanse," of course, varied during the course of the Byzantine era.)

Every Byzantine wished for a good education (although how realistic a goal this was, is a factor that remains cloudy at best). The opposite of this ideal, *ἀπαίδευσία* (apaidesusia), was something to be ashamed of; indeed, it was practically tantamount to a crime.² Ignorant people, including those in high places, were always being mocked and made fun of, while well-trained individuals were held in high esteem.

The first question which may be explored in this complicated area is just who among the citizens of the medieval Greek Empire actually received an education. It has been widely believed that the members of the middle and upper classes of the Byzantine population were educated. According to Deno Geanakoplos (1984), there existed, "a considerable number of educated laymen"³ throughout the history of the Empire. This factor would demonstrate an unbroken tradition with the classical and Hellenistic eras. As had been the case in the ancient world, the Byzantines emphasized education, at least among the higher classes of society, and especially encouraged the arts of writing and speaking as well as possible, which will be shown later.

Education was one of the benefits of one's being a child of royalty or aristocracy. Such a child could have received instruction from private teachers who held public positions. Biographies of famous men attest to the fact that individuals of the upper classes were the recipients of a good education. However, not much is known as to how far education extended into the lower classes of society. It is true that large segments of the Byzantine population were completely illiterate, especially in the rural districts.

On the other hand, Georgina Buckler (1969) has written that it was possible for children of the lower classes to

4

receive an education. An example of such an instance is that of the slave Andreas Salos who studied Greek and the scriptures. Saint Theodore of Syceote, whose mother was a prostitute, attended school in the village where he resided. However, these facts do not prove that education was well-organized in the rural areas of the Empire.⁵

The question as to whether or not girls were able to receive an education in the Byzantine Empire is one on which scholars have differed in their opinions. Joan M. Hussey (1961) has written that girls received an education, although it was not typical for them to attend the universities.⁶ They received any higher education from tutors who were engaged by their well-to-do families.

According to Steven Runciman (1933), there were many educated women throughout the history of Byzantium, although nothing specific is known about the educational services that were offered to them.⁷ We have no definite evidence of girls' schools. It has been estimated that girls from wealthy families received approximately the same education as did boys, although they would have been privately taught in their homes. Girls of middle class families could very likely read, but their formal education did not extend much beyond that.

In her chapter, "Byzantine Education," (in Byzantium, ed. Bayes and Moss), Georgina Buckler (1969) included

J.B. Bury's view that both boys and girls had the opportunity for an education if their parents had the means to finance this.⁸ Buckler herself, however, expressed the opinion that study of the scriptures and the pursuit of handicrafts, both undertaken at home, sufficed for most girls. "Eastern Roman girls apparently neither went to school or to University."⁹

It is unclear how much access to literature Byzantine girls and women enjoyed. Works of a devotional or religious character were very likely available to them, although their access to classical literature and culture were probably curtailed. In his eulogy for the princess Anna Comnena, George Tornikes (1987) remarked that she had begun to study classical literature without the knowledge of her parents, since they feared that the influence of the polytheistic stories might be detrimental to her spiritual welfare.¹⁰ So if, in theory, the Greek literary heritage was denied to the female inhabitants of medieval Byzantium, the more resourceful (and privileged) could often find a way to achieve access to this treasure.

Among the educated women of the Empire that we do know about were Theodosius II's wife Athenais (during the fifth century); Kassiani, the poetess/hymnodist who flourished during the mid-ninth century and composed the beautiful poem about Mary Magdalene which is sung during the Holy Tuesday liturgy in the Greek Orthodox Church;

Constantine VII's daughters (during the tenth century); Irene, the daughter of Theodore Metochites (during the fourteenth century); several Comnenian princesses (during the eleventh and twelfth centuries); the mother of Michael Psellos (during the eleventh century); the Palaeologi princesses (during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries); a professor named Hypatia who taught at the university at Alexandria; and some women doctors. It is known that a woman doctor was on the staff of the hospital founded by John Comnenus during the twelfth century.¹¹

The most famous of these educated women of Byzantium, the abovementioned Anna Comnena, wrote that she was,

"...not without some acquaintance with literature--having devoted the most earnest study to the Greek language, in fact, and being not unpracticed in Rhetoric and having read thoroughly the treatises of Aristotle and the dialogues of Plato, and having fortified my mind with the Quadrivium of sciences..."¹²

The point can be made that education was in many cases an advantage for girls of the Empire's royal family that came with the high station they enjoyed. As far as the majority of those from the other classes of society, the likelihood of their receiving any type of real education beyond the basic reading and writing skills is a rather remote one.

Regardless of the status of girls in the educational sphere, it is most likely that only a small percentage of the educated people, male or female, received a complete education in the Greek classics, which constituted the basis and much of the content of the curriculum as followed in the Empire. Furthermore, during the span of the middle and late Byzantine periods, such an education was possible mainly in Constantinople and Thessalonika. It is believed, however, that functional literacy was widespread after the ninth century. The majority of provincial officials and clergy could read and write. So could many monks and laymen, as can be attested by the signatures that appear on various documents. In the military sphere, most orders were transmitted through the ranks in written form, so that the ability to read was a practical necessity for a great many people.

Education was a highly valued and respected commodity in the Eastern Roman Empire. However, it was for many people, especially among the female population, a prize beyond reach. The basic literary skills seem to have been reasonably procurable, but not so the more advanced subjects.

The next chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the curriculum that was followed in the schools of the Byzantine Empire, with emphasis on the integral place held by the classics in education.

CHAPTER III

THE CURRICULUM AND ITS PROPONENTS

The system of education, at least during the early centuries of the Byzantine Empire's existence, was similar to that of classical Greece and Rome and had its roots in the tradition of the Hellenistic age. This system ultimately was to influence the course of study pursued by the humanists of Renaissance Italy. Aspects of it remained constant throughout the span of the Empire's existence. This system differed from that of the medieval West, where logic and dialectic rather than the humanities were emphasized (at least from the twelfth century onwards).¹³

As in modern times, the education that students received involved three stages, which consisted of primary, secondary, and higher education. At around the age of six, the children were sent to a *γραμματιστής* (grammatistis), or elementary school teacher, for training in orthography. This teacher taught them the alphabet, how to read aloud, and how to write and count. These studies involved much memorization and repetition. They were also challenging for the young students because of the changes in the pronunciation of Greek which had occurred over the centuries, so that classical spelling

had to be carefully learned. For a great portion of the population this phase of learning marked the end of their formal education.

For the secondary stage of education the students had a different teacher who was called the γραμματικός (grammatikos), and who received a much better salary than did the grammatistis. Rather than strictly "grammar" as we think of it, this teacher concentrated upon the writings of certain classical authors. The rather formal regime of study with his students involved four activities. The first, διορθώσεις (diorthosis), or correction, involved proofreading of the teacher's and students' texts to ensure that they were the same (which could not always be assumed.)¹⁴ The second operation, ἀναγνώσις (anagnosis), consisted of the text being read aloud for the purposes of correct intonation and proper expression, because of the absence of punctuation, and because of the fact that the words were not separated within the text. The third activity was ἐξήγησις (exegesis), during which the text was explained from both a linguistic and an historical context. The reason for this stage of explanation was that the Greek language had changed considerably from the way it appeared in the texts of Homer and other authors who were were studied. Historical exegesis involved the students learning geographical and mythological names in order to be conversant with these from then on.

The fourth educational activity was κρίσις (krisis) during which the moral lessons that were inherent in the ancient works could be pointed out and discussed.

The students studied the works of a number of ancient Greek poets (e.g., Hesiod and Sappho) during this phase of their education,¹⁵ but the poetry of Homer constituted the basis of their literary studies. His writings were stressed, to the extent that his works were memorized by students. The nephew of Synesius in the fifth century learned fifty lines of Homer per day so that he could recite it. Michael Psellos supposedly learned Homer's entire Iliad by heart while still a child! In his writing, Psellos (as did Anna Comnena) often referred to Homer as "the poet," with no further clarification, and his readers knew exactly who was meant by this designation. As we shall see presently, Anna Comnena quoted and paraphrased Homer many times in her Alexiad and did not offer any explanations of the quotes, assuming immediate comprehension on the part of her readers. The twelfth-century commentary on the Iliad written by Eustathius of Thessalonika¹⁶ stressed the literary and psychological insight to be found in the works of Homer, as well as the poet's influence on later Greek literature, and how Homer served as the foundation of the later studies undertaken by the Byzantine student.¹⁷

Besides the works of the ancient Greek poets, the study of grammar was pursued at this level of one's education. The purpose of studying grammar was for the students to acquire, "complete Hellenizing of the speech and mind,"¹⁸ and to preserve the purity of classical Greek against the corruptions of the vernacular tongue (about which more will be said below). This process, which was sometimes referred to as *τὰ πρῶτα μαθήματα* (ta prota mathemata, literally, "the first lessons"), "involved a thorough study of the matter as well as the form of classical poetry."¹⁹ The vehicle for this study, up until around the fourteenth century, was usually the handbook that had been written by Dionysius the Thracian during the first century B.C.²⁰ Dionysius' grammar book was for the most part concerned with the classification of language, involving the different letters of the alphabet, diphthongs, the quantity of vowels, the parts of speech, the conjugation of verbs, and the declension of nouns and adjectives, among other things. This work went out of favor with the advent of the *Ἑρωτήματα* (Erotemata), which was a new method of language instruction employing the question-and-answer method. This technique was the vehicle by which Greek was taught to westerners during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Also extensively used were the sixth-century canon of Theodosius of Alexandria, and then the grammar of George

Choeroboscus, which dated from sometime between the sixth and tenth centuries.²¹

Upon assimilation of this information a number of exercises known as the *προγυμνάσματα* (progymnas-mata) were undertaken. The first group of these were tackled during the students' secondary school training, while the rest were left for the advanced level of education.

Besides the literary studies, which were by far the most important aspect of secondary education, the four subjects known as the quadrivium were included in the curriculum. These subjects were arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry. The combination of literary studies and the quadrivium encompassed the *ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία* (enkyklos paideia), or general education. This was an oft-used term, but it is unclear as to whether those who received such an education had really studied all of these subjects or if they had just taken up space in a secondary school. Cyril Mango has pointed out that the second option is the likelier one, since the sciences had been pushed forward to the realm of higher education, with the result that only those students who wished to do so could or needed to pursue them.²²

The rhetor, or sophist, was in charge of higher education. This level of learning was undertaken by the students at fourteen or fifteen years of age, and could

only be pursued in the large cities. At this time the students proceeded to to the study of rhetoric and rhetorical theory, which included emphasis on correct pronunciation and the study of several Greek authors. This strong regard for rhetoric represented another very significant inheritance of the Byzantines from their predecessors and had a profound effect on its school curriculum as well as on its literature. Mastery of this discipline enabled one to speak or write in the most suitable and/or gracious manner possible. This study involved the reading and memorization of Greek history and orations. Compositions were written and speeches delivered in conformance with classical styles in as close an imitation as possible.²³

The closest roots of Byzantine rhetoric lay in Hellenistic writings, i.e., pagan sophistry. Criticism was leveled at writers who lacked a sense of proper style; for example, Saint Ioannicos' ninth-century life was not composed in the most rhetorically correct fashion and was thus a disappointment to its readers.²⁴ In the Alexiad, Anna Comnena leveled a criticism at Bishop Leo of Chalcedon for this lack of rhetorical ability:

"He was incapable of expressing his ideas accurately and without ambiguity, because he was utterly devoid of any training in logic."²⁵

Rhetoric was regarded by the Byzantines not merely as a necessary discipline, but as a literary form that

was equal to, or even superior to, poetry, and their functions are interchangeable in Byzantine literature. Form and style were the essential ingredients, regardless of the matter that engendered the expression. This means that a serious or important subject could be written equally well in rhetorical verse or in inspired poetical prose style.²⁶

Studies in rhetoric could be effectively applied in the fields of law, public service, and civil service. Besides this, it was the means by which one could enter into educated Byzantine society where imitation of the classical literary tradition permeated both thought and written expression.²⁷ Emphasis was placed on the study of Demosthenes, Plutarch, Isocrates, and especially Hermogenes.

The study of philosophy could also be pursued during a student's advanced training. In his Chronographia (E.R.A. Sewter, trans., 1966) Psellos makes mention of the two areas of rhetoric and philosophy which he pursued during his own higher education:

"At the time I was in my twenty-fifth year and engaged in serious studies. My efforts were concentrated on two objects: to train my tongue by rhetoric, so as to become a fine speaker, and to refine my mind by a course of philosophy."²⁸

Philosophy was widely regarded as above and beyond all other arts and sciences, and in some writings includes the

quadrivium, whereas in other sources philosophy towers above these "servants of knowledge."²⁹ Generally, philosophy included ethics and speculative ideas, plus logic and dialectic. This discipline was a pagan subject, and was prone to suspicion, especially where the clergy were concerned, lest they depart from their zealously held standards of Orthodox Christianity.

Still, philosophy was a subject highly regarded by the Byzantines from the very inception of the Empire, when the works of the ancient philosophers, as well as those of the the Neoplatonists, were known to the Church Fathers. This topic will be examined in more detail further on.

During the seventh and eighth centuries, the general breakdown in scholarship had its effect on philosophy, but this subject experienced a revival in the ninth century, along with learning in general. Leo the Philosopher encouraged the study of Plato, Epicurus, and the Neoplatonists, as well as his favorite Aristotle. Platonism experienced a great revival during the eleventh century under the leadership of Psellos. Enthusiasm for Greek philosophy continued into the twelfth century, at which time it was an assumed part of the curriculum.

The subjects of medicine and law could also be studied as a part of advanced training, the former in Alexandria or Pergamum, and the latter in Beirut. It was also possible

for students to pursue these studies at the University in Constantinople.

The advanced students continued for as long as they wished and could finance their studies. The entire course extended for the duration of five years, although many students gave it up after two or three years.³⁰ Most of these students were from wealthy families of government workers or professionals. It is impossible to estimate the student numbers, but, according to Mango, they numbered in the hundreds and not in the thousands in the important centers.³¹ An example can be seen in the case of Libanius during the second half of the fourth century, when for the most part he had about fifty students in the school of rhetoric.

It is necessary to more closely define what is meant by a "university" according to the context in which it is used in discussing advanced training in the Byzantine Empire. The "universities" at Constantinople and Alexandria were the closest approximations to what we consider to be a university in modern times; otherwise, there was nothing that corresponded to such an institution of learning where a number of highly trained academics offer a variety of subjects on an advanced level.

There was a limited variety of subjects that were taught, as well. This, then, necessitated much travel on the part of a would-be scholar in the Byzantine Empire.

Hopefully, he was eventually able to establish himself in a proper profession and make use of his hard-won and costly training.

Teachers held important positions in the medieval Roman Empire, and the people of Byzantium held both public and private teachers in high regard (although the grammatisti tended to occupy a rather low station in society). Anna Comnena remarked in the Alexiad that only a conceited person would attempt to study without the assistance of a teacher. In Book V she describes how Italos, who studied with the brilliant Michael Psellos, was incapable of comprehending philosophical truths, for

"even in the act of learning he utterly rejected the teacher's guiding hand, and full of temerity and barbaric folly, believing even before study that he excelled all others, from the very start ranged himself against the great Psellos."³²

Parents sacrificed greatly in order to see their children educated, sometimes surrendering needed farm animals in order to pay tuition.³³ Teachers functioned in loco parentis during the school day and had the authority to punish or dismiss students.

As in ancient times, "pedagogues" accompanied the wealthy boys to school and carried their books. The teacher conducted class while the students stood or sat (on benches or on the floor) around him. During the

lessons the students recited, read aloud, participated in discussions, wrote, and asked and answered questions.

There was no special training for teachers beyond the learning they acquired from their own education. They could begin teaching as soon as they had completed their studies, and they had the wealth of both classical and Byzantine books to assist them. In other words, it was their challenge and responsibility to draw upon both their pagan and Christian heritage in furthering their own academic skills and in passing the lamp of knowledge on to their students.

At this point, we have seen how the ancient classical heritage figured in the educational curriculum of the Eastern Roman Empire. The next step in our study is to examine the dynamics which resulted from the co-existence of the pagan and Christian elements of medieval Byzantine society and culture.

CHAPTER IV

THE CO-EXISTENCE OF PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS

It has been seen that the pagan classical tradition figured prominently in the educational upbringing of Byzantine students. Despite their strict Orthodox Christianity, the knowledge and influence of the pagan world was always with the denizens of the medieval Greco-Roman Empire.

In a milieu where pagan and Christian literature, culture, and traditions existed side-by-side with much interaction, there were bound to be, if not conflicts, then certainly interesting exchanges. Still, for the most part, the tension between the two opposing spheres of influence were minimized, while their common bonds from the classical past were realized and acknowledged.

In actuality, there were two kinds of learning involved in Byzantine education: the "outer," or profane, and the "inner," or theological. Profane learning, which has already been discussed, was permitted on the condition that it did not interfere with or contradict the teachings of Christianity as fostered by the Greek Orthodox Church. It was very rare that attempts were made to foster paganism or other religious beliefs.³⁴

Early in the history of the Empire, the Fathers of the Church attended the same institutions of higher learning as did those who espoused the pagan traditions, and, as already mentioned, they were well versed in ancient pagan thought. Parents were exhorted to raise their children in the Christian fashion, but this by no means precluded their receiving an education. The value of education was acknowledged by the Fathers of the Church, one of whom, Gregory Nazianzos, maintained that education constituted, "the first of the goods that we possess."³⁵

The Church Fathers possessed deep knowledge of classical thought. This can be seen upon examination of the Fount of Knowledge, written by John of Damascus³⁶ during the eighth century. This work is a handbook of Christian teaching; however, the first part of it had for its subject Aristotle's logic and metaphysics. Philosophy, however, had to be subordinated to Christian doctrine; that was the only way in which it could be tolerated. The methods and ~~methods~~ and arguments employed in the field of philosophy constituted an important tool for theologians.

The Christian creeds themselves were formulated in classical philosophical terminology, e.g., the Chalcedon Creed of 451, which reflects the thinking of this era to a great extent. These creeds are believed to have constituted, "the last great original achievement of the Greek

genius."³⁷ The question may be posed (according to Baynes) as to whether this particular achievement of Greek thought (i.e., the Christian creeds) is the one which exerted the the greatest influence upon the subsequent history and thought of Europe.

After the death of the emperor Julian the Apostate (who would not permit Christians to teach in the university at Constantinople), the ancient Greek literature was no longer equated with the pagan faith of the past, with the result that it was not necessary for pagan converts to Christianity to abandon the culture with which they were so intimately bound. This movement served as a very significant bridge from late antique to early medieval times, with support from the Christians. An illustration of this is that in the fifth century Socrates wrote a Church history in which he defended the use of pagan literature by Christians (Historia Ecclesiastica, iii, c. 16) and propounded the idea that one should hold onto the beautiful and true while renouncing evil.³⁸ Thus, the unity of pagan and Christian traditions was achieved and constituted the foundation of the Byzantine cultural world.

During the third century A.D., Clement and Origen embraced and utilized pagan thought as they taught in the pagan school in Alexandria. Let it be remembered that the threat posed by Christianity was realized by the

pagan thinkers of this era, so that both sides took it upon themselves to defend their respective thought worlds from any potentially negative influence that could be received from the other. The typical Byzantine outlook regarding the pagan Greek writings may be seen in Saint Basil's "Advice to Young Men on Studying Greek Literature," in which he encouraged "qualified acceptance" of classical poetry, philosophy and prose."³⁹

The emperor Justinian in his zeal for Christianity closed the university at Athens (which was noted for its school of philosophy) and decreed that all university teachers were to be Christians. (During the fifth century, most of the philosophy faculty had been pagans.)

In contrast to this spirit, the classics were studied more zealously than ever during the Comneni dynasty. The emperor Alexius, however, was a strong champion of scriptural studies. Both of these traits were attested to by Alexius' ever-devoted daughter Anna in the Alexiad:

"All those who had any inclination for learning were increasingly urged by him (Alexius) to study...but he did advise them to devote attention to Holy Scripture before turning to Hellenic culture."⁴⁰

The Byzantine Empire rallied to the defense of its Greek inheritance in the realm of philosophy during the iconoclastic controversy of the eighth century. This was

essentially a religious controversy involving the question of idolatry. The church officials of Asia Minor were questioning whether or not Jesus Christ, who according to Orthodox believe possessed both a divine and a human nature, could be represented by means of a pictorial image. In the wake of this, the question arose as to the adoption of a more symbolic art to replace the icons. According to iconoclast belief, it was necessary for an icon, or image, to be of the same substance, or essence, as that which it was representing, so that the only true representation of Christ was to be found in the elements of holy communion after the act of consecration had taken place, since these would be, in the minds of the believers, the Body and Blood of Christ.⁴¹ The iconodules could not accept this line of reasoning since, they protested, an icon would no longer be an image if it were the same as that of which it was meant to be a representation.

These defenders of the icons made use of a Platonic argument in order to prove their point: that the relationship of the icon to its model can be compared to that of objects to the Platonic "idea," so that the respect rendered to the icon is transferred to God Himself or to a saint. So, the torch of antiquity aided the Byzantine faithful in ultimately winning their argument, thus preserving the medieval Greek art form for the ages to come.

Despite the orientalization of the Empire which had already taken place, the Byzantines were by no means prepared to abandon their tradition religious art in favor of an Eastern brand of decorative and symbolic expression. Persecution was preferable to such a change, so that the Byzantines prevailed in their struggle and iconoclasm was ultimately defeated. (Two Byzantine empresses, Irene in 787, and Theodora in 843, were significantly involved in the restoration of icons. This may or may not have any bearing on the case for the education of women. Did these empresses champion the cause of icons because of an artistic sensitivity which was nurtured through scholastic enrichment, or were their efforts a mere exercise in piety?) The icon lives today in Greek and other Orthodox churches throughout the world and serves as the symbol and identifying factor of this major Christian denomination. At any rate, the fact that the classical methods and arguments that were utilized in the sphere of philosophy saved the day in this crisis aided immeasurably in preserving and passing on to the West a number of basic principles and works.⁴²

The Christians inherited their obsession for rhetoric from the pagans who had preceded them. There was much imitation and admiration of the classical form, which went hand-in-hand with the study of Christian works. From the time of the fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers Basil,

Gregory Nazianzos and Gregory of Nyssa, "much of the content of the pagan Greek classics, in particular, those dealing with philosophy and rhetoric, had been assimilated ... into a Christian framework,"⁴³ so that it would be acceptable to the Church.

The pagans and Christians studied the same authors during the course of their respective educations. They shared a common culture which had its roots in the literature and thought of the classical Greek world. The Christians, along with the pagans during the earlier period in the Empire's history, claimed the classical inheritance for their own, and continued to do so long after the pagan religion had become obsolete. Despite their various prejudices against the pagan thought that was contained in ancient literature, the Christians counted themselves among the heirs of this precious possession.

Thus, an important factor in Byzantine education was that Christian children still needed to rely upon pagan books, both textbooks and literary works, during their educational process. Saint Basil got around this by pointing to Moses and Daniel who, although instruments of God, benefited from pagan learning.⁴⁴ He urged young people to study classical history and literature in order to derive moral edification from the examples they would encounter. But (using Homer to illustrate), he cautioned these students to do as Odysseus had done; that is, as he had

closed his ears against the singing of the Sirens, they should barricade their souls against any evil influences that could be derived from pagan study.

Yet another example of Byzantine regard for the wisdom of the classical writers can be seen in John Mauropous' poem of the eleventh century in which he implored Christ to spare Plato and Plutarch from damnation by virtue of the fact that their lifestyles and teachings were compatible with those advocated in the Gospel, despite their ignorance of the one true God:

Εἵπερ τις βούλο τῶν ἀμοτρίων
 τῆς σῆς ἀπειλῆς ἐξελεῖσθαι, Χριστέ μου
 Πλάτωνα καὶ Πλούταρχον ἐξελοῖό μοι.
 ἄμφω γὰρ εἰσὶ καὶ λόγον καὶ τὸν τρόπον
 τοῖς σοῖς νόμοις ἔγγιστα προσπεφυκότες,
 εἰ δ' ἠγνόησαν ὡς Θεὸς σὺ τῶν ὅλων
 ἐν ταῦτα τῆς σῆς χρηστότητος δεῖ
 μόνον
 δε' ἦν ἅπαντας σωρεὰν σώζειν
 θέλεις.

("If indeed you would wish to release
 some of the others--i.e., pagans--
 From your threat--of damnation--,
 my Christ,
 Choose for me Plato and Plutarch.
 For they have both clung very closely
 to your laws both in word and
 in character.
 If they were ignorant of You as God
 of all,
 There is only need of your kindness
 here,

Through which You freely wish to save
everyone.")

This view corresponds to Dante's attitude in the thirteenth century towards Plato and Aristotle in the Divina Commedia, as he placed them in Limbo rather than in Hell.⁴⁶

Despite this open-mindedness, however guarded, there were some more extreme Greek monks who regarded the reading of classical works as inconsistent with the Christian mind-set and moral teachings. The sixth-century hymn writer Romanos consigned all pagan authors to Hell.⁴⁷ Despite the fact that Greek authors were widely studied, they were regarded by some as liars, always under suspicion, unless some Christian allegory could be discovered in their verse. Homer, the poet par excellence, was read by virtually any and all who were literate, but his work was viewed even by Saint Basil as "'a praise of virtue'" in the guise of poetical stories."⁴⁸ (At least Basil did not condemn Homer for his paganism; besides, this idea is consistent with Basil's overall support of Homer's role in the education of the early Byzantine period.)

So, children received instruction in Christian doctrines before all else. Boys and girls could be entrusted to a cleric at as young an age as three for training in the scriptures before any of the abovementioned secular education. This Christian training was, of course, reinforced by the parents at home, and could have been regarded as a

sort of safeguard against the onslaught of pagan thinking to which they would eventually be exposed.

Regardless of the variety of pros and cons with respect to learning which had its foundations in paganism, education on all levels was pursued throughout the life of the medieval Greek Empire, and the lamp of higher education always remained kindled somewhere in Byzantine territory, even if it had died out in other areas within this considerable expanse. Both "outer" and "inner" learning helped to form the Roman citizen of the Greek Middle Ages.

CHAPTER V

THE PERVADING SPIRIT OF HOMER IN THE ALEXIAD OF ANNA COMNENA

Anna Comnena, the daughter of the emperor Alexius and his spouse Irene, devoted the later years of her life to the composition of the Alexiad. She speaks to us in this book of her father's military exploits, his abilities as a monarch, and not least of all, his personal virtues. The princess was evidently a well-read and cultivated woman whose life extended over one of the greatest periods of the medieval Greco-Roman Empire. She endeavored in her history to approximate if not the literary greatness of the ancient writers, then their formal, classical Greek language. She also manifests in this work her deep knowledge of and devotion to the poetry of Homer. This chapter will discuss Anna's use of Homeric quotations and allusions in the Alexiad and her reliance upon these references to enliven and strengthen her narrative.

In the preface to her work, Anna states that she wishes to clarify her objectivity as an historian and to present the facts of her father's life as honestly as possible. She is concerned that the enemies of Alexius might "cast in my teeth the story of Noah's son Ham and, as Homer says, 'blame the guiltless.'"⁴⁹ Here we see a reference to

the Bible and to Homer side-by-side in the narrative. (So much for the emperor's concern for training in both the classics and the scriptures). The biblical allusion is from the ninth chapter of the book of Genesis (verses 21-24), and treats of the punishment of Ham, the ancestor of the Canaanites, who became his brothers' slave because of the fact that he had beheld his father's nakedness.⁵⁰

The "blameless" parties here are Noah's other two sons, Shem and Japheth, who covered up their naked father and kept their faces turned away so as not to behold his naked body. The Homeric quote is taken from Book XX of the Odyssey (line 135).⁵¹ At this point in the epic, Telemachus was expressing his concern to the nurse Eurycleia that his mother Penelope and the other women had not extended the proper courtesies to their visitor who was, of course, Odysseus. Eurycleia replied that he should not blame Penelope when there was no reason to do so:

οὐκ ἂν μιν νῦν, τέκνον, ἀπαίτων ἀντιόω.

Here, Anna means that, like Penelope, she is not at fault for setting out to perform her task in the manner that she sees fit.

In the course of Book I, Anna recounts the capture of Nicephorus Bryennius, the Duke of Dyrrachium (whom she earlier praised and compared with Ares, the ancient Greek God of war) by the emperor Alexius' men. Alexius treated

Bryennius with compassion and accompanied him for part of the way to the Emperor Botaniates. At one point, Alexius suggested that they take a rest, and after the two men dismounted, Bryennius is described by Anna as having propped his head against the root of "'a high-leafed oak,'" while being unable to indulge in "'sweet sleep.'" ⁵² The first of these references is from Book XIV of the Iliad (lines 398-399), where Homer was comparing the war cries made by the Greeks and the Trojans to the moaning of the winds in the oak trees:

οὐτ' ἄνεμος τόσσον γε περὶ δρυὶν ὑψικόμοισι
ἤπύει...

The second reference (*νήδυμος ὕπνος*) was used more than once in the in the Alexiad (see below).

A few pages later, Anna speaks of a Cappadocian soldier who is in the midst of fighting against Basiliacus (who had crowned himself emperor as Bryennius had previously done), lost his sword which was, "'thrice and four times shattered.'" ⁵³ This quote is from Book III of the Iliad (lines 362-363), and refers to the episode in which Paris and Menelaus were engaged in combat. When Menelaus brought his sword down upon Paris's helmet, it shattered into three and four pieces and fell from his hand:

... ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ
τριχθαῖ τε καὶ τετραχθαῖ διατρυφέν ἐκπέσσε
χελρὸς.

It is interesting to see how Anna seeks to relate the details of the fighting which occurred in defense of her father's empire with those of the Trojan War.

In Book II, Anna compares Pakourianus, who swore his oath of loyalty to Alexius, to Tydeus in Book V of the Iliad (line 801).⁵⁴ Homer was here describing Tydeus as being small in body, but a warrior (nonetheless). Anna describes Pakourianus in the same way:

ΤΥΔΕΥΣ ΤΟΙ ΜΙΚΡΟΣ ΜΕΝ ἔην ΔΕΜΑΣ, ἀλλὰ ΜΑΧΗΤΗΣ

Further on in Book II there is an episode described by Anna during which Palaeologus, who was sympathetic to Alexius' accession to the throne, recognized his father, who was opposed to Alexius, aboard a ship that was approaching the Great Palace. Palaeologus hastened to show proper respect by bowing to his father, who did not acknowledge this gesture or return his greeting. Anna contrasts this encounter with that which took place between Odysseus and Telemachus in the Odyssey, and was, of course, the complete opposite in spirit, since Odysseus was overwhelmed with joy to see his son after so many years, and him with emotion and love:

ὥς ἄρα φωνήσας ὕλὸν ΚΥΣΕ, ΚΑΘ' ΔΕ ΠΑΡΕΙΩΝ
ΔΑΚΡΥΟΝ ἦΚΕ ΧΑΜᾶΖΕ· ΠΑΡΟΣ Δ' ἔΧΕ ΝΩΛΕΜΕΣ Αἰεΐ.

("Thus, he called his son and kissed him, and a tear rolled from his cheek to the ground. Formerly, he always held himself firmly in control."--Book XVI, lines 190-191).

Furthermore, Anna says that in Homer's poem, "there was a banquet, suitors, games, a bow and arrows, as well as a prize for the winner--prudent Penelope."⁵⁵ Here in the situation that Anna is describing, there is no such pomp, nor are there such spoils; it is a grim scene, with father and son on opposing sides.

In Book III, Anna describes the scheme of the emperor John Dukas regarding the driving away of the Empress Maria from the palace (where she had remained out of concern for the safety of her young son). In his efforts to bring the Patriarch Cosmas over to his plan, he advised him to turn a deaf ear to Maria's cause. He then counselled Maria to withdraw after obtaining a written promise of safety from the emperor. This latter piece of advice is described by Anna as a "Patroclus-like scheme,"⁵⁶ since John had previously managed to exert control over Maria by advising Nicephoras Botaniates to take her as his wife. The reference that Anna is making here is from Boox XIX of the Iliad (lines 301-302), at the point when the Trojan women, along with Briseis, are making a show of mourning over the death of Patroclus, but are in reality lamenting their own unhappy fate at the hands of the Greeks:

ὥς ἔφατο κλαίοντες, ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο
 γυναῖκες
 Πάτροκλον πρόφασιν, σφῶν δ' αὐτῶν κήδε,
 ἑκάστη.

("Thus she--Briseis--spoke, weeping, and the women groaned besides, ostensibly for Patroclus, but each one for her own troubles.")

In Book V, Anna describes the elation of Bohemond, the younger son of Robert Guiscard, when he caught sight of Michael Dukas (Anna's maternal uncle) and his soldiers, and proceeded to make an attack against them.⁵⁷ In her description of Bohemond, Anna utilizes the Homeric comparison of a hungry lion which rejoices when it encounters a prey that is pleasing to it:

ὥς τε λέων ἑκάρη μεγάλῳ ἐπὶ σώματι κυρσας
εὐρὼν ἢ ἔλαφον κεραὸν ἢ ἄγρων αἶγα πενθάων.

(Iliad, Book III, lines 23-25). In this instance, Menelaus is pleased to see Paris emerge from the Trojan ranks in order to offer single combat: "He (Menelaus) rejoiced as a lion who has come upon a large carcass, finding in his hunger either a horned stag or a wild goat.")

This comparison is a favorite one of Anna, for she utilizes it again in Book VI, when she speaks of the manner of Barkiyaruq, the Sultan of Rum and son of the murdered Sultan Taparus, or Malik-Shah, as he came upon Tutush, the Anatolian who had been won over to the emperor's side by bribery, whom he ultimately killed and whose army he destroyed.

She uses this quotation again in Book X when describing Count Raoul's reaction to the sight of the Byzantine

military leader Opus and his troops as they approached in battle order so as to compel the Frankish leader and his forces to depart the Propontis area for the Asian side. Instead of experiencing dismay at the sight of Opus and his men, Conrad wished to engage them in battle, "'like a lion who rejoices when he has found a huge prey,'" ⁵⁸ which precipitated a huge *mélée*.

As she continues her account of the attack of Bohemond against Michael Dukas and his troops, Anna speaks of a man named Ouzas, who was very courageous and, "knew how to 'wield the dried bull's hide to right and left,'" so that "when he emerged from the pass, swerved slightly to the right, swiftly turned and struck at the Latin behind him." ⁵⁹ In this comparison, Anna is making reference to Hector's remarks to Ajax in Book VII of the *Iliad*, where Hector is rather arrogantly assuring Ajax of his (Hector's) own skills in battle and how well he knows how to handle his weapon:

οἷδ' ἐπὶ δεξιά, οἷδ' ἐπ' ἀριστερά, νωμῆσαι
βῶν ἀζαλέην τό μοι ἔστι ταλαύρων πολεμίζειν.

("I know how to wield my withered oxhide to the right or to the left, which is, to me, the means of fighting bravely." --lines 238-239).

A few pages into Book VII, Anna digresses from her narrative and speaks eloquently in praise of her late husband, Caesar Nicephorus. In making mention of his ster-

ling qualities, Anna compares him to Achilles, whom Homer praised extensively; thus, Nicephorus could be said to have "excelled among all men who live beneath the sun,"⁶⁰ as did Achilles in Homer's estimation.

Further on into this same book, Anna describes how Tzachas in his discussions with the admiral Constantine Dalassenus was attempting to strike a bargain with the emperor through a marriage contract, whereupon he would return to Alexius the islands he had taken from the Roman Empire. Dalassenus mistrusted Tzachas and informed him that the matter was to be referred to Ducas. Tzachas then made a statement which Anna relates to Homer, i.e., "Tzachas gave the impression that he was quoting from Homer's line, 'Night is already upon us: it is good to heed the night.'"⁶¹ This reference from the Iliad takes us back to the same battle between Ajax and Hector mentioned above. At this point in the episode, the combat has become very serious and two ambassadors, one Greek and the other Trojan, step in to separate the two adversaries at the behest of Zeus. The Trojan emissary, Idaeus, beseeches the two heroes to stop fighting, reassuring them that they are both fine warriors. Also, night is about to fall, which is another good reason for laying down their arms:

νύξ δ' ἤδη τέλει· ἀγαθὸν καὶ οὐκτὶ μίθεσθαι.

("For it is already night, and it is good to give in to it."--Book VII, line 282).

A few pages later, Anna describes how, in the midst of the battles between the Scythians and the forces of the emperor, when night fell, "'the others, both gods and warriors with horse haircrests, slept,' to quote Homer's muse, but 'sweet sleep did not embrace Alexius.'" ⁶² This quote is from Book II of the Iliad, lines 1-2, where Homer was describing the insomnia of Zeus, who was pondering how he could come to the aid of the humiliated Achilles and at the same time have the Greek forces reap the harvest of Agamemnon's arrogance:

ἄλλοι μὲν ῥά θεοί τε καὶ ἄνδρες ἵπποκορυσταὶ
εὖδον παννύχιοι, Δία δ' οὐκ ἔχε νήδυμος ὕπνος.

Thus, Alexius, the emperor of the Byzantines, like Zeus, the king of the gods, was lying awake pondering battle-related problems.

Anna then goes on to describe Alexius' infamous wheel strategem, whereby he took the wheels from the wagons belonging to the local people and had them suspended in a row from the battlements on the outside of the wall. The next day, Alexius instructed his men that when the Scyths proceeded to charge, they were to head to the right and left, thereby giving ground to the enemy as they approached the wall. So, the Byzantine soldiers, following the emperor's orders, "'slowly changed knee for knee,'" ⁶³ and made space for the Scyths to enter, whereupon the wheels were released from the wall above and created great havoc, with

the result that Alexius' army won the battle. The Homeric reference is from Book XI of the Iliad, at the point when Ajax had been wreaking havoc among the Trojans by attacking fiercely and managed to avoid the sword of Hector as he sought to overtake Ajax. Zeus then decided to put a stop to Ajax's rampage:

στῇ δὲ ταφῶν, ὅππῃθεν δὲ σάκος βάλεν ἑπταβόων,
 τρέσσε δὲ παπτήσας ἐφ' ὀμίλου, θηρὶ ἐοικώς,
 ἐντροπαλιζόμενος, ὀλίγον γόνυ γουγὸς ἀμείβων.

("And he stood in wonder, and cast his seven-fold shield behind him. After peering around cautiously, he turned in flight towards the crowd, like a wild beast, turning about frequently, exchanging knee close upon knee."--lines 545-547).

In Book VIII, Anna describes the preparations of Alexius and his army for doing battle with the Scyths. They prayed throughout the night and equipped themselves for battle the next morning. Alexius ordered the alert to be sounded; the troops massed. Alexius took his place at their head, "'breathing the fierce spirit of battle,'" ⁶⁴ according to Anna. This reference is from Book XXIV of the Odyssey, and it is an interesting one. At this point in Homer's narrative, after having slaughtered the suitors of Penelope in the great hall, Odysseus is in the presence of his aged father Laertes. He disguises his identity and tells Laertes that he is a wayfarer who saw Odysseus more

than four years ago. Laertes reacts to this news with despair and proceeds to pour black dust over his head in mourning for the son he presumes to be dead. Odysseus is moved with deep compassion for the old man:

ΤΟΥ Δ' ὤρίνετο θυμός, ἀνὰ ῥῖνας δέ οἱ ἤδη
 δριμύ μένος προύτυψε φίλον πάτερ' εἰσορόωντι.

("His--Odysseus'--heart was moved, and stinging wrath forced itself forward through his nostrils as he beheld his beloved father."--lines 318-319) Here, Odysseus is intensely moved at the sight of Laertes in his grief and experiences a combination of sorrow, anger, and outrage at the old king's suffering which had endured over the years because of the unknown fate of Odysseus, both during and after the Trojan War. It may perhaps be said that in the Alexiad, the emperor is moved not only with the spirit of battle as the fighting is about to commence, but that this emotion is mingled with concern for his men, as well, and the thought that a number of them might well lose their lives in the exchange.

In Book IX, Anna discusses Nicephoras Diogenes' desire to assassinate Alexius. Nicephorus arrived at Daphnutium where Alexius had camped, and set up his tent close to where Alexius' was pitched. This state of affairs was reported to the emperor by Manuel Philokales, who was aware of Nicephoras' treachery. Alexius would not take any action against Nicephoras, to Manuel's chagrin. During the

night, while Alexius and the empress slept, Nicephorus approached their tent and stood at the threshold hiding a sword under his arm. According to Anna, Nicephorus was prevented from harming Alexius through divine intervention. Upon beholding the young girl who was fanning the royal couple, "'trembling seized on his limbs and a pale hue spread over his cheeks,'" ⁶⁵ whereupon he abandoned this particular attempt at murdering Alexius. Here, Anna is very aptly comparing Nicephoras to Paris, the abductor of Helen, in Book III of the Iliad. In this episode, Menelaus, the husband of Helen, has responded to Paris's challenge of hand-to-hand combat with whichever of the Greek warriors wished to fight. Upon seeing who his adversary is, Paris loses courage and retreats back into the Trojan ranks, as Homer describes:

ὥς δ' ὅτε τις τε δράκοντα ἰδὼν παλινὸρσος ἀπέστη
 οὐρεὺς ἐν βήσσει, ὑπὸ τε τρόμος ἔλλαβε γυῖα,
 ἄψ δ' ἀνεχώρησεν, ὥχρος τε μιν ἔειλε παρείας.

("As when someone, seeing a serpent in a mountain glen, stands away, recoiling, and a trembling takes hold of his limbs, and he retreats, while a pallor seizes his cheeks."
 --lines 33-35).

In the course of Book X, Anna is paying tribute to the braze Byzantine warrior Marianus, son of the Duke of the Fleet. Speaking in Latin, Marianus urged the enemy soldiers not to do battle with their fellow Christians.

However, he was attacked by a Latin priest who was in the company of the opposing forces. Marianus fought bravely against the repeated attacks of this man. A fierce battle ensued between the Byzantine and the Latin forces and continued for many hours. Despite the granting of an armistice by Marianus at the Latins' request, this particular priest continued to attack and hurled a sharp stone at Marianus. This blow rendered him unconscious and he was unable to speak for a time. Anna compares Marianus' state with that of Hector in Book VII of the Iliad after he was attacked in a similar manner by Ajax. Like Hector, Marianus was ultimately able to recover his senses and resume his role in the fray (only Marianus did not have the aid of Apollo, as did Hector!)

A little further on in the same book, Anna is describing to her readers Alexius' reluctance to have his troops engage in combat with the Kelts on Holy Thursday because of the sacredness of the day. He ordered Anna's husband Nicephorus to instruct his men to aim widely at the enemy so that the minimum of lives would be lost. Anna goes on to describe the emperor's bowmen as being, "skilled as Homer's Teucer in archery."⁶⁶ Teucer is an outstanding figure in the Iliad. He is the half-brother of the greater Ajax, i.e., the son of Telamon, and is the best archer of all the Achaeans. This constitutes quite a compliment on Anna's part. She then continues to describe the bow of Nicephorus

as being, "truly worthy of Apollo."⁶⁷ Now, only Apollo's skill with the bow could be perceived as better than that of Teucer. (Of course, Anna had to render the ultimate compliment to her husband.) Apollo was the god of archery (among many other things) and the patron of archers. When people or animals died suddenly from some illness, their deaths were attributed to Apollo's arrows (and this is very evident in Book I of the Iliad).

Anna continues her praise of Nicephorus by declaring that, unlike the Trojan fighters in Homer's poetry, her husband did not, "'pull the bow-string until it touched his breast and draw back the arrow so that the iron tip was near the bow,'"⁶⁸ that is to say, Nicephorus was not making a display of his skill with his weapons, as the Achaeans had done. Here, Anna is making a reference to the Trojan warrior Pandarus' skillful fitting of his bow, prior to taking an unsuccessful aim at King Menelaus, at the instigation of Athena:

ἔλκε δ' ὄμρῳ γλυφίδας τε λαβὼν καὶ νεῦρα βόεια
νευρὴν μὲν μαζῷ πέλασεν, τόξῳ δὲ σίδηρον.

(Book IV, lines 122-123). Anna then reinforces her laudatory remarks about Nicephorus by declaring that, "'even Teucer and the two Ajaxes were not his equal in archery,'"⁶⁹ so forcefully did he bend his bows and release his arrows.

At another point in Book X, Anna is describing the arrival of "a numberless heterogeneous host gathered together from almost all the Keltic lands with their leaders."⁷⁰ Alexius sent ambassadors to greet them and their officers and to offer refreshment. On describing the approach of the Keltic troops to Constantinople, Anna remarks upon their massive numbers and states that they were as "'numerous as the leaves and flowers of spring.'"⁷¹ This quote appears in more than one instance in Homer's works. Firstly, it is seen in Book II of the Iliad, where the poet is describing the massing of the Greek troops on the Trojan plain:

ἔσταν δ' ἐν λειμῶνι Σκαμανδρίῳ ἀνθεμόεντι
 μυρίοι, ὅσα τε φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ἄρη.

("They stood in the flowery meadow of the Scamander--
 thousands--and were as many as both the leaves and the
 blossoms during their season."--lines 467-468.)

A similar quote occurs in Book IX of the Odyssey, where Odysseus is describing to King Alcinous his sojourn in Ismarus, the city of the Cicones. Odysseus and his men had sacked the city and killed its male inhabitants. Instead of departing right away, Odysseus' men wished to linger and enjoy the resources of this place. In the meantime, the very strong neighboring Cicones, who were quite numerous, arrived to attack the Greek warriors:

ἤλθον ἔπειθ' ὅσα φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ⁴⁵
ἡ ἔρως
ἥρην

("At dawn they came, as many as the leaves and flowers during their season."--lines 51-52).

In Book XIV, Anna briefly discusses Alexius' mercy toward the traitor Michael, the governor of Akrounos, who had instigated a rebellion, taken control of the city, and then terrorized the surrounding area. After Michael's capture by George Dekanos (one of Alexius' most trusted associates and a fine warrior), Alexius, instead of causing Michael to be executed as he deserved, not only set him free, but sent him on his way with many gifts.⁷² Anna goes on to tell her readers that Alexius was inclined to behave that way towards those who deceived and betrayed him, even though many of these people ultimately demonstrated ingratitude for his kindness. This is followed by another example of Anna's using a biblical reference and a Homeric quotation in sequence. She compares her father's mercy to that demonstrated by God when He sent manna to the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness under Moses.⁷³ As the Israelites subsequently proved unfaithful to the Lord for his beneficence (by condemning and crucifying Him), Alexius reaped ingratitude for the kindness he had shown. Anna continues by saying that despite her desire to speak of these evil people and events, she summons up

patience and quotes to herself Homer's words, "'Endure, my heart; thou has suffered other, worse things before.'" ⁷⁴

Here, Anna is comparing herself to Odysseus in Book XX of the Odyssey. At this point in the epic poem, not too far from its end and to the resolution of the conflict involving Penelope's suitors, Odysseus is trying to sleep and is unable to do so as he contemplates the evils which have been a part of his household for so long. He hears the laughter of a group of the suitors' mistresses as they emerge from the house and this evokes great anger in Odysseus' heart. He debates within himself whether to go after the suitors and murder them right then and there or to wait for his proper revenge. He counsels his heart to have patience, as he recalls another, more terrible, instance when he needed to exert a similar measure of control:

Τέτλαθι δῆ, Κραδίη· καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης,
ἡματι τῷ ὅτε μοι μένος ἄσχετος ἦσθιε Κύκλωψ
ἰφθίμους ἑτάρους· σὺ δ' ἐτόλμας, ὅφρα σε μήτις
ἔξαγαγ' ἐξ αὐτροῖο οἴόμενον θανάεσθαι.

(Bear up, my heart. You once endured another, more shameless, thing, on the day when the Cyclops, ungovernable in his wrath, devoured my mighty comrades. But you held out, until ingenuity drove you out of the cave as you thought you were about to die."--lines 25-28)

So, as Odysseus found it prudent to check his impulses, so Anna identified with this train of reasoning

and decided to call a halt to her indignant remarks against Michael and others like him.

Anna Comnena referred to Homer's works quite extensively in order to lend strength to her descriptions and clarify the points that she was endeavoring to make in her history. There are several more such Homeric quotations and allusions in the Alexiad, and this fact serves as abundant evidence of the matchless esteem in which "the poet" was held during the Greek Middle Ages, not only by Anna Comnena herself, but by virtually all scholars, students, and people of any degree of cultivation in the Byzantine Empire.

As a postscript to the material in this chapter, it should be mentioned that a number of such references can also be seen in the Chronographia of Michael Psellos.⁷⁵ The most famous of these involves Psellos's description of the occasion on which Constantine IX's mistress, Sclerena, was walking in a procession with the empress Zoe and Zoe's sister, Theodora. This was the first occasion on which the citizenry saw Sclerena together with the other two women. One person quoted two words from a line of Homer (from the Iliad, Book III, line 156): *οὐ δέμειδ' ἔγωγε* ("It is no shame"), to express his tolerance, if not admiration, of Sclerena's appearance and of Constantine's relationship with her. Indeed, it only took these two words to conjure

up in people's minds the Homeric scenario in which Priam and several elders of Troy, upon viewing Helen's beauty from where they were sitting in conference on the tower, remarked:

οὐ νέμεος Τρῶας καὶ εὐκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς
τολῆδ' ἀμφὶ γυναῖκι πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν.

"It is no shame that the Trojans and the well-greaved Achaeans suffer for a long time because of such a woman (as she)."

Such was the magical web spun by Homer.

CHAPTER VI

THE GREEK LANGUAGE IN THE BYZANTINE PERIOD

For the final chapter of this study, the discussion will turn to the Greek language to which the Byzantine students devoted themselves throughout their training and which the inhabitants of the Empire both preserved in their scholarship and utilized in their daily lives throughout the centuries.

It should be remembered that since the works of Homer were first written down sometime around the seventh century B.C., the Greek language has undergone a great many changes. Nevertheless, it "has enjoyed a continuous tradition,⁷⁶ up to the present time, and is one language rather than a series of distinct languages."⁷⁷

The main obstacle to spontaneity and creativity in both Byzantine learning and literature was very likely the language. According to Runciman, three forms of Greek existed in Constantinople.⁷⁸ The first was the vernacular tongue employed by the common people. The grammar of this this form of Greek was simple and its vocabulary a mixed bag of colloquialisms. This form of the language was called Romaic, and the name was derived from the title that the Byzantines had given themselves, namely, *Ῥωμαῖοι* (Rhomaioi). This title denoted the new Hellene who now

lived in a Christian setting and was under the authority of the Orthodox Church. In the multiracial Byzantine world, Rhomaioi and barbarians were not separated by ethnic considerations, as had been the case with the ancient Hellenes; rather, what distinguished the Rhomaioi from the others was their Greek Orthodox faith. The Rhomaioi were unified under the authority of the Emperor, God's earthly representative, by membership in this community of believers. Despite the loss of his traditional title of Hellene and the breakdown of pure ethnicity, the citizen of the Byzantine Empire loyally held onto the age-old sense of separation from the barbarian element that inhabited his world. He, the Rhomaios, was the inheritor of a wondrous civilization and now of a religion which distinguished him from the others. This outlook extended to Byzantine relations with the Latin West. In the twilight years of the Empire, the Rhomaioi preferred subjugation at the hands of the Turks to union with Rome, even if the latter alternative were to involve military assistance.⁷⁹

The second language was the Greek which was utilized by educated people; they spoke and carried on their correspondence in this language. This second type of Greek did not remain uniform, and fluctuated in its resemblance to classical Greek and in its level of quality. By the early Byzantine period accent determined the stress of words, and

the diphthongs were being pronounced uniformly as the iota sound (i.e., long e).

The third type of Greek was the ancient classical language, which was taught in the schools and diligently learned by those who wished both to become and to be considered cultivated citizens of the medieval Roman Empire.

A gap existed between the Greek that was spoken and that which was written. Koine Greek (ἡ κοινὴ γλῶσση) existed from the early centuries of the common era, but its roots go back to the fourth century B.C., when Philip of Macedon adopted Attic Greek for use in diplomacy and administration in his efforts to increase the status and power of his kingdom. With the conquests of Alexander the Great, the use of Attic Greek expanded far and wide so as to become the international language for the conquered territories and to ultimately supersede the older dialects of Greece itself. The Koine became the medium of prose literature in the Hellenistic world. This "common" language consisted of a merging, from around the fourth century B.C., of the different dialects that had existed in the classical world, and was in use during the Hellenistic period, when it was written, spoken, and universally understood.

The Hellenistic period was characterized by a breakdown of barriers and by communication on a wide scale. Both Greece and Rome made their contributions to the unity

which developed in the Mediterranean area. As the kingdoms of the Hellenistic world ultimately crumbled, Rome was coming to the fore in power and the wherewithal to create a new empire. Unity was achieved through Roman roads, while the Greek contribution came in the form of a lingua franca, which was the Koine. This language became widespread and was the vehicle by which people from far-ranging parts of the Empire could understand and be understood. Koine Greek thus became the instrument by which the Good News of Christianity was communicated to the nations; it was also the tongue in which the Christian liturgy was later formulated. (It was also utilized in the Church of Rome until the early third century.) Thus, the Gospels and Epistles were composed in this form of Greek, as was the Septuagint, which dated from the third century B.C. The Byzantine Empire inherited these writings for use in its liturgy and for their profound influence on its spiritual life and religious writings; indeed, on its entire thought-world (besides the role of the Koine in early missionary work).

Around the third century B.C., Alexandrian scholars directed their attention to the writings of classical Greece. They produced editions of commentaries in their zeal to restore the brilliant writings of their past to as close to their original form as possible. Like the Byzantines in later centuries, they perceived the inimitable

quality and workmanship of these writings and of the language in which they had been composed. Never again could such a high calibre of literary greatness be achieved; one could only endeavor to imitate the work of the glorious past.

This mentality had its roots in the Hellenistic age and persisted throughout the Byzantine era. It can be viewed as a sort of cultural burden, this inheriting of a literature that is too great. Poets and other writers of later years can despair at their inheritance as well as glory in it; they may lose their inspiration and their resolve to create as they experience a feeling of inferiority and perhaps even hopelessness.

A trend dating from the end of the first century B.C. which profoundly influenced the Greek of the Byzantine world was the fact that the grammar and rhetoric teachers deplored the idea that the Greek language was experiencing change and further developments. These linguistic experts insisted that the only proper form of Greek was classical Attic. The Koine was seen to be incorrect, an ignorant and vulgar mode of expression which was to be rejected as a medium of proper verbal and written expression. In the years that followed, this movement gained momentum and dominated the teaching of Greek in the schools, as well as exercised a great influence on prose writing so that the ancient language was consciously and conscientiously

imitated to the detriment of the contemporary, developing form of Greek.⁸⁰ This marked the beginning of the diglossy which characterized the Greek tongue throughout the Byzantine era and into the modern era.

There are a number of reasons which can account for the success of this trend. Firstly, there is the fact that the gap that existed between the literary and spoken forms of the language became wider. The possibility of further dialectical differentiation within the Koine itself may also have been a contributing factor. A third reason might have been the fact that the reaction against the flowery rhetoric of the first century B.C. caused teachers to encourage imitation of classical models. Lastly, the conquest of Greece by the Romans resulted in a renewed harkening back to the great days of ancient Greece. This latter factor caused the writers and grammarians to ignore the progress and trends of their present age and to concentrate on past glories, so that they strove to express themselves in the language of their glorious ancestors. This served as a status symbol, as well; knowledge and command of the ancient mode of expression could heighten one's class position.

Early Christian writings, for example, the Didache and The Shepherd of Hermes, imitated the New Testament in language and style. Such a trend might have continued and prevailed over the Atticistic movement to establish a lin-

guistic trend for subsequent Christian literature in Greek. However, the Christian preachers and writers ultimately had to also reach a more cultivated audience than the poorer class to whom Christianity had initially appealed. The result of this factor was that beginning with the second century, Christian apologists were obliged to compose their treatises in a more formal, that is, Attic style which would be more acceptable to their readers (not that these attempts succeeded in approximating the richness and nuance of the archaic language; that glory belonged to the past.) It was thus that diglossy became even more firmly entrenched in literary usage, so that it continued for centuries more. An example from the early Christian period is Clement of Alexandria in the third century who employed Attic Greek as his vehicle of expression, hand-in-hand with his use of Greek philosophy as a tool in explaining Christian doctrine to his readers.

The archaic form of the language was very prestigious and the only Greek taught in the schools. The common language was not to be even spoken on formal occasions. The fact that the Christian scriptures had been composed in this vulgar tongue did not cause it to be any more acceptable. Socrates in his Ecclesiastical History brought out the point that the scriptures were the source of wonderful doctrines of faith, but that they failed to instruct the be-

liever in the art of correct expression, so that he might defend his faith against the attacks of nonbelievers.

The fourth-century Fathers of the Church uniformly opted for the ancient literary language over the contemporary spoken tongue in their writing and preaching. The Christian writers of this period took words and expressions from the Greek scriptures and included them in their texts which were written in the puristic tongue, thus treating of these terms on a purely lexical level, while rejecting the morphology and syntax found in the Greek Bible.⁸¹ This trend further enhanced the prestige of the purist Greek and gave continued life to the diglossy that had begun four centuries before. The type of Greek used by the Church Fathers was the literary language of most of the Greek literature produced in the next thousand years. The linguistic form of Greek was relegated to being an undercurrent of the predominant trend and was mainly utilized for the composition of saints' lives (which sometimes contained quotes from Homer and other much-admired writers), stories of desert fathers, and world chronicles.

The Koine language, which was for the most part Attic in style and usage, experienced further changes and breakdowns during the medieval period, thus laying the foundation for Modern Greek. A parallel with the evolution or breakdown (depending upon one's point of view) of Latin into the Romance languages can be seen, as the structure of

the language became simplified and irregular forms were assimilated into the regular systems of syntax and morphology. The accent in Greek now served to indicate stress rather than vowel quantity. Simplification and assimilation occurred in accordance, and in syntax and morphology.⁸² Roman administrative, technical, and military terms came to be found in the developing Greek of the Middle Ages, just as later on Arabic, Turkish, and Italian words crossed over into Modern Greek.

An author needed to choose the type of Greek which would function as his medium of literary expression. This did not pose much of a problem for prose writers until the seventh century, since proper writing closely resembled classical Greek, anyway. The situation was different for poetry, however, in light of the new rules for stress which were followed since the sixth century.⁸³ Still, classical meters, especially iambics, were followed throughout Byzantine history, with poets paying careful attention to quantities of syllables.

The new Greek that was blossoming during the Middle Ages did not make headway into Byzantine literature. The government and Church officials would not have approved this, and perpetuated the teaching and use of Attic Greek, the rules of which were tirelessly expounded to students by the rhetoricians and grammarians who taught them, as we have already seen. This tendency illustrates the Byzan-

tines' pride in their ethnic and cultural roots. They saw themselves as being, like their Hellenic predecessors, the proud keepers and preservers of an ancient and glorious tradition, and this was one tangible way in which they could express their pride. The language used by the ancient historians, philosophers and dramatists was considered the only true and correct mode of literary expression. A truly educated and cultivated individual was one who could write in formal and correct classical style with references to mythology and the scriptures both.⁸⁴ Form and style were of the essence, but only a certain group of people could understand or appreciate such work: those who had received an education comparable to that of the writer.

At this point it would be appropriate to present a few examples of early Byzantine poetry as an illustration of this Atticistic trend which involved not only the Greek language itself, but extended to the inclusion of pagan themes, as well. It must be emphasized that, despite the Christianization of the Empire, this ancient cultural tradition was very much alive in Byzantium, and not only during the comparatively early period from which this poetry dates. The following examples all date from the sixth century, and represent some of the finest poetical efforts of the Empire. Their mood, as we shall see, is very pagan.

The first poem was composed by Macedonius, who flourished during the middle of the sixth century:

Φωσφόρε, μὴ τὸν Ἔρωτα βιάζεο μηδὲ διδάσκου
 Ἄρει γειτοπέων, νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχειν.
 ὥς δὲ πᾶρος Κλημένης ὀρόων Φαέθοντα
 μελᾶσθω
 οὐ φρόνον ὠκυπόδην εἶχες ἀπ' ἀντολῆς,
 οὕτω μοι περὶ νύκτα, μόγις ποθέοντι φανεῖσαν
 ἔρχεο δηθύκων ὥς παρὰ Κιμμερίους.⁸⁵

Morning Star, do not do violence to Love,
 Nor be taught by your neighbor Ares to have a
 ruthless heart.
 But as before, having seen Phaethon in the hall
 of Clymene,
 You did not hold a swift-footed course from
 the East;
 Thus, at night, which has appeared to me who has
 been yearning for it with pain,
 Come tarrying as (you do) in the presence of the
 Cimmerians.

In this poem, the author is addressing the Morning Star, which in the ancient Greek religion was regarded as the star that heralded the approach of dawn (Aurora) and bore the light of day. The Morning Star is here being advised to treat Love personified (i.e., Eros, the god of love) with kindness, and to avoid the influence of Ares, the god of war. Ares personified blood-thirstiness and violence (hence, the antithesis of love), and was not very popular with the ancient Greeks. Indeed, in many of the myths, Ares did not emerge from battles as the victor; he was often deceived or restrained by the power of other

deities or by heroes, such as Herakles. (He was much more popular as a member of the later Roman pantheon.)

According to one (and the more popular) tradition, Phaethon was the son of Helios (the Sun) and the Oceanid Clymene, hence the reference to his having visited her hall. Phaethon's "swift-footed course" refers to the drive he took across the sky in his father's chariot, which resulted in his (Phaethon's) death. The poet's plea to the Morning Star to take his time in coming, includes a reference to the Cimmerians, who were a mythical race who inhabited a country where the sun never appeared. Hence, we can appreciate the allusion which occurs at the end of the poem; if the poet got his way, the day would never come, since the sun would not appear.

Macedonius was also the author of the following selection:

Νῆα Ποσειδάωνι πολύπλωνος ἄνθετο Κράντας,
 ἔμπεδον ἐς νηοῦ πέζαν ἐρεϊσάμενος,
 αὔρης οὐκ ἀλέγουσαν ἐπὶ χθονός· ἧς ἐπὶ Κράντας
 εὐρύς ἀνακλινθεὶς ἄτρομον ὕπνον ἔχει.⁸⁶

Far-roaming Krantas dedicated his ship, which
 pays no heed to the breeze on land, to Poseidon,
 Having set it firmly to the steadfast edge of
 the temple;
 On this land does broad Krantas, after reclining,
 Have serene rest.

In this poem we have a Greek sailor who has dedicated his vessel to the god Poseidon, who in the ancient religion

a dry harbor.
 I am just a tomb; as your ship approaches, you
 heavily strike with your oar-handle another
 place that is free from grief.
 This will be pleasing to Poseidon and to the
 hospitable gods;
 Fare thee well as you travel on the sea or on
 the land!

This is another poem in which the power and prestige of Poseidon are acknowledged. Here, the harbor is addressing a sailor and urging him not to direct his efforts on its own behalf, as it is only as good as a tomb. Rather, his activities will serve to propitiate Poseidon, the god of the sea, as well as other, unnamed deities, who are described as hospitable and friendly. This poem represents another acknowledgement of the lingering pagan influence in the early medieval Greek Empire (and an influence that was long in disappearing).

The fourth selection was written by a poet named Julianus, who flourished just before the middle of the sixth century.

ΚΕΚΜΗΩΣ ΧΡΟΝΪΗ ΠΕΠΟΥΗΚΟΤΑ ΔΙΚΤΥΑ ΘΗΡΗ
 ἄνθετο ταῖς Νύμφαις ταῦτα γέρων Κινύρης.
 οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τρομερῇ παλάμῃ περιηγέα κόλπον
 εἶχεν ἀκουτίζειν οἰχομένοιο λύκου,
 εἰ δ' ὀλίγου δώρου τέλεθει δόσις, οὐ τότε
 Νύμφαι,
 μέμψις, ἐπεὶ Κινύρου ταῦθ' ὅλος ἔσκε
 βίος.⁸⁸

The old man Cinyras, after having toiled for
 a long time, offered these worn-out nets

to the Nymphs.

For no longer did he hold to hurl them with
his trembling hand at the surrounding gulf
when the fishing line was unfurled.

But if the gift is a small one, let it not be
something to complain about, Nymphs, since
this was Cinyras' whole life.

In this poem we have the situation of an old fisherman dedicating his tattered nets to the Nymphs who were the minor goddesses of the sea. The poet entreats them to graciously accept this ostensibly small gift, as it represented Cinyras' livelihood during his productive years. This is a rather poignant, touching picture of an aging man who has spent his youth and mature years laboring on the seas and who now wished to offer the trappings of his trade to the delicate and lovely sea deities whom he revered.

The next selection was composed by a poet named Leontius whose work dates from the mid-sixth century.

Ὀρφεὺς οἰχομένου, τάχα τις τότε λείπετο Μοῦσα.
σεῦ δέ, Πλάτων, φθιμένου, παύσατο καὶ κιθάρη.
ἦν γὰρ ἔτι προτέρων μελῶν ὀλίγη τις ἀπορρώξ⁸⁹
ἐν σαῖς σωζομένη καὶ φρεσὶ καὶ παλάμῃς.

When Orpheus passed away, some Muse was then
quickly left behind.

But, Plato, when you perished, your kithara
also stopped.

For there was some small portion of former
melodies that was saved in both your spirit
and in your hands.

In this poem in memory of a deceased musician named Plato, the artist is likened to Orpheus, the mythical Thracian bard (believed to have been the son of Calliope, the Muse who held domain over epic poetry and the most

renowed of these deities, whose sphere encompassed the various literary and art forms). Tradition holds that Orpheus' melodies and gift of song were so profound and beautiful that they caused the very stones to pay heed, and the god of the dead to demonstrate mercy. Orpheus can be said to have been a very symbol of a musician, singer, and poet. (Indeed, he still is.) His instruments were the lyre and the cithara, which he was believed to have invented (and which was the instrument of the Plato of this poem). At Orpheus' death, says Leontius, the art of music was carried on by one of the Muses; however, at the demise of this Plato, the music ceased, since he had carried in his heart and fingers something of the ancient art (which, we are to assume, is not to be continued by anyone else at this time).

The next two poems were written by Rufinus, who flourished during the middle of the sixth century.

Εἰ μὲν ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρωθεν, Ἔρως, ἴσα τόξα πταίνεις
εἰ θεός· εἰ δὲ ῥέπεις πρὸς μέρος, οὐ θεός εἰ.⁹⁰

Cupid, if you bend your bows equally towards both
(people), you are a god;
But if you incline either way, you are not a god!

Here, the poet is playfully doing some of his own sparring with Eros (Cupid), the mythical god of love, saying that if the god shows partiality in aiming his bow (from which he shot arrows that could engender love or hatred in their victims), his divinity is to be called into question. (As with the people of our own day and age, Love

was not far from the minds of the Byzantines, and a poet could certainly be expected to invoke this deity, even if he represented a pagan belief.)

The second of Rufinus' poems to be considered here is the following:

ὄμματα μὲν χρύσεια, καὶ ὑαλόεσσα παρειή
 καὶ στόμα πορφυρέης τερπνότερον κάλυκος,
 δειρὴ λυγρινέη, καὶ στήθεα μαρμαίροντα,
 καὶ πόδες ἀργυρέης λευκότεροι Θέτιδος.
 εἰ δέ τι καὶ πλοκαμίσι διαστίλβουσιν ἄκανθα,⁹¹
 τῆς λευκῆς καλᾶμης οὐδὲν ἐπιστρέφωμαι.

(She has) eyes of gold, and her cheek is like
 crystal;
 Her mouth is more delightful than a flushing
 rosebud.
 Her neck is marble-white, her bosom shimmers,
 and her feet are whiter than silvery Thetis.
 But if some thistle-down gleams in her locks,
 I pay no attention to the white corn-silk.

In the midst of praising the physical features of the lovely lady who is the subject of this poem, Rufinus describes her feet as being whiter than "silvery Thetis" of the ancient myths. Thetis, a Nereid (sea deity) and granddaughter of Oceanus, figured prominently in Homer's Iliad, as she was the mother of the hero Achilles who was, of course, one of the starring players in this epic. In Homer's poetry, Thetis is often described as "silvery" or "silver-footed," which bespoke her swiftness of movement along with her marine origins and associations. Her presence in the poetry of Homer ensured comprehension of

Rufinus' allusion on the part of his readers. The poet was paying the lady in question a gracious compliment by likening her to a graceful deity like Thetis. He also declares that he does not mind the fact that, due to age, her hair shows traces of white.

These poems have demonstrated not only how ancient Greek forms survived in the literary sphere of the Byzantine world, but also how the pagan mythological tradition prevailed tenaciously in this Christian Empire.

Still, despite the evidence that we have just seen, the results of this devotion to Attic Greek were not as satisfactory as the scholars, highly educated people, and authors would have wished. It is true that words and expressions in Attic Greek denoted culture and fostered literary success. Certain usages were deemed to be correct if they coincided with those used in ancient literary texts, so that spontaneity was superseded by ancient authority. This system, however, was full of pitfalls for Atticising writers who either overdid their efforts and produced false Atticisms or managed to use Koine forms anyway. The writings they produced often contained expressions and forms that were no longer used in the Greek world of the Middle Ages. Their knowledge of the pure Attic tongue was imperfect, so that they committed a multitude of grammatical errors when contemporary and ancient syntax

were used side-by-side. This constituted a hallmark of late antique and medieval Greek diglossy.

During the twelfth century the vernacular language was used by authors of secular poems and verse romances. Popular ballads and folk poetry flourished in more remote islands and provinces. The Atticistic language may have prevailed in the education and in the literary circles of the Greek Middle Ages, but the vernacular was the living language which survived to become Modern Greek. Byzantine literature has been criticized for lack of originality in style and language, and also on account of its generally mediocre quality. It is certainly true that the Byzantines did not produce many authors who can be compared to the great classical authors, notably the playwrights. (Although it must be said that there was a general lack of interest in drama, as the Byzantines preferred mimes and cabarets.) Still, despite the fact that there were few Byzantine authors who created works of genius, the medieval Greek Empire nurtured more capable and intelligent writers over a great span of time than any other country in the known world over the same period.⁹²

Since there was such great interest in classical Greek literature, much attention was given to textual and philological work. Byzantine grammarians and philologists preserved for posterity some of the major literary works of the ancients. Their learning and insight have aided our

comprehension of works of prose and poetry. Reference works, dictionaries, grammars, encyclopedias, commentaries and anthologies were produced to further the comprehension and appreciation of the literature. Their sense of tradition had so strong a hold on the Byzantines that scholars were at all stages involved in philological and exegetical studies. Some of these outstanding thinkers had farther-ranging effects on the classical pursuits that took place during the Italian Renaissance than has often been realized or acknowledged.⁹³

The ninth-century Patriarch Photios broke new ground with his Bibliotheca in which he placed extracts from a great variety of books he had read, along with his comments on their literary styles. This work is unique and unmatched in all of Byzantine literature. John Tzetzes (born ca. 1110) composed commentaries on Homer, Hesiod, and other classical authors. Eustathius, who lived during the late twelfth century, drew in his Homeric commentary on the best of the earlier commentaries and added his own perceptions. This work has been the basis for modern commentaries on the works of Homer. Such works as these, "were not literary creations, but they were the essential tools and products of an educated public."⁹⁴ During the fourteenth century there were a number of textual scholars who wrote commentaries on Homer, Pindar, Theocritus, and the tragedians.

Collections and anthologies were produced by the Byzantines, also. An outstanding example is the Excerpta of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. Since the Byzantines especially enjoyed etymology, the dictionaries they produced contained factual and historical material along with etymological detail. The most significant work of this nature dates from the tenth century and is entitled the Suda.

However, the Byzantines' fascination with the classics also inspired them, perversely, we might think, to abridge, annotate, and supposedly improve upon the originals. In the tenth century Cometus amended the work of Homer. During the eleventh century Nicetas thought he discovered allegories in every line of Homer's work, and in the fifteenth century Constantine Hermoniacus made an abridgement of the Iliad. The fascination with "the poet" never ended.

The science of schedography was restored by Psellos in the eleventh century. This involved the detailed analysis of certain passages of literature, thus affording grammar supremacy over literature itself.⁹⁵ Students would write analyses of sentences and the definitions of words, after which they explained the inflection and etymology of these words. This trend continued to the time of the Palaeologi.

In concluding this mention of schedography and the final chapter of this study, Anna Comnena will have the

last word. In her Alexiad she criticized what she believed to be the "stilted, pedantic education"⁹⁶ of her time and expressed her opinion regarding some of what she viewed as extremes in education:

"...it grieves me to see the total neglect of general education...After (I finished my) elementary studies I devoted myself to rhetoric...So the rough edges of my style were smoothed out; thereafter with the aid of rhetoric, I condemned excessive indulgence in schedography."⁹⁷

Even such a devotee of the classical style as Anna Comnena could see the need for limits on the passionate enthusiasm for detailed analysis of the "pure" Greek language which was so revered.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the people of the Byzantine Empire were passionately devoted to their cultural heritage. This led them, as we have seen, to zealously preserve a great portion of that wealth which would otherwise have been lost to posterity and to keep alive traditions of education, literary form, and language in an effort to keep their cultural birthright intact. On the other hand, their extremism led them to stifle a great deal of what could have been a much greater creative impulse in their learning and in their literature. The Byzantines have been harshly judged for this, and to some extent, rightly so. But theirs was, in large measure, a literate and cultivated society which cherished the glories of the classical Greek past and sought to emulate these. Their view that it was an impossible quest to surpass or even hope to equal the achievements of their illustrious predecessors can and, indeed, should be respected by those who seek to comprehend their outlook and the mindset which motivated them to proceed as they did in the intellectual and educational spheres of their culture through the centuries. As we have seen, a number of beacons flashed on the Greek horizon during this long

period in time, and those who have followed can only have benefitted from the love for learning and the classical past which they preserved and cultivated.

ENDNOTES

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⁴ Georgina Buckler, "Byzantine Education," in Byzantium, ed. N.H. Baynes and H. St. L.B. Moss (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 201.

⁵ This point was explored by L. Bréhier in his article, "Les populations rurales au IXième siècle d'après l'hagiographie byzantine," in Byzantium, Vol. I (1925), p. 182. (Ref. Buckler, *ibid.*)

⁶ Joan M. Hussey, The Byzantine World (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 146.

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⁸ Buckler, p. 200.

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¹⁰ Evelyn Patlagean, "Byzantium in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in A History of Private Life, ed. Paul Veyne (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1987), pp. 627-8.

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- ¹⁴ Cyril Mango, Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. 125.
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- ¹⁷ Runciman, p. 179.
- ¹⁸ Buckler, p. 204.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
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⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 172.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 324.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 173.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 220.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 237.

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⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 257.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 278.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 321.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 322.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 324.

⁷¹ Ibid.

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⁷⁵ Sewter, Fourteen Byzantine Rulers, p. 185.

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⁷⁹ Baynes, p. 21.

⁸⁰ Browning, p. 41.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 55.

⁸² Hussey, ed., vol. iv, The Cambridge Medieval History, p. 205.

⁸³ Runciman, p. 192.

⁸⁴ Hussey, ed., vol. iv, The Cambridge Medieval History, p. 206.

⁸⁵ Trypanis, p. 391.

⁸⁶ Gilbert Murray, Cyril Bailey, et al., editors, The Oxford Book of Greek Verse (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 583.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 584.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 582.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 584.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 583-4.

⁹²Hussey, ed., vol. iv, The Cambridge Medieval History,
p. 247.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Hussey, The Byzantine World, p. 150.

⁹⁵Runciman, p. 185.

⁹⁶Geanakoplos, p. 406.

⁹⁷Sewter, The Alexiad of Anna Comnena, p. 496.

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