LATE ANTIQUE OR EARLY BYZANTINE?
THE SHIFTING BEGINNINGS OF BYZANTINE LITERATURE

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SUNTO. – Lo scopo del lavoro è di esaminare le ragioni epistemologiche che stanno dietro gli sfuggenti inizi della letteratura bizantina, in un arco temporale di quattro secoli (300-700 d.C.), nonché i problemi metodologici relativi allo studio di tale letteratura, emersi dalla nascita della Tarda Antichità, come un nuovo periodo storico e un nuovo campo di ricerca. D’altro canto, lo studio propone una serie di quattro criteri immanenti al testo e di sette principi operativi interni ad esso, per mezzo dei quali si può arrivare con un diverso approccio metodologico agli “inizi” della letteratura bizantina. A tale scopo le opere di Eusebio di Cesarea e di Lattanzio saranno utilizzate come base per stabilire una rottura strutturale nella produzione letteraria nelle prime due decadi del quarto secolo. Con l’intento di verificare questa ipotesi, sarà fatto un confronto con un monumento importante e oggetto di un ampio dibattito (l’Arco di Costantino a Roma) e saranno proposte alcune conclusioni sulla letteratura greca del primo periodo bizantino.

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ABSTRACT. – The aim of the paper is twofold. On the one hand, it examines the epistemological reasons behind the shifting beginnings of Byzantine literature, a shift that covers a period of four centuries (AD 300-700), as well as the methodological problems for the study of Byzantine literature resulting from the rise of Late Antiquity as a new historical period and a new field of studies. On the other hand, the paper pro-
poses a series of four textually immanent criteria and seven internal operative principles by means of which a different methodological approach to the «beginning» of Byzantine literature can be reached. For this purpose Eusebios of Caesarea and Lauchtianus will be used as the textual basis for establishing a structural break in literary production in the first two decades of the fourth century. For the purpose of controlling this proposal a comparison with an important but highly debated monument (the Arch of Constantine in Rome) will be made and some final conclusions as to the course of Greek literature in early Byzantine times will be made.

Since the appearance of the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium twenty years ago, there have been a number of voices pointing to the absence of a new history of Byzantine literature. Obviously, one major difficulty in producing such a history in the age of electronic databases and the internet is the choice of the form and the content of this kind of large book. Another difficulty is the choice of the outer and inner boundaries for such a history: Where does it begin, where does it end, where does it make a pause in order to start afresh? In the present paper I will concentrate on the beginning of Byzantine literature because it is a most complex problem in its scholarly context, as well as being a most prominent marker on account of its symbolic force in opening a grand narrative.

Over the past decades the beginning or «upper boundary» of Byzantine literature has been moving downwards; for some scholars it

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1 See, for example, the various papers in P. Odorico – P.A. Agapitos (eds.), Pour une «nouvelle» histoire de la littérature byzantine: problèmes, méthodes, approches, propositions. Actes d’un colloque international philologique, Nicosie, mai 2000 [Dossiers Byzantins 1], Paris 2002, as well as the essays by A. Littlewood, Literature, in J. Harris (ed.), Palgrave Advances in Byzantine History, Basingstoke – New York 2005, pp. 133-146 and P. Odorico, Byzantium, a literature that needs to be reconsidered, in Byzantine Manuscripts in Bucharest’s Collections, Bucharest 2011, pp. 64-77.

has even reached the seventh century. This shift is not new. It had been already executed by Karl Krumbacher (1856-1909), the «father» of Byzantine Studies, albeit the other way round. For in the introduction to the first edition of his Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur (abbreviated hereafter as GBL) he strongly argued that Byzantine literature should begin in the middle of the seventh century, that is, after the death of Emperor Herakleios and the «end» of Greek (qua classicizing) literature.\(^4\) Six years later, however, in the equivalent section of the revised and expanded introduction to the second edition of the GBL, Krumbacher decisively and in the strongest terms placed the beginning of Byzantine literature in the reign of Constantine as sole ruler (AD 324-337), now viewing the literary production in Greek from the fourth to the seventh century as frühbyzantinisch («early Byzantine»).\(^5\) It becomes obvious to the attentive reader of both introductions that this change was in part the result of Krumbacher's newly won familiarity with early Christian literature and with the socio-economic history of the later Roman empire. Yet, Krumbacher was forced to begin the GBL with the age of Justinian because it was there that Ivan von Müller (1830-1917), founder and first editor of the Handbuch der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, had placed the boundary between the ancient and the medieval world.\(^6\)

The historiographical question of why the beginnings of

\(^3\) See references below in note 29.


Byzantine literature have been shifting over the past hundred-and-twenty years is directly related to the methodological question of how these beginnings are being defined. I would call these two interrelated questions the «epistemological problem», and I shall attempt to address it briefly in the first part of my paper. In the second part, I shall offer a proposal for establishing new criteria of periodization and a suggestion for a «specific beginning» of Byzantine literature.

PART I

Let me begin with the «epistemological problem». Parallel to the formation of the model of a national state and of its national language in the first half of the nineteenth century, there also developed the model of a national literature. In the sense of a nation’s historical continuity and its development towards the «age of progress», the beginnings of a specific nation were sought in the Middle Ages, while a national literature was created that would express the «characteristics» of this nation. The ideological concept of historical continuity supported the fashioning of a master narrative that presented a «history» of the creation and development of a particular national literature. This fashioning was attuned to the then prevailing «biological» concepts about the birth, growth and decay of an organism, be it a

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state or a literature. As a result, the concept of historical development played an important role in the formation of a biologicist master narrative for ancient Greek literature. Byzantine texts, being written in Greek, were placed in the historical period of the final decadence of Greek literature.

An important element of the concept of historical continuity (and, concomitantly, of the notions of beginning and end) was periodization. Since the sixteenth century, a tripartition of historical time was gradually established, through which the «flow of history» had been divided into Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times. A most important criterion for establishing the boundary between periods was the choice of a significant historical event or of a significant historical figure as the marking point for the turn of an era. Thus, the «end» of the Roman empire in the West in the year AD 476 was chosen as the most significant event to mark the boundary between Antiquity and the Middle Ages, or, to put it in nineteenth-century ide-

10 See A. Demandt, Biologistische Dekadenztheorien, Saeculum 36 (1985) 4-27.
11 A telling, and stylistically most powerful example, is the «decadence» of the Greek novel from late Roman to Byzantine times as described by E. Rohde, Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer, Leipzig 1914 (originally published in 1876), pp. 554-567; see the remarks of M. Alexiou, A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' «Hyismine and Hyismiñas», Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 3 (1977) 23-43, specifically pp. 23-24.
12 See P.E. Hübinger, Spätantike und frühes Mittelalter: Ein Problem historisch-er Periodenbildung, Darmstadt 1959, pp. 5-15 for a brief but well documented overview of the concept of periods in Antiquity and the Middle Ages.
14 See Demandt, Spätantike, pp. 590-591.
ological terms, the passage from the end of an overarching Roman citizen state to the beginning of the genesis of the modern European national states.\textsuperscript{15}

Strongly related to the criterion of the significant event or figure for establishing historical boundaries was –especially for literature and the arts– the criterion of «ancient education».\textsuperscript{16} This criterion exercised an immense influence in shaping the image of the passage to and the nature of the Middle Ages, because the survival of ancient education (whatever that might have meant) and, consequently, the production of a classicizing literature practically became the exclusive means for measuring the cultural achievement of a particular era. In the case of Byzantine literature, more specifically, the presence of a classicizing production was seen as an indication of a strong continuity,\textsuperscript{17} while its absence was interpreted as an indication of an even stronger discontinuity.\textsuperscript{18} Hence, the «otherness» of Christian literature in the Greek language was either legitimated through incorporation (Christian production accepted into the Greek pagan literary canon, for example,

\textsuperscript{15} It is a model that finds even today its implicit proponents, for example, A. Schiavone, \textit{The End of the Past: Ancient Rome and the Modern West}. Translated by M. J. Schneider [Revealing Antiquity 13], Cambridge, MA 2000 (Italian original published in 1996), pp. 200-202.


Gregory of Nyssa\textsuperscript{19} or ignored through omission (Christian production rejected as alien to this canon, for example, early hagiography\textsuperscript{20}).

A critical response to these ideological factors has led over the past sixty or so years to a gradual redefinition of the traditional boundary between Antiquity and the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{21} The spatiotemporal void resulting from this redefinition needed to be filled. \textit{Spätantike} or Late Antiquity not only consolidated itself as a new era between Antiquity and the Middle Ages but, more importantly, as a new and independent area of research that brought together in an innovative manner the fields of history, archaeology and literature.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, writers such as Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, Claudian, Nonnos of Panopolis, Sokrates Scholastikos, Chorikios of Gaza,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} See the critical remarks by M. van Uytfanghe, \textit{Heiligenverehrung II (Hagiographie)}, Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum 14 (1987) 150-183, concerning genre in early hagiography.
\end{itemize}
Cassiodorus, Jordanes, or writers of Greek and Latin lives of saints and miracle collections are now being viewed as authors and cultural exponents of Late Antiquity, rather than as participants in late Roman or early Byzantine society. This expansive tendency has gone so far that very recent studies suggest that Byzantine intellectuals of the ninth or the eleventh century had some understanding of Late Antiquity as a historically distinct era. This process of transformation, whose beginnings go back to the nineteenth century, stepped forcefully into the foreground forty years ago. Peter Brown published his brilliant little book on The World of Late Antiquity in 1971, in which he tore down the boundaries between the various disciplines and between time and space, and argued for the unity of an «expanded» Mediterranean world that extended geographically from Ireland to Mesopotamia and chronologically from the second to the seventh century. Though this transformation has been criticized from various perspectives, the concept of Late Antiquity and its autonomous his-

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24 S. Papaoianou, The Byzantine Late Antiquity, in Rousseau (as above n. 22), pp. 17-28.


27 See, indicatively, Av. Cameron, The Perception of Crisis, in Morfologie sociali
torical existence has fully established itself in the broadest interna-
tional academic contexts.\textsuperscript{28}

As a result, Byzantine history and literature have been undergoing
a similar transformation because, in an increasing number of recent
publications, the upper boundary of Byzantine culture has been moving
downwards to the seventh century.\textsuperscript{29} In my opinion, here lies a
methodological error in the marking of this new boundary. The «rise
and function of Late Antiquity» (to paraphrase the title of Peter
Brown’s famous paper\textsuperscript{30}) were described from a perspective that was
based on historical events, social history and artistic production of the
fourth and fifth century in the West.\textsuperscript{31} The concept of Late Antiquity


\textsuperscript{31} This is evidenced in the work of Jakob Burckhardt (1818-1897) and Alois Riegl (1858-1905); see the studies referred to in n. 25, as well as two studies by S. Mazzarino, \textit{Il basso impero: Antico, tardoantico ed èra constantiniana. Volume primo
attempted, against the various decadence theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth century to show that the late Roman era was, in fact, historically autonomous and artistically dynamic. This attempt led to a series of radical re-interpretations and re-evaluations of society, culture and literature in the Latin-speaking western Roman empire.\textsuperscript{32}

However, these new interpretive perspectives can only be projected with a substantial degree of arbitrariness upon the eastern parts of the empire because there the socio-economic, cultural, religious and linguistic context was different. The so-called unity of the expanded eastern-western late antique space cannot be so easily established on all levels simultaneously and in parallel development.\textsuperscript{33}

Two examples should suffice to demonstrate this difficulty in application. On the one hand, the Greek language and its «culture» were present in the East in a very different way than they were in the West, while there existed other languages that also had an important written culture (Hebrew, Syriac, Coptic) and that interacted strongly with Greek.\textsuperscript{34} On the other hand, it is not possible to project the 476 «end

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\textsuperscript{33} See, from rather different points of view, the critical papers by M. Mazzia, Di Ellenismo, Oriente e Tarda Antichità: Considerazioni a margine di un saggio (e di un convegno), Mediterraneo Antico 1 (1998) 141-170 and Av. Cameron, Thinking with Byzantium, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 21 (2011) 39-57.

\textsuperscript{34} G. Dargon, Aux origines de la civilisation byzantine: langue de culture et langue d’État, Revue historique 241 (1969) 23-56 (reprinted in G. Dargon, La romanité
of Rome» in the West unto the East.\textsuperscript{35} And yet, historians have attempted to find for the East a similar break out of which a new «medieval» state—the Byzantine empire—was to emerge. This break has been placed in the seventh century during which tumultuous events brought with them immense changes in all of the Eastern Mediterranean world.\textsuperscript{36} Literary scholars have tacitly taken over this break and have placed therein the end of «ancient education» and culture.\textsuperscript{37} Here, then, lies one reason for the continuous shifting of the
boundary between Antiquity and Byzantium. It is a boundary that cannot be stabilized because no similar historical preconditions for such a stabilization can be found as those developed for the western empire. Whatever one might think about the existence or not of Late Antiquity, one thing is certain. The periodization of history as argued by historians is external to the surviving texts. In this sense, an already existing conceptual frame is superimposed on the texts or, to express it in reverse, the texts are mechanically placed within a prefixed frame without any thought about their particular textual (qua literary and cultural) character.

PART II

The brief analysis presented in the previous pages makes it necessary to establish different criteria for the periodization of Byzantine literature. Obviously, periodization as a taxonomic tool for understanding the movement of historical time is a modern invention. It serves our scholarly needs and academic expediencies, but reflects only in the rarest of instances the notions premodern cultures might have had about «periods» in history or literary production. As Witold Kula, the famous Polish historian of medieval economy, brilliantly argued in his essay Reflections on history (1958), history is essentially the co-existence

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38 Even then, the concept of period in literature refers to a specific event that «changed» some major aspect of literature, for example the rise of Islam in the case of Arabic poetry or the «change» of poetry in fifth-century China. See B. Dodge, The «Fihrist» of al-Nadim: A Tenth-century Survey of Muslim Culture [Records of Civilization. Sources and Studies 83], New York 1970, pp. 343-378 (where al-Nadim divides poets before and after Islam), and S. Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought [Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 30], Cambridge, MA 1992, pp. 183-298 (on the sixth-century treatise of Liu Hsieh on poetics, where poetry is divided into «ancient ritual» poetry and «modern non-ritual» poetry).
of non-synchronisms without any apparent linear development. In other words, history and literature consist in their spatiotemporal movement of many different structures whose continuities, discontinuities and rhythms do not fully overlap at any given moment of their co-existence.

In order, then, to understand and to describe the multileveled and ever changing fluidity of literature we must formulate a series of criteria by means of which we could detect a «structural break»; such a break would allow us to read the literary production of a given era in a methodologically satisfactory manner against its appropriate historical and socio-cultural background. I would define these criteria as «textually immanent» because they have been developed from the texts themselves. Four such criteria are:

(i) The choice of at least two contemporary authors with a voluminous work so as to conduct a satisfactory comparison on the basis of substantial textual material.

(ii) A study of the structural, generic and stylistic characteristics of the various works of the authors chosen.

(iii) A study of the «authorial consciousness» of these writers concerning: (a) their opinion about the structural, generic, stylistic or other formative elements that are to be found in their works; (b) their more general opinions as authors, possibly in relation to their real or imagined predecessors; (c) the degree of convergence, divergence or innovation as to these predecessors.

(iv) A study of the primary and secondary reception of their works, that is, on the one hand, of their immediate addressees and their contemporary audience and, on the other, of later readers.

These criteria may help to establish if there is a structural break that could be characterized as the «beginning» of Byzantine literature. Within the time span from the early fourth to the middle of the seventh century – in other words, the three-and-a-half centuries of «Late Antiquity» – there are a number of periods that have been for-

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39 W. Kula, Riflessioni sulla storia. Traduzione e introduzione da M. Herling, Milano 1990, pp. 63-78. It is interesting to note that Santo Mazzarino expresses similar views about the passage from Roman to late Roman and, thus, late antique society; see an interview of his on the concept of crisis (1980), reprinted in La fine del mondo antico (as above n. 21), pp. 195-207.
m ally or inform ally proposed as the beginning of Byzantine literature: the sole rule of Constantine (AD 324), the division of the empire in 395, the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the reign of Justinian (527-565), the beginning or the middle of the seventh century, the very beginning of the eighth century. We might ask ourselves if the above mentioned four criteria are applicable to the following, always contemporary, authors (from the seventh back to the fourth century):

(i) George Pisides, Theophylaktos Simokates, Leontios of Neapolis, John Moschos and Sophronios of Jerusalem in the first third of the seventh century.

(ii) Prokopios of Caesarea, Romanos the Melodist, Paul the Silentia ry, Flavius Cresconius Corippus, Cyril of Skythopolis and John Malalas in the reign of Justinian.


(iv) John Chrysostom, Synesios of Cyrene, Claudius Claudianus, Ammianus Marcellinus and Eunapios of Sardis in the last quarter of the fourth century.

Each one of these authors has an important work to show, often

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40 Informally: Krumbacher, GBL² (as above n. 4); Krumbacher, Die griechische Literatur des Mittelalters (as above n. 5). Formally: Impellizzeri, La letteratura bizantina (as above n. 2); Hunger, Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner (as above n. 17). An interesting example of terminological variety can be found in the respective chapters on Byzantine literature in E. Jeffreys – R. Cormack – J. Haldon (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies, Oxford 2008, pp. 827-914, where the period 300-650 is referred to as late antique or early Byzantine according to the contributor's perspective.


42 Informally: Young/Ayres/Louth (as above n. 23).


44 Formally: Lauxtermann, Byzantine Poetry (as above n. 29); Kazhdan, History (as above n. 2). Informally: Krumbacher, GBL¹ (as above n. 4); Howard Johnston (as above n. 36), pp. 1-15 from a historian’s perspective.

45 Stephenson (as above n. 29), p. xxiv (with no explanation for the choice of AD 700).
described as «innovative», sometimes times even as «original». Yet, when they are compared to each other in their relevant environment, they do not offer the image of a clear and conscious break; on the contrary, they present exactly the kind of overlap of non-synchronisms consisting of particular continuities and discontinuities.

However, towards the end of the reign of Diocletian (AD 284-305) we find two authors who, in my opinion, meet the criteria for a structural break in literary production. These are L. Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius († ca. 325/6) and Eusebios of Caesarea (†339). Both were faced with the same very serious crisis, that is, the «great»


persecution of 303-313. Lactantius resigned from his post as teacher of rhetoric in Nicomedia (invited there by Diocletian), when he became an eyewitness to the beginning of the persecution in February 303, while, between 307 and 310, Eusebios was imprisoned and his teacher and protector Pamphilos executed.

Both authors entertained relations with Emperor Constantine. Lactantius had probably met him in Nicomedia before 306, while, later, on the emperor’s invitation, he became teacher to his son Crispus in 315. It is to Constantine that Lactantius dedicated the second edition of his *Divine Institutes* in 325, that is, after Constantine’s sole emperorship in 324. Eusebios met Constantine at the Council of Nicaea (summer of 325), while thereafter he had a «professional» exchange of letters with him. Eusebios declaimed a panegyric oration in Jerusalem in September 335, and another one in Constantinople in July 336 during the celebration of the emperor’s *tricennalia*.

Eusebios and Lactantius decided to dedicate their efforts to the systematic (historical and didactic) presentation of Christianity as (i) an autonomous religion distinct from «Hellenism» and «Judaism», (ii) an autonomous system of thought, and (iii) a historically realized decision of God concerning the path of humanity towards truth and salvation after death. The extended production of both authors includes apologetic, theological and historical works. However, these characterizations have to be placed in quotation marks since most of their works do not appear in a generic form instantly or even easily recognizable in relation to Ancient Greek, Latin, or earlier Christian literature. Both authors know to a certain extent the other «ecumenical» language, a knowledge that allows them to have some perspective of the other «ecumenical» literature as well.

The various works of the two authors present strong similarities; let me briefly mention the most obvious:

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(i) The *HE* of Eusebios and the *DMP* of Lactantius, despite their historical subject, stand completely outside the framework of political historiography on the levels of content, structure and style.50

(ii) Theological analysis and apologetic argumentation in their works tends rather to present the «proof» of the existence of Christianity and of Divine Providence for humanity, than actual theological thought.51 For example, the analysis in *DI* and *PE/DE* is conducted on the basis of a vast selection of passages from older –Greek, Latin, Jewish, Christian– texts, prose as well as poetry.

(iii) In all five of the above mentioned works (HE, DMP, DI, PE, DE) the two authors treat the selection of texts (for example, poetic passages or imperial documents) as an essential component of the truth —and, thus, of the validity— of their didactic discourse.52

(iv) Most of these works are dominated by a fluid form of composition that we could describe as a kind of «work-in-progress» with more

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than one «editions», while the texts often give the impression that they are entities composed out of distinct passages. Eusebios, in particular, presents writing as a process of transforming through narrative a group of selected passages into a σωμάτιον, a «book» (HE I 1.4):

Ὄσα τούνω εἰς τὴν προκειμένην ὑπόθεσιν λυσιτελεῖν ἡγούμεθα τῶν αὐτοῖς ἐκεῖνος σποράδην μνημονευθέντων, ἀναλεξάμενοι καὶ ὡς ἂν ἐκ λογικῶν λειμονόν τὰς ἐπιτηδείους αὐτόν τῶν πάλαι συγγραφέων ἀπανθισάμενοι φωνάς, δι’ ὑφηγήσεως ἱστορικῆς πειρασόμεθα σωματοποιήσαι [...].

Thus from the scattered hints dropped by my predecessors I have picked out whatever seems relevant to the present subject, plucking like flowers in literary pastures the useful utterances of earlier writers to be formed through a historical account into a book (Williamson/Louth, p. 2 with modifications).

The verb σωματοποιῶ signifies here «forming into the body of a book», given that Eusebios in Book 4 of the De vita Constantini (a letter of Constantine quoted in Greek) uses the phrase σωμάτιον ἐν διφθέραις ἐγκατασκεύοις and refers to a parchment codex.

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54 The words printed by me in italics are the technical terms Eusebios uses to describe the subject matter and narrative approach to his innovative work, in this case, υπόθεσις («subject») and υφήγησις ἱστορική («historical account»).

55 See DVC IV 36.2 (134.9-9 Winkelmann): πρέπον γάρ κατεφάνη τοῦτο δηλῶσαι τῇ σῇ συνέσει, ὅπως ἂν πεντήκοντα σωμάτια ἐν διφθέραις ἐγκατασκεύοις εὐανάγνωστα τε καὶ πρὸς τὴν χρήσιν εἰμιτακόμιστα ὑπὸ τεχνιτῶν καλλιγράφων καὶ ἀκριβῶς τὴν τέχνην ἐπισταμένων γραφῆναι κελεύσεις. – «It appeared proper to indicate to your Intelligence that you should order fifty volumes with ornamental leather bindings, easily legible and convenient for portable use, to be copied by skilled calligraphists well trained in the art» (Cameron/Hall, p. 166). The rendering of the phrase σωμάτια ἐν διφθέραις ἐγκατασκεύοις as «volumes with ornamental leather bindings» (see the commentary in Cameron/Hall, p. 327), based on Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius (as above n. 47), pp. 118-119, goes back to C. Wendel, Der Bibel-Auftrag Kaiser Konstantins, Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen 56 (1939) 165-175. The latter’s hypothesis
The wrath of God and the resulting punishment of Christianity’s persecutors is explained historically and documented theologically in both authors: (a) Lactantius first writes the DMP (the collection of horrifying deaths of the persecutors in a direct line from Nero to Licinius) and, then, composes his treatise DID, wherein he develops and refines his theology of God’s just anger;\(^{56}\) (b) Eusebius incorporates the deaths of the persecutors in the HE, putting a particular emphasis on Galerius and Maximinus, while he later transfers this passage from Book 8 of the HE to Book 1 of the DVC;\(^{57}\) (c) well beyond any older models, the death of the persecutor of Christians, as depicted by Lactantius and Eusebius, is elevated to one of the most powerful structural typoi for the representation of the death of evil characters in Christian historiography and hagiography.\(^{58}\)

Both authors express a critical attitude towards their predecessors who supposedly treated similar topics:

(a) In the opening chapters of Book 5 of the Divine Institutes, Lactantius presents three older Latin apologists of Christianity and their relevant works: Minucius Felix, Tertullian and Cyprian.\(^{59}\) He praises them individually for some of their
efforts, but he mainly criticizes their partial or insufficient development of their topic. In the case of Cyprian and his *Demetrius* he even criticizes the older author’s style (*Di* V 4.7):

quod quia ille non fecit raptus eximia eruditione divinarum litterarum, ut his solis contentus esset quibus fides constat, accessi deo inspirante, ut ego facerem et simul ut viam ceteris ad imitandum pararem.

Cyprian failed to do this because he was swept away by his own remarkable knowledge of divine literature; indeed, he was content with only those things which are the substance of our faith. Hence my own approach to the task, under the inspiration of God, and my approach also to the preparation of a path for others to emulate (Bowen/Garnsey, p. 290 with modifications).

(b) Similarly, Eusebius in the general preface to the *Ecclesiastical History* criticizes «the authors of old» and «the authors of ecclesiastical affairs» as having written in an insufficient or partial manner. 60 At a much later point and in a very different context (*He* VI 13.4-8), 61 he praises comprehensively only one work of an older author, namely, Clemens of Alexandria and his *Stromateis*, 62 a work that could be viewed as the only recog-
nizable conceptual model for his own «theological» works.\(^{63}\)

(c) It is important to note that both authors present themselves as doing something «different» or «new».\(^{64}\) On the one hand, Lactantius, twenty lines before his criticism of Cyprian just quoted, writes in relation to Tertullian’s *Apologeticus* (DI V 4.3):

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\text{alíud est accusantibus respondere, quod in defensione aut negatione sola}
\text{positum est, alíud instituire, quod nos facimus, in quo necesse est doctrinae}
\text{totius substantiam contineri.}
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there is a difference between merely responding to attacks, when defence and denial is the sole form, and setting up something new, which is what I am doing, when the full doctrinal content has to be in place (Bowen/Garnsey, p. 290).

Eusebios, on the other hand, makes two important statements concerning his pioneering and different «narrative discourse» (διηγηματικὸς λόγος) of «historical subject matter» (ὑπόθεσις or ύφήγησις). The first statement appears in the preface to Book 1 of the *Ecclesiastical History*, the second governs the preface to the same work’s Book 5 (HE I 1.3, and V pr.3-4 respectively):

(a) Άλλα μοι συγγνώμην εὐγνωμόνων ἐντεῦθεν ὁ λόγος αἰτεῖ, μείζονα ἢ καθ’ ἡμετέραν δύναμιν ὁμολογῶν εἶναι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ἐντελῆ καὶ ἀπαράλειπτον ὑποσχεῖν, ἐπεὶ καὶ πρῶτοι νῦν τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἐπιβάντες οἷα τίνα ἔρημη καὶ ἀτριβῆ ἰέναι ὁδὸν ἐγχειροῦμεν, θεὸν μὲν ὁδηγὸν καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου συνεργὴν σχῆσειν εὐχόμενοι δύναμιν, ἀνθρώπων γε μὴν οὐδαμῶς εὑρεῖν οἷοί τε ὄντες ἴχνη γυμνὰ τὴν αὐτὴν ἡμῖν προωδευκότων, μὴ ὅτι σιμικρὰς αὐτὸ μόνον προφάσεις, δι’ ὅν ἄλλος ἄλλως ὃν διηνύκασι χρόνον μερικὰς ἢ μεν οὐ καταλείπασι διηγήσεις, πόρρωθεν ὡσπερ εἰ πυρσοὺς τὰς ὑπὸ σκοπῆς βοῶντες καὶ διακελευόμενοι, ἡ ἀρχὴ βαδίζειν καὶ τὴν τοῦ λόγου πορείαν ἀπλάνως καὶ ἀκινδύνως εὐθύνειν.\(^{65}\)

\(^{63}\) On Eusebios and Clemens in Book 6 of the HE see Johnson, *Eusebius’ «Praeparatio Evangelica»* (as above n. 52), pp. 75-83 (in relation to the device ofexcerpting).


\(^{65}\) Here the technical terms used are λόγος («discourse, literary work»),
I trust that kindly disposed readers will pardon the deficiencies of my discourse, for I confess that my powers are inadequate to do full justice to so ambitious an undertaking. I am the first to venture on such a subject and to set out on what is indeed a lonely and untrodden path; but I pray that I may have God to guide me and the power of the Lord to assist me. As for men, I have failed to find any clear footprints of those who have gone this way before me; only minor remarks, by which in differing fashions they have left us partial narratives of their own lifetimes. Raising their voices like warning lights far ahead and calling out as from a distant watch-tower perched on some hill, they make clear to me by what path I must walk and guide the course of my work if I am to reach my goal in safety (Williamson/Louth, p. 2 with modifications).

(b) Τῆς μὲν οὖν περὶ τούτων ἐντελεστάτης ὑφηγήσεως τὸ πᾶν σύγγραμμα τῇ τῶν μαρτύρων ἡμῖν κατατέτακται συναγωγῇ, οὐχ ἱστορικὴν αὐτὸ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ διδασκαλικὴν περιέχον διήγησιν· ὁπόσα γέ τοι τῆς παρούσης ἐξοχο ἐπεξεργασίας, ταῦτ’ ἐπί τοῦ παρόντος ἀναλημματίζον εἰρήνησιμομαχηματικὸς. Αἴτησι καὶ μυρίους πάθους τὸ πάσαν πατρίδιτον καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἔννοια τῆς τούτων θεοματικῆς ἐνεργείας, ἐκδοσῶν τὰ ἀποκαλοῦντα τὴν γαρ τῶν πολέμων νίκαις καὶ τρόποις κατ’ ἐξήγερσι διατετάματα τὰ ἀριστείας καὶ ὑπέρτατον ἀνδραγάθιας, εἶναι καὶ μυρίους πάθους τὸ παίδαν καὶ τοὺς ἐν τούτοις ἐπάνω ἀληθείας μᾶλλον ἢ πατρίδος καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπάνω εὐσεβείας ἢ τῶν φιλάνθροποι ἀνδρισαμένοις ἀιώνιοι ἀναγράφεται στῆλαι.

The entire work about the most complete account of these things has been inserted in my Collection of Martyrs, containing not only a historical but also a didactic narrative. For the moment I will content myself with quoting such passages as are relevant to the present treatise. Other authors, having produced historical narratives, transmitted in writing victories in war and triumphs over enemies, the exploits of the commanders and the heroism of their men, stained with the blood of the thousands they have slaughtered for the sake of children and country and possessions; it is peaceful wars, fought for the very peace of the soul, and men who in such wars have fought manfully for truth rather than for country, for true religion rather than for their dear ones, that my narrative

ὑπόθεσις («subject»), σμικραὶ προφάσεις («minor remarks») and μερικαὶ διηγήσεις («partial narratives/accounts»).

66 The number of technical terms in this particular passage is very high: υφήγησις («account»), σύγγραμμα («written works»), ἱστορικὴ καὶ διδασκαλικὴ διήγησις («historical and didactic narrative»), πραγματεία («treatise»), ἱστορικαὶ διηγήσεις («historical narratives/accounts»), γραφὴ («writing»), διηγηματικὸς λόγος («narrative discourse»).
discourse of the polity according to God will inscribe on imperishable monuments (Williamson/Louth, p. 138 with substantial modifications).

(vii) Both authors strongly react to the same text. It is the Φιλαλήθης («Lover of Truth»), a now lost polemical treatise against Christians by Sossianos Hierokles, commander of Bithynia when the persecution was formally announced. Sossianos undertook a comparison between Christ as represented in the Gospels and Apollonios of Tyana as represented in Philostratos’ Life of Apollonios (ca. AD 220). On the one hand, Lactantius was present at a public reading of the work just before the beginning of the persecution; he criticizes the author in Book 5 of the Divine Institutes (V 2.12-3.24). On the other hand, Eusebius writes a brief essay against Sossianos and his inappropriate comparison between Christ and Apollonios as wonderworking men, though doubts have been expressed concerning the Eusebian paternity of the Contra Hieroclem.67

Beyond these actual similarities, there is another point that relates Lactantius to Eusebius. Both authors have been the subject of a debate concerning the literary genres to which their works belong, on the one hand, Lactantius’ De ira dei and De mortibus persecutorum, on the other, Eusebius’ Historia Ecclesiastica and De vita Constantini. The strongest disagreements concern the DMP and the DVC as «historiographical» works.68 In the case of the DVC especially, the most complex hypotheses have been proposed about how the text was actually composed and to what genre it belongs. These hypotheses are based on the presupposition that some recognizable ancient generic model must lie behind the DVC.69 In my opinion, this particular work cannot be reduced to any ancient model or combination of models, and this in

67 These doubts were eloquently proposed by T. Hägg, Hierocles the Lover of Truth and Eusebius the Sophist, in T. Hägg, Parthenope: Selected Studies in Ancient Greek Fiction, 1969-2004, Copenhagen 2004, pp. 405-416 (originally published in 1992); they have been countered by S. Borzi, Sull’autenticità del «Contra Hieroclem» di Eusebio di Cesarea, Augustinianum 43 (2003) 397-416 and C.P. Jones, Apollonius of Tyana in Late Antiquity, in Johnson, Greek Literature (as above n. 37), pp. 49-64, specifically pp. 49-52.

68 On the DMP see the references above in n. 50.

69 See, for example, the debate between Timothy Barnes and Averil Cameron, going back to suggestions made by Giorgio Pasquali more than hundred years ago: T.D. Barnes, Panegyric, History and Hagiography in Eusebius’ «Life of Constantine», in R.
contrast to the *Life of Origenes* in Book 6 of the *HE*. This *vita* is clearly modelled on a specific ancient biographical subgenre, namely, the pagan philosopher’s life as «preface» to his works. Eusebios chose this model because it served a wholly different ideological, didactic and literary purpose within the *HE*, than the purpose the DVC was to serve as an autonomous biographical text.

Even this brief and necessarily generalizing comparison of Lactantius and Eusebios shows that we are faced here with two authors who reflect through their works a wholly new code of communication with their audience. «New» in this context does not signify originality on the level of individual textual characteristics, since some of the characteristics pointed out above can be found in Hellenistic and Roman literature. «New» here describes the overall effect of and the deeper attitude

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72 Callimachus with his *Aetia*, Apollonius of Rhodes with his *Argonautica*, Lucretius with his *De rerum naturae* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* on the side of poetry (especially what concerns use of older material, scientific outlook, poetics, rivalry with predecessors); Cicero’s and Seneca’s philosophical essays (e.g. *De natura deorum* or *De ira* respectively), Plutarch’s *Moralia* and *Parallel Lives* or Polybios’ *History* on the side of prose (didactic-moral philosophy, narrative biography with a «point», didactic-moral historiography).
to writing and its reception. Thus, the work of the two authors examined represents a structural break in the strongest terms. In my opinion, this break is not the coincidental result of overlapping asynchronisms, but a conscious attempt to introduce a specific and broadly valid ideological change. In the works of Lactantius and Eusebios we might recognize a series of seven «internal operative principles» that determine a new aesthetic framework for each individual text. These principles are:

(i) CENTRICITY: The text focuses on a marked structural or conceptual centre placed within a clearly hierarchical disposition. For example, Lactantius turns the death of Galerius into the narrative and moral focus point of DMP, while Eusebios does this with the great persecution in Book 8 of the HE, already emphasized in the hierarchical disposition of the immense opening sentence to the preface of Book 1. A similar centre is the new and true place of Christianity as opposed to Hellenism and Judaism, assigned by Eusebios in the PE and the DE. Lactantius elevates Book 5 of the DI on justice with its fifth address to Constantine and its second introduction to the work’s historiographical centre, thus leading his readers to the theological culmination of Books 6 and 7.

(ii) COUNTERLINEARITY: We observe the cancellation of linear


74 See the statement in the preface about the deaths of the recent persecutors (DMP 1.7) and, then, the strong focusing on Galerius – the «second Maximian», as Lactantius calls him – at DMP 31ff.

75 In the opening sentence (HE I 1.1-2) the catalogue of historical subjects to be treated culminates in the martyrs of Eusebios’ own times (καὶ καθ’ ἡμᾶς αὐτούς μαρτυρῶν). The preface to Book 8 picks up exactly the phrasing of the general preface. In its first edition, the HE ended with the full description of Galerius’ disease, decree of tolerance, and death, including a comment on Galerius’ major role in the great persecution (see the Appendix to HE VIII 17.11 on p. 796.1-9 Schwartz).

76 PE I 2 and DE I 1-2 (with direct references to the opening chapters of the PE).

77 DI V 1-4 (the chapters that include the positioning of the work in its «apologetic tradition»).
structures (in other words, of structural hypotaxis) that would allow the multiple and in-depth connection of the text’s recognizable parts.\textsuperscript{78} For example, the overall structure of the DID or of the HE and the DVC is not organized along linear and hypotactical sequences of narrative or argumentative sections.\textsuperscript{79}

(iii) PARATACTICALITY: Instead of hypotaxis, the structure of the text presents a paratactical organization of its smaller units, in other words, we find a clearly observable sequence of units all placed on the same narrative level.\textsuperscript{80}

(iv) COMPARTMENTALIZATION: The smaller units are highlighted through some kind of strong marking as autonomous and often «water-tight» compartments. In this way, the impression is given that the removal or insertion of one or more compartments would not affect the text’s macrostructure. One might look at works such as the DMP, the EDI, the HE and the DE.\textsuperscript{81}

(v) NON-CLOSURE: The text does not seem to reach a recognizable


\textsuperscript{79} On DID see the structural analysis by Ingremeau, \textit{La colère de Dieu} (as above n. 53), pp. 37-41; on HE see Grant (as above n. 47), pp. 22-32 and Carotenuto (as above n. 50), pp. 16-24; on the DVC see the overall plan of the work as presented in Cameron/Hall (as above n. 53), pp. 24-27.

\textsuperscript{80} For Lactantius see, indicatively, DMP 3-6, the loose series of persecuting emperors (with the gap of approximately hundred-and-eighty years between Domitian and Decius); DID 3-6, where despite the syllogistic process of elimination of false hypotheses as to God’s anger and goodness, the presentation of each hypothesis is paratactical. For Eusebios see, for example, HE III 5-24 (covering the time from Nero’s death to the beginning of Trajan’s reign), wherein we find a paratactical narrative interspersed with excerpts from authors such as Josephus or Clemens; DE III concerning the proofs of Christ’s divine presence on earth, wherein a loose series of chapters presents a paratactical and associative structure, mixing excerpts ranging from the Prophets down to Philostratos’ \textit{Life of Apollonios}.

\textsuperscript{81} DMP 38-41, the sexual misdeeds of Maximinus Daia; EDI 1-12, presenting in dense syntactical and stylistic parataxis the main points of the original text (DI I 1.11); DE VIII, on the time of Christ’s appearance among men; HE IV 21-30, a presentation of authors having written on the history of bishops, heresies and much more.
closure, while in some cases it gives the impression of continuously awaiting further reworking. In other words, the notion of an authorially completed work is substantially weakened. One might compare the various levels of reworking in the *HE*, the two editions of the *DI* and its «reworking» as an epitome by the author himself.  

(vi) ABSORPTIVITY: The text visibly absorbs in different ways and for different purposes a multitude of various passages from older texts, for example, Eusebius’ *PE/DE* and his partially lost *General Elementary Introduction* (Καθόλου στοιχειώδης εἰσαγωγή), or Lactantius’ *DI*.

(vii) REVEALMENT: The text consciously reveals the mechanisms of its own structuring with continuous references to its structural parts and their «relation» to each other, for example, the *DI*, the *PE/DE* and the *HE*.

Particularly important for the validity of the seven internal operative principles described and the new ideological and aesthetic code they represent is the fact that we find similar principles in the visual arts. One very prominent example is the Arch of Constantine in Rome. The arch was erected for the celebration of the emperor’s *decennalia* and was dedicated in July 315; it is, thus, absolutely contemporary with Lactantius and Eusebius. The edifice consists of three distinct and dis-

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82 For these three works see the references above n. 53.
84 Lactantius’ *DI* is an obvious case; one need only read the passage from one book to the next, for example, from Book 1 to 2, from Book 3 to 4, the opening of Book 5 with its second introduction to the whole work, the opening of Book 6 with its statement about the work’s most important part, the end of Book 7 (and of the whole work). Similarly, Eusebius’ *DE* reveals its structural system, moreover, it does so with systematic references to the relevant books of *PE* (see in *DE* the general preface, the preface to Book 2, the passage from Book 3 to 4, from Book 5 to 6, the preface to Book 9). Both these works have a strong didactic aim, and revelation could be perceived as inherent to this aim. But revelation is also found in the narrative works of the two authors. Thus, *HE* I 1.7-2.1 points to the narrative structure of the first books, but see also the preface to Book 2, the passage from Book 2 to 3, as well as the prefaces to Books 5 and 7.
85 On the Arch of Constantine and the current archaeological findings see P. Pensabene – C. Panella (eds.), *Arco di Costantino: Tra archeologia e archeometria* [Studia Archaeologica 100], Roma 1999.
tistinguishable «elements»: (i) the original structural frame; (ii) large spolia of three different periods (Trajanic, Hadrianic, Aurelianic) from respective buildings of different types, visibly incorporated into the frame; it is now certain that these older Roman buildings were not demolished in 315 so as to spoliate the various reliefs used;  

(iii) Constantinian sculptures, for example, the rectangular reliefs above the smaller arches and under the Hadrianic roundels or the dedicatory inscription and the pair of grand roundels on the East and West sides.

We immediately recognize some of the principles governing the composition of the edifice: (a) *centricity* as reflected in the extreme prominence of the centre and its hierarchical disposition from the dedicatory inscription downwards; (b) *counterlinearity* as seen in the non-hypotactical disposition of the reliefs on the four walls of the arch, as well as within the Constantinian reliefs themselves; (c) *paratacticality* and *compartmentalization* displayed at a maximum degree, in contrast to similar older buildings, such as the arches of Titus (AD 82) or of Septimus Severus (AD 203), both in Rome; (d) *absorptivity* as witnessed in the incorporation of the older sculptural material. Furthermore, as with the debate concerning the genre and historical value of Lactantius’ and Eusebios’ «historiographical» works, a similar debate has been conducted about the aesthetic value of the Arch of Constantine and its place in the «declining» history of Roman architecture and sculpture.  

This debate has been almost exclusively conducted independently of the building’s archaeological data.

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88 For a critique of the debate and its ideology see J. Trilling, *Late Antique and Sub-antique, or the «Decline of Form» Reconsidered*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers 41 (1987) 469-476. For new proposals on the Arch and its place in late Roman (*qua* late antique)
PART III

At this point, it will be necessary to draw some tentative conclusions. Faced with the unprecedented crisis of the great persecution, two important teachers and scholars decide—indepedently the one of the other—to compose a series of works with the aim of proving the absolute truth and universal validity of a specific religious ideology. By criticizing most previous efforts in this direction, as well as rejecting in different ways other existing religious ideologies, Lactantius and Eusebios established through their substantial writings a new code of communication. This textual code, fully formulated by ca. 320, reflects a similar visual code expressed in the Constantinian arch of 315. This synchronism indicates the existence of a strong ideological and aesthetic break in artistic production, but particularly so in literature. The break expressed through the works of Lactantius and Eusebios is indeed contemporary with Constantine but it is not intrinsically related to him as the «important» historical figure signalling the beginning of a new historical period in the conventional sense. In other words, it is not Constantine that is responsible for the break we detect in Lactantius and Eusebios; on the contrary, it is the two authors who are responsible for our image of Constantine and his place in the history of Christianity, an image which scholarship has been trying to revise over the past thirty years.89

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If we are to look for a historical figure to place next to the literary break, that figure would rather be Diocletian, his immense reform of the Roman empire and, most importantly, his decision to begin the persecution in February 303.  

A closer examination of Christian literary production until the beginning of the fifth century shows that later authors have been placed in an intertextually charged position, either by accepting or by competing with the «innovation» of Eusebius and Lactantius, for example, Hieronymus and Augustine as to Lactantius, Sokrates and Sozomenos the Church historians as to Eusebius.  

Moreover, after the deaths of the two authors, a gap of approximately twenty years can be detected in the writing of Christian texts because, if we are to judge by the surviving works, an openly classicizing Christian literary production begins to appear only after ca. 350-360. In my opinion, there is no structural continuity between Graecoroman (qua «pagan») literature and Christian writing after Lactantius and Eusebius. The «classicism» of major Christian authors writing in Greek after ca. 355 (for example, Gregory of Nazianzus or Gregory of Nyssa) is a conscious literary stance of a «second-degree retrieval» in the formation of Christian discourse. It is not a contin-
uation of the so-called second sophistic, nor is it a «third sophistic» as a newly coined term suggests.

More importantly, the works of Lactantius and Eusebios fully reflect three overarching ideological concepts—intrinsically related to the seven internal operative principles proposed above—that three scholars have independently described for different phenomena between the sixth and the tenth century. These overarching concepts are:

(i) The «unitary thought», or *la pensée unique* as Polymnia Athanassiadi has called it; it is a demand towards a unitary and unified way of thinking about everything concerning the earthly and the heavenly kingdoms, in other words, religion, politics and social order. Athanassiadi saw its inception—and, thus, the rise of intolerance—in the middle of the third century in connection with the famous decree of Emperor Decius (AD 249) and placed its full development in the age of Justinian.

(ii) The «collection culture», or *la cultura della sylloge* as Paolo Odorico called it, in contradistinction to the term and concept «encyclopedism» used by Paul Lemerle for the age of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in the tenth century. It is a way of organizing...
knowledge and thinking that brings together vast material in a supposedly «static» manner.\textsuperscript{100}

(iii) The «cumulative aesthetic», as termed by Ja. Elsner, for understanding the particularly three-dimensional and hierarchical organization of texts and buildings observable in the sixth century.\textsuperscript{101} Elsner based his analysis on a comparative examination of Prokopios’ Buildings and Justinian’s Hagia Sophia.\textsuperscript{102}

The three concepts were proposed in order to explain the nature of developments that lead away from the world of Late Antiquity and towards Byzantine culture.\textsuperscript{103} However, all three concepts are fully present in the works of Lactantius and Eusebios: the unitary thought demands an ideological singularity and unity, as well as simultaneous inclusivity and exclusivity; the collection culture defines to a substantial

\textsuperscript{100} For the ancient traditions of excerpting texts and collecting passages see, indicatively, J. Mansfeld, Prolegomena: Questions to be Settled before the Study of an Author, or a Text [Philosophia Antiqua 61], Leiden 1994 and G.H. Snyder, Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews, and Christians, New York 2000.

\textsuperscript{101} J. Elsner, Late Antique Art: The Problem of the Concept and the Cumulative Aesthetic, in S. Swain – M. Edwards (eds.), Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire, Oxford 2004, pp. 271-309.


extent the structure and content of the texts; the cumulative aesthetic supports the move towards overpowering hierarchical forms. Lactantius’ *Divine Institutes* and Eusebios’ *Ecclesiastical History* are the works that reflect to a maximum degree the seven internal operative principles and the three overarching ideological concepts described. Moreover, the *DI* and the *HE* are also the two works with the broadest primary and secondary reception between the fourth and the tenth century.

All of the above makes obvious that in the works of Lactantius and Eusebios we are faced with a profound structural break in both Latin and Greek literature. The gradual literary developments in the West and the East after the middle of the fourth century also show that different Christian realizations of this break were taking place. We find a greater emphasis on poetry in the Latin speaking parts of the Mediterranean related, in my opinion, to the different type of patronage in the West, while a greater emphasis is placed on historiography and political writing in the Greek speaking parts due to different power structures and demands in the East.

Thus, the structural break of 300, as expressed by Lactantius and Eusebios, reflects a conscious departure from everything «antique» in structure, meaning and ideology. In this sense, the «end of antiquity» is clearly signalled in the work of these two outstanding Christian authors, despite the presence of Hellenic (*qua* pagan) literary production in the Greek language up to the early sixth century. In my opinion, Christian

104 See, for example, the greatly diverging evaluations of Greek and Latin poetry between the fourth and the sixth century proposed by Al. Cameron, *Poetry and Literary Culture in Late Antiquity*, in Swain/Edwards (as above n. 28), pp. 327-354 and M. Hose, *Poesie aus der Schule: Überlegungen zur spätgriechischen Dichtung* [Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte 2004.1], München 2004; personally, I find myself in agreement with Alan Cameron’s mature synthesis.

105 See the negative evaluation by J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford 2001, pp. 223-248 (The transformation of Greek literary culture under the influence of Christianity) and 318-341 (The transformation of literary culture in the West under the influence of Christianity); see the more positive evaluations by L. Pernot, *La rhétorique de l’éloge dans le monde greco-romain* [Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité 137-138], Paris 1993 and G. Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity*, Leiden 2003.

literature did not imitate Hellenic literature in some form of «natural symbiosis» but appropriated and absorbed it forcefully as society irrevocably moved towards the consolidation of a Christian –political, religious and social– view of the world. No comparable structural break appears in literary production until approximately 800, in the Greek East as well as in the Latin West.107 However, the structural break around 800 in Byzantium presupposes the break of 300 and its reception.108 Therefore, the break of 300 is for Byzantine literature a textually logical and ideologically significant beginning, while the break of 800 concerns an inner reorganization of Byzantine textual production along its various synchronisms and asynchronisms. Seen from this perspective, can it be a coincidence that around the year 800 the two parts of the world chronicle written by George Synkellos and Theophanes Confessor are divided exactly at the reign of Diocletian and his «great» persecution?109

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Appendix: The Works of Eusebius and Lactantius

I. Eusebius (surviving works in tentative chronological order)

- Περὶ τῶν ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ μαρτυρησάντων – De Martyribus Palaestinae (=MP), ca. 311; ed. E. Schwartz, Eusebius Werke Bd. II.2, pp. 907-950.

Lactantius

Greek and Latin Accounts of the Discovery of the Cross, the Edict of Constantine to Pope Silvester [Translated Texts for Historians 39], Liverpool 2003, pp. 1-62.


II. Lactantius (surviving works in tentative chronological order)


De Ira Dei (=DID), between 316 and 325; ed. and French transl. by C. Ingremeau, Lactance: La colère de Dieu [Sources Chrétiennes 289], Paris 1982.