

**Performing Authority in Byzantium.
Bodies, Gestures, and Behaviour
in the Practice and in the Literary Representation of the Power**

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«(...) εἰ δ' ἄγε τοι κεφαλῆ κατανέσομαι, ὄφρα πεποίθης·
τοῦτο γὰρ ἐξ ἐμέθεν γε μετ' ἀθανάτοισι μέγιστον
τέκμων· οὐ γὰρ ἐμὸν παλινάγρετον οὐδ' ἀπατηλὸν
οὐδ' ἀτελεύτητον, ὅ τί κεν κεφαλῆ κατανέσω.»
Ἦ καὶ κυανέησιν ἐπ' ὄφρῦσι νεῦσε Κρονίων·
ἀμβρόσια δ' ἄρα χεῖται ἐπερρώσαντο ἄνακτος
κρατὸς ἀθανάτοιο· μέγαν δ' ἐλέλιξεν Ὀλυμπον.

*'See then, I will bend my head that you may believe me.
For this among the immortal gods is the mightiest witness
I can give, and nothing I do shall be vain nor revocable
nor a thing unfulfilled when I bend my head in assent to it.'*
*He spoke, the son of Kronos, nodded his head with the dark brows,
and the immortally anointed hair of the great god
swept from his divine head, and all Olympos was shaken.*
(Il. I, 524-530, tr. R. Lattimore 1951)

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INTRODUCTION

'Tra quel che succede in guerra e quello che si racconta poi, da quando mondo è mondo è corsa sempre una certa differenza, ma in una vita di guerriero, che certi fatti siano avvenuti o meno, poco importa; c'è la tua persona, la tua forza, la continuità del tuo modo di comportarti, a garantire che se le cose non sono andate proprio così punto per punto, però così avrebbero potuto pure andare, e potrebbero ancora andare in un'occasione simile'.

Italo Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente*

With these simple words in 1985 Italo Calvino, an author used to playfully invade the historical field without losing sight of the accuracy of his narrative backgrounds, addressed with humour and ease the complicated relationship between factual reality and its narration, a problem that has vexed historians and art historians for years. The words come from Agilulfo, a Carolingian knight who distinguishes himself from his peers by having acquired an awareness of the fiction that governs not only the activities within the system of which he is part, but also the human condition itself. Between what happens and what is then recounted there is a certain difference, it is inevitable. But 'what matters' lies in the continuity of past and future behaviour, in the conventions, and hence in the accurate presentation of the public identity. In other words, fiction guarantees social order and it is just as important to look at as the factual reality.

This study will be precisely about public behaviour, bodily performances and gestures in the culture and society of the Eastern Roman Empire. It will not be an attempt to reconstruct exactly how they were performed in their outward form. Rather, it will draw on insights provided by social sciences and ritual-anthropological studies to address their perception, function, and role in the Byzantine society with a focus on the practice and the literary representation of imperial power.

The topic has been the object of moderate scholarly interest in the field of Greek-Roman and Western Medieval studies, where it has proved its potential for historical research. In the field of Byzantine studies, however, study of gestures has traditionally been limited to specific iconographic and literary themes. 'Gestures mattered' Leslie Brubaker wrote, stressing the lack of interest in the subject in one of the few articles entirely devoted to the iconographical treatment of gestures and bodily movements¹. Gestures, however, mattered not only in the artistic field. Only occasionally they had been included in more general studies on ceremonial. But gestures, as well as bodies and physical appearance, mattered for the functioning of the whole of Byzantine society. They mattered especially for the emperor, the 'performing body' par excellence, and the analysis of his public gestures and image could constitute a useful tool to better understand the working of power, with its mechanisms, its ambiguities, and its apparent anomalies.

¹ BRUBAKER 2009, p. 55.

Gestures were powerfully persuasive weapons, charged with evocative imagery and with deep-rooted moral and theological values. Gestures were actively employed (or manipulated) in everyday-life interactions, in public speeches, and ceremonies. Everybody, from the actor to the philosopher, from the priest to the holy man, from the common man to the emperor, was regarded as part of a community in which all members were expected to behave in a certain way and to use their public 'social' body accordingly. Furthermore, in the Christian context and especially in liturgy, gestures, and postures needed to be enacted mindfully, rationally performed, and properly understood, so as to become instruments of faith.

The research will thus explore the construction and the developments in the perception of gestures and 'gestural categories' in the Byzantine society and public performances between the Late Antiquity (here: 4th-5th centuries) and the middle period (11th-12th centuries), gathering evidence of continuities and changes in the repertoire of physical movements and values present in literary and, occasionally, artistic sources. An analysis conducted through theoretical lenses provided by social sciences and ritual-anthropological studies suggests that this repertoire was not only enriched with new ethical, aesthetical and theological elements, but it was also constantly adapted to the current religious and political situation.

A chronological approach will best illustrate such an evolution of standards in imperial behaviour, shaped through a selection of biblical, Hellenistic, Roman, and then Christian models. The analysis will be based on the statement that both emperors and authors could employ their gestural repertoire and the attributes attached to it in a very creative manner, the former as an important performative weapon, the latter in the form of *topoi* for both critique and praise which also could impact society and policy. In general, the way in which the emperor built and used his body was a process made up of successes and failures: in some cases the public presentation of the body did not work as intended, and the critics promptly turned 'failures' and imperfections into literary themes intended to weaken the emperor's image². As for the problematic issue of the relationship between literary *topos* and reality, however, it will be pointed out how literary commonplaces about the imperial body and behaviour reflected but also influenced how the emperor displayed his body and the actual exercise of power. The ruler was somehow passively bound to conform to the ideal imagery deeply embedded in the mind of his audience, but he could also actively exploit the visual and evocative power of gestures and postures to deliver specific ideological statements, to reinforce legitimacy, or to deal with

² In the ritual context, failure can be understood as either a failure to produce a result (through an 'outcome-oriented' approach) or in terms of mistakes, procedural errors, and incorrect performances (the 'procedure-oriented' conception). Potential failures, however, could include any imperfections, unusual event, or contingency that changes significantly the ritual; SCHIEFFELIN 2007, esp. pp. 4-8. For the way in which accusations of ritual mistakes could be seen not only in terms of efficacy of rituals but also as strategies with political value for discrediting the rivals and for achieving advantage in a power relation, see *ibidem*, pp. 12-15.

particularly threatening moments. A rich and variegated number of different *Gestalten* was used according to the context and needs of the moment, and allowed the emperor to create and physically display powerful visual parallelisms grounded in biblical and historical tradition and clearly recognized by the audience. In this context will be set for example also the problematic compresence and integration of a 'democratic' and a 'theocratic' principle in the imperial person, as formulated by Agostino Pertusi³. The approachable and familiar emperor of some descriptions testifies, as we shall see, to the survival of the ancient republican tradition which tended to regard the emperor as a *civilis* and *moderatus primus inter pares*, without being in tension with his exceptional condition above the common man. Next to this, emotional imperial gestures (i.e. references to emperor's body movements in association with passions such as anger or agony of death) expressed often the mortal nature of the emperor next to the supernatural, divine, and 'untouchable' one, in line with Ernst Kantorowicz's notion of the 'King's two bodies'⁴. Both authors and performers seems to demonstrate a keen awareness of the 'game' played in the course of the exercise of the power, and the reflections that emerged are valuable testimony to the capacity for self-reflection and consequent change of which the cleverest members of Byzantine society were capable.

Before starting to explore these issues, let us begin by first clarifying what is meant by gesture and through which perspectives it can be investigated.

PART I. STATE OF RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

'We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things'.

Michel de Montaigne⁵

In the following paragraphs, I will set forth the main methodological and historiographic concerns relating to the study of gestures and the use of the body. The most stimulating insights into the role and functions of gestures and performances in social and cultural contexts come from sociological and ritual-anthropological research and from Greek-Roman and Western Medieval studies⁶. They provide definitions, questions, and concepts like *habitus*, performativity, practices, agency, as well as a shift in interest toward an active and signifying body interacting with a stratified society, that have led historical research to a new emphasis on *how* the body is perceived (in its visual and aesthetical

³ PERTUSI 1976, pp. 491-496; PERTUSI 1990, pp. 16-26.

⁴ KANTOROWICZ (1957) 1966.

⁵ Cited by DERRIDA (1966) 2009.

⁶ On the logical and methodological relation between historical and social research, see GIDDENS 1984, esp. pp. 355-363.

dimension) and on what the body *does* (when performing and mutually interacting with the social and cultural structures). Such a shift in perspective has allowed for a new and multifaceted viewpoint on how individuals of the past perceived and publicly displayed their physical appearance and their movements. Starting from the attention paid by Marc Bloch and the *École des Annales* to the cultural history and the physical body, down to the interest for attributes of authority and ritual acts in art-historical studies and political history, historians have gradually recognized the role and functioning of gestures and public performances as physical and performative instruments with an effective role in societies and politics. This interest does not seem to have been met by Byzantine scholarship, which seems to have remained for a long time immune to the fascination of performativity, of the instruments of social science and, hence, of gesture as a topic.

1. GESTURE, *HABITUS*, AND PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND RITUAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES

Gesture and body have drawn the attention of social sciences since at least the seventeenth century. Back then, gestures continued to be regarded as natural and innate movements, shared and universally understood by members of different cultures, potentially independent from the spoken languages, and even able to replace it⁷. The equally common assumption of a dualism between body and mind that put the former in a condition of inferiority, led early anthropological research to look at gestures, dances, and all kinds of symbolic systems involving non-verbal communicative instruments as irrational expressions of the most natural, uncontrolled, and ‘savage’ part of the human being⁸. It was only in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries that Durkheimian functional-structuralism and a ground-breaking article on ‘The Techniques of the Body’ by Marcel Mauss paved the way for achieving and substantiating a shift to the idea of a constructed, acquired, and ‘social’ body influenced by the dynamic principles and the contexts of the social structures in which it moves⁹. Without excluding the role of the individual psychological component, Mauss unveiled different facets of the ways in which individuals use their bodies and acquire specific ‘techniques’ necessary to interact with others within a society. This process of acquisition is regarded as going through education and imitation of tested

⁷ For the history of this type of approach, which harked back to Greek and Roman times, see KNOWLSON 1965.

⁸ See the review by WILLIAMS 2004, pp. 40-62.

⁹ ‘Each society has its own special habits’ and habits ‘vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges’; MAUSS (1936) 1973, pp. 71-73. I am leaving aside ethnographic, psychological, biological, and anatomical approaches in the field of non-verbal communication established especially in the ‘70 and ‘80. For a comprehensive review of this approach, see HALL and KNAPP 2013. For the advantages and disadvantages of the functional-structural approach for the study of human movement, see WILLIAMS 2004, pp. 104-129.

actions performed with success by people with authority and prestige¹⁰. In this way, claims Mauss, the individual acquires a 'controlled body' governed by 'a set of permissible or impermissible, natural or unnatural attitudes' which change in time and space and according to circumstances: this 'acquired ability' constituted the *habitus*, a term that he considers as equivalent to the Aristotelian 'exis'¹¹. Mauss provides thus the simplest formulation of a fundamental notion for understanding the active way in which individuals cope, through appearance, with the structure which surrounds them.

Bodily movements and public behaviours started to be seen not only as elements governed and constricted by the rules of social structures. They came to be seen as practices acquired and used by individuals to perform their social 'Self'. In 1959 Erving Goffman addresses further the way in which 'body techniques' are built and function in social life in his work 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'. He adopts a dramaturgical perspective on the topic and describes how the 'social actor' actively relates to social rules by playing different outward 'roles' on the stage of the 'ritual dramas of everyday life'¹². He enacts, fashions, and sometimes even adaptively manipulates his body, using bodily movements as devices to express himself 'in a way that is dramatized and pre-formed in his repertoire of actions'¹³. He carefully informs his practices to fulfil the expectations of his class, gender, and age, and to avoid embarrassment, not only in order to assure a peaceful and orderly interaction, but also to maintain the control over the definition of the situation and over the impression he wants to foster in his audience. Without building a comprehensive theory, Goffman stresses in this way the role of individual agency within the social structure and the active role played by bodily appearance in the construction of the social person¹⁴, rising a 'sociological awareness of the symbolic significance of the body to the interactional order'¹⁵.

It is, however, Pierre Bourdieu 'the most prestigious contemporary theorist who does give explicit consideration to the body'¹⁶: his 'theory of practice' developed the notion of *habitus* in its complexity and in its symbolic character and went a step further in clarifying the subjective dimension of the individual agent as both acting and being integrated into the structure. The *habitus* is the *lex insita* that guides the individual in social life since childhood and that allows 'the harmonization of agent's experience'¹⁷. It provides patterns unconsciously followed in accordance with the position occupied in

¹⁰ MAUSS (1936) 1973.

¹¹ MAUSS (1936) 1973, p. 73; p. 76.

¹² GOFFMAN 1959. Cf. MORRIS 2012, *ad vocem* 'Role', p. 220. Rank, status and role could be seen as indicators of social position, which have to be maintained by behaving in a patterned and predictable way; LUCAS 2010. Mauss however clearly overcomes the perspective which sees the body as a 'passive recipient of 'cultural imprints'', and recognizes its value as a 'self-developable mean for achieving a range of human objects'; ASAD 1997, p. 47.

¹³ GOFFMAN 1959, pp. 73-74.

¹⁴ Cf. MANNING 1992, p. 175.

¹⁵ TURNER 1991, pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ FRANK 1991, p. 36.

¹⁷ BOURDIEU (1972) 1977, p. 80.

society as regards class, education, ideology, and ethnicity. Yet, the *habitus* can also be transformed in an active and generative manner: it is a 'set of received beliefs' but it also enables choice and 'structured social improvisation' that 'allows people to create ways of achieving their aims within an existing context'¹⁸. It is both a 'structured' system of 'durable, transportable dispositions', as well as a 'structuring' and 'generative principle of social practices and representations' that can even be subverted¹⁹. In this perspective, the physical and visual constitution of the individual – 'die Haltung, Gebärde oder der typische Verhaltenstil einer Person', defined by Bourdieu as *hexis* and embodied in the *habitus*²⁰ – is also regarded as being acquired during social relationships. The *habitus* is 'socially informed' like the body that performs it, and the body, 'achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysics, a political philosophy', is able to 'turn into a permanent disposition' the 'political mythology' to create values and knowledge. The body can visually reveal the social status and the role of the individual in society so that they became the 'instruments of an ordering of the world, a system of classifying schemes which organizes all practices'. It can also actively express specific beliefs and judgments, thanks to its 'endless capacity to engender thought, perceptions, expressions, actions' in what has been called the 'symbolic manipulations of body experience'²¹.

While Bourdieu seems to have been focused more on the reproduction of the social order, the deeper understanding of the mutual relationship between agency and structure led Anthony Giddens to develop an 'ontological framework for the study of human social activities'²² where habitus and social behaviour could be unveiled in their subversive and transformational qualities. Giddens criticizes the earlier scholarship focused either on the 'structure' or on the 'individual', and recognizes the role of both in securing 'ontological safety' in society. The individual is not dominated entirely by social structure. He also acts in autonomy and with inner rationality. He actively and creatively interprets and employs as resources the rules imposed by the structure and even transforms the reality through practice. The concept of agency comes to include the individual's capability to influence the structure and to confer order to social life through habits and routinized practices, which he was able to interpret. This led him to develop Goffman's theory of the 'positioning of the body' in social encounters by stressing the coherence of acting, the importance of motivation, and the relative position of the individual in time and space to create different social ties and interactions²³.

¹⁸ MORRIS 2012, *ad vocem* 'Habitus', p. 114.

¹⁹ BOURDIEU (1972) 1977, p. 72; p. 78; pp. 167-171. A comprehensive explanation of habitus is found in KRAIS and GEBAUER (2002) 2009, esp. pp. 19-25. Cf. MORRIS 2012, *ad vocem* 'Doxa', p. 71.

²⁰ SIMONIS 2005.

²¹ BOURDIEU (1972) 1977, pp. 87-95 and 123-124; KRAIS and GEBAUER (2002) 2009, p. 28.

²² GIDDENS 1991; cfr. BRYANT and JARY 1991; CRAIB 1992. The latter compared Giddens' structuration theory to a 'theoretical omelette' made of 'good and bad eggs'.

²³ GIDDENS 1991, pp. XXIV-XXV.

Further insights come from the field of studies concerned with contexts in which the body is publicly and deliberately displayed using personal skills to convey meaning. Theatrical studies on the *mise en scène* of the body consider the *habitus* in its most physical dimension as a ‘three-dimensional visual icon’ and a tool through which the performer conforms to a standard archetype recognized by the onlookers through significant acts and dynamically embodied practices²⁴. Like social interactions, also theatrical performance required a proper *decorum*²⁵. Actors and performers display their bodies according to patterns expected from the class, the age, and the gender of their role²⁶. And this in line with the behavioural rules governing everyday life: according to Keir Elam, every gesture or ‘mode of *ostending* the body’ always starts from a selection of features characteristic of the social role being performed, which are exaggerated to maximize their ‘ostensive potential’. A lack of clear delimitation exists therefore between ‘social’ and ‘cultural’ performance (the latter possibly including not only dramaturgical and choreographed performances but also ceremonies and rituals)²⁷. The process by which gestures are created, their use, as well the ability of gestures to influence ‘reality’, are topics that gain in-depth insights especially thanks to the concept of ‘performativity’, emerged in the 1950s in the fields of linguistic theory and philosophy of language as the ability of words, or ‘speech acts’ to effectively *do* things²⁸. As well as verbal language, then, gestures and corporeal signs could also be recognized as playing a role in the reproduction of social configurations and in the performativity of the identity through acts (an idea developed with important result in gender and queer studies)²⁹. The meaningful shift of interest occurred from what a person *is* to what a person *does* and the new dynamic point of view centred on an practice- and agency- oriented approach (the so-called ‘performative turn’) had invested several different disciplines³⁰. In the ritual field in particular, the concept influenced the view of ‘dynamic processes’ and ‘practices’ as reflecting ideologies, values, and rules, as well as engaged in a mutual interaction with the social structure. The interaction between structure and the individual agency had been further defined in Catherine Bell’s concepts of ‘strategies’ and ‘ritualization’³¹ and allowed Victor Turner to recognize the degree of ambiguity of ritual acts

²⁴ FARNELL 1996, pp. 536-541; SCHMAUKS 2005.

²⁵ Any deviations from *decorum* lead to vilification; KERRY WHITE 1995, *ad vocem* ‘Decorum’, p. 40.

²⁶ Actors presented their role through their costume, but also through their gestures, which can be also seen as a ‘systemic overlay of visual information’: see KERRY WHITE 1995, *ad vocem* ‘Costume’, p. 36.

²⁷ ELAM 1980, pp. 73-78. For the blurred delimitations between theatre and ritual see ROZIK 2003. ‘Performance studies’ provide a cross-cultural model which contributed to detect the similarities between dramatic arts, dance, ceremonial, ritual, martial arts, and sports; SCHECHNER 2013. Cf. also the contributions in KREINATH et al. 2007, esp. pp. 458-459.

²⁸ In a speech act, ‘performative utterances’ do not describe a doing, but rather perform an action (such as the statement ‘I do’ in a wedding context): see AUSTIN 1962.

²⁹ BUTLER 1988; BUTLER 1990.

³⁰ Cf. DAVIS 2008. For a review, see PFISTER 2005; BACHMANN-MEDICK 2006, pp. 104-143.

³¹ BELL 1992. For a useful synthesis of earlier theories, see NELSON 2012. On the inclusion and use of the concept of performance in ritual studies, see also GRIMES 2004.

(depending on the audience, the place of the performance, and other symbols involved in the event)³². The dynamic process of 'ritualization' also raises the issue of the relative power of ritual agency. Again according to Bell, the ritual agency involves simultaneously 'both consent and resistance, misunderstanding and appropriation' in the process through which authority, 'Self', and society are negotiated³³. Rituals acts thus 'must be understood within a semantic framework whereby the significance of an action is dependent upon its place and relationship within a context of all other ways of acting: what it echoes, what it inverts, what it alludes to, what it denies'³⁴.

The application of such a practice-oriented approach has been slow in taking off in the study of gestures and behaviour. In the mid '90s, Ronald Grimes still complained about the lack of focus on 'the dynamic symbolic acts' (the gestures) and the 'symbolic stilling of action' (the postures) in ritual studies, despite their role as fundamental units of ritual activity³⁵. In 1997 Talad Asad also complained that the general interest in 'the body' in anthropological studies had been mostly focused on body's 'disembodied' representation, rather than following Mauss' suggestion to appreciate the body as a technical mean, made by embodied aptitudes and not merely by systems of symbolic meaning³⁶. Sociology tendency to stress the symbolic order led also to neglect the materiality and the biological nature of the body, for example the somatic effects linked to the social environment³⁷. The connection between the psychological states of participating individual bodies and the representational use of the social body in the ritual context, however, has recently been explored by scholars. Timothy Nelson considers for example the way in which codified ritual gestures and postures are enacted and experienced, together with the choice of particular spaces and the regular repetition of events, among the 'framing strategies' that define the transformation of the common frame into a 'ritual frame' apart from ordinary life. In this context, the body's movements are transformed into ritual actions with specific symbolic and communicative potentials³⁸. Particular attention has been paid in recent research to the mechanism through which symbolic gestures and other sensorial devices such as music, dance,

³² TURNER 1987.

³³ BELL 1992, pp. 7-8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

³⁵ Grimes insisted on the importance of multidisciplinary ventures: see GRIMES (1982) 1995. For a semiotic perspective, see KERRY WHITE 1995, *ad vocem* 'Code System', p. 28; ELAM 1980, esp. pp. 35-38; NÖTH (1985) 1990, pp. 363-366 and 398. For the use of spatial codes in human relationships (the 'proxemics') inaugurated by the anthropologist Edward T. Hall, see FARNELL 1996, pp. 536-541; ELAM 1980, p. 56. For the critique on Ray Birwhistell's model, see ELAM 1980, p. 70-72. For the application of the semantic approach to anthropology, see FARNELL 1996; KENDON 2004; WILLIAMS 2004.

³⁶ ASAD 1997, pp. 43. Already in 1969 Victor Turner analysed ritual symbols as sets of evocative devices that arouse, channel and domesticate powerful emotions, but he also continued to distinguish between culture (thought, speech and affected gestures) and body (source of individual and innate feelings that needed to be 'domesticated'); ASAD 1997, pp. 44-47.

³⁷ BERTHELOT 1991, p. 399.

³⁸ NELSON 2012. Other 'framing strategies' are the use of archaic vocabulary, music, and styles no longer popular. If considered separately, all these elements are not sufficient to make a frame ritual, but when combined, their effect is stronger; *ibidem*. On the concept of 'frame', see GOFFMAN 1974.

and rhetorical techniques contribute to trigger emotions and affect the bodies and the subjectivity of individuals³⁹. Now more than ever scholars feel the importance of acknowledging the dynamic, flexible, and active role of the physical display and the bodily practices in society and rituals.

2. BODIES AND GESTURES IN THE WORK OF THE HISTORIAN

*'This book (...) is also an essay in symbolic anthropology by an unlicensed practitioner, proper fieldwork being impossible until the author gets to Hades'*⁴⁰.

In a well-known passage of his *Apologie pour l'histoire*, Marc Bloch identified his ideal of a historian with the ogre of the fables who follows the human flesh's smell⁴¹. After him, the '*Ogre historien*' par excellence, Jacques Le Goff, has followed the advice together with his colleagues at the *École des Annales*⁴². Thanks also to an innovative multidisciplinary approach, those scholars have been responsible for the turn of the interest from a '*histoire événementielle*' to a '*histoire des mentalités*' and to a cultural history focused on the tangible aspects of everyday life, on a man with a soul made of thoughts and beliefs as much as with a body made of flesh and blood⁴³. In this context gestures also began to attract the attention of historians, especially as elements embedded with shared meanings and efficacious in visually displaying the social boundaries in the highly ritualized and few literalized society of the Western Middle Ages⁴⁴. '*Le geste*' – together with '*la parole*' and '*les objets*' – was embodied anew by Le Goff and acknowledged as a symbolic practice of the feudal society: in the rite of vassalage, for example, it publicly expressed the relation of subordination or reciprocity between lord and vassal, according to a specific cultural system⁴⁵.

³⁹ See, for example, the psychological approach in ARGYLE 2000, pp. 93; pp. 113-114; pp. 126-129. On the role of emotions in ritual, see also MOSSIÈRE 2012.

⁴⁰ GLEASON 1995, p. XIV.

⁴¹ '*Le bon historien, lui, ressemble à l'ogre de la légende. Là où il flaire la chair humaine, il sait que là est son gibier*' ; BLOCH (1949) 1974, p. 35.

⁴² Le Goff himself declared to be an ogre pushed by an insatiable 'appétit'. The metaphor conveyed 'la manière sensible, et comme tactile, dont Jacques Le Goff se saisit de l'histoire (...) : l'attention qu'il porte prioritairement aux choses et aux corps dans leur matérialité, mais aussi la dimension concrète qu'il donne aux idées et aux rêves'; REVEL and SCHMITT 1998, pp. 10-11.

⁴³ SCHMITT 1998, p. 40.

⁴⁴ BLOCH 1939-1940, esp. pp. 171 and p. 209. The alleged opposition between literacy and 'culture of gesture' had been recently reshaped; SCHMITT (1990) 1999, esp. pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵ Le Goff pointed out that the hand in the 'rite manuel' of the *immixio manuum* was not so much to be seen as an abstract concept ('la *manus* du droit romain, incarnation et en définitive synonyme de la *potestas*'). Rather, 'ce qui compte, ce qui signifie, et même symbolise, c'est ce que *fait* la main, et non ce qu'elle est'; LE GOFF 1976, p. 712.

Starting from the '60s, the topic has greatly profited from studies in the fields of perception, visuality, and art history⁴⁶. In the same period and using iconography as a historical source, Richard Brilliant managed to prove how in Roman society gestures permeated the everyday experience of all classes. They were part of a cultural code exploited also in art to signal social status, a relative or absolute relationship, or even the absolutist tendencies of government during the transition to late Antiquity⁴⁷. By the '90s especially, an unprecedented focus on gestures in historical written sources and works of art unveiled their role as meaningful *loci* reflecting the moral values and the social status of specific categories of persons. They gave, therefore, cohesion to society and revealed the cultural system of a community⁴⁸. The analysis of ritual gestures through the anthropological approach unveiled important facets like the reason for the divergence between a prescript gesture and its actual performance, its relationship with the words uttered and the space in which it was performed, and the role of the participants⁴⁹. Studies in the juridical and ritual contexts acknowledged the constitutive and performative nature of gestures and went beyond the traditional point of view, which looked at them as mere communicative devices substituting words⁵⁰.

In the field of political history, ritual gestures were included in the discourse over the symbolic representation of power for their role as attributes of the authority and visual expressions of ideological statements. Bloch's fundamental study on the beneficial touch of the sovereign in the French and English kings' tradition⁵¹, the works of Alföldi on the forms of the symbolism of power in the Rome of the first centuries⁵², and Schramm's analysis of the 'visible signs of (the ruler's) invisible office'⁵³, offered a perspective which included gestures among the *insignia* forming the ceremonial *Ausgestaltung* of power. Later Ernst Kantorowicz' ground-breaking theory of the 'King's Two Bodies'

⁴⁶ For the power of the visual communication and the interaction between imagery and reality in the process through which the artist's creative mind perceives and fixes the space, the time, and the movements in images, see GOMBRICH 1982. The question of the derivation of the iconographic of a gesture from classical tradition or from a contemporary practice is also addressed in BARASCH 1987.

⁴⁷ BRILLIANT 1963. The iconographic treatment of gestures has appealed to art historians since the turn of the century and persists to these days; see for example SITTL 1890; VON AMIRA 1905; JUCKER 1956; NEUMANN 1965; SETTIS 1975; KIRIGIN 1976; GARNIER 1982-1989; PEDRINA 2001; CHASTEL 2002; BARASCH 2003; BAGGIO 2004; FRUGONI 2005; FRUGONI 2010.

⁴⁸ SCHMITT 1990 (1999); BREMMER and ROODENBURGH 1991. On gestures employed in the framework of the visual imagery of medieval literature, see also RAGOTZKY und WENZEL 1990.

⁴⁹ LE GOFF 1990. Le Goff highlighted here the nature of the coronation ceremony as a 'rite of passage', which increased status and power. He also works in parallel with an art historian (BONNE 1990).

⁵⁰ BERTELLI and CENTANNI 1995, p. 21.

⁵¹ BLOCH (1924) 1989.

⁵² ALFÖLDI (1934) 1970; ALFÖLDI (1935) 1970.

⁵³ So Bak defined the *Herrschaftszeichen* of Schramm on the ground of the latter's statement on the 'ability of medieval men to dress the invisible mysteries in a visible garment and to spy out the hidden visible meaning in the visible object'; BAK 1973, p. 44 and p. 62. Schramm anyway did not deal specifically with imperial gestures and postures and only occasionally recognized the importance of the *Handhaltung*; SCHRAMM 1928; SCHRAMM 1954. For a synthesis of Schramm's thought and contribution to the historical studies see BAK 1973, esp. pp. 37-39.

addressed the problematic relation between power and image and become paradigmatic in showing the potential of a focus on the symbolic representation build up and manipulated by the authority. *Insignia*, postures, and behaviour – even those that emerged from the most ‘subjective’ sources, like anecdotes, comments on historical events or ceremonial incidents, visions, myths, as well as works of art –⁵⁴, were included among the constituent parts of the public image of the ruler. They could reflect his ‘political theology’, such as when Otto II’s gestures and *insignia* on the frontispiece of the Aachen Gospels expressed the ruler’s ideas about the relation between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* and the emperor’s assimilation with Christ⁵⁵.

As stated by Robert E. Lerner, Kantorowicz, Schramm and all the scholars marked by German idealism remained bound to the ‘realm of the ideas, often without relation to their context in the mundane world of events’⁵⁶. Only after the ‘60s German and British scholarship re-established the ties with the French colleagues and inaugurated a political history opened to modes of enquiry informed by anthropology and ethnology⁵⁷. The symbolism of power was extended to a wider sphere of *Herrschaftssymbolik*⁵⁸ and it was recognized the function of ritual forms of expression as instruments in the exercise of power. Ceremonial gestures described in sources were also no longer regarded as mere abstract *Abzeichen*. They were rather seen as material elements able to transmit ideas and values and even to legitimate (or de-legitimate) the political order, affirming or reinforcing a status⁵⁹. They were parts of ‘metaphorical’ acts and ‘minidrama’ which can ‘carry far more meaning and significance for contemporaries than the most eloquent, but often unread, political treatises’⁶⁰. This within the framework of a wider system made of social relations where ‘the hierarchies of dominance and deference are created, maintained, overturned’⁶¹. The rhetoric degree associated with the descriptions of ceremonies, acts, and behaviour remained an ever-present issue for the historian, aware of the inevitable political mystification involved in the construction of the ruler’s superior aura

⁵⁴ Kantorowicz debated the value of those sources for the historical research in the essays on the ‘Mythenschau’ and in the speech held at Halle in 1930; GHELARDI 1995; FRIED 1997, pp. 186 ff.

⁵⁵ KANTOROWICZ (1957) 1966, esp. pp. 62ff. For the ‘process of the secularization of the sacred’ in which the ruler fulfilled his religious claims through both the classical and the Christian imagery, see for example also KANTOROWICZ (1944) 1965. On the place of Kantorowicz’s work into the framework of the German historiography of his time, see FRIED 1997, esp. pp. 180-188.

⁵⁶ LERNER 1997, p. 121.

⁵⁷ LE GOFF 1971; ALTHOFF, FRIED, and GEARY 2002, p. 5. Those are the ‘warning signs’ of the so-called ‘performative turn’, which will magnetize the attention of historians of the following years; MARTSCHUKAT and PATZOLD 2003.

⁵⁸ ELZE 1976a; ELZE 1976b; ELZE 1986; ELZE 1987.

⁵⁹ CANNADINE 1987.

⁶⁰ WILENTZ 1985, p. 4.

⁶¹ CANNADINE 1987, p. 2.

(or 'charisma') and legitimation through symbolic forms⁶². Yet, the elements surrounding the theatre of power came to be established as necessary to understand politics and society.

The traditional field of the coronation studies have especially unveiled the major role played by ritual acts surrounding the self-display of the ruler: they expressed and reinforced the kingship's ideology, they legitimated the ruler's position, and they re-enacted the power relations in the eyes of the participants⁶³. In this field the physical dimension of gestures came to the fore, as they appeared as elements experienced by sentient and moving bodies deeply involved at a sensorial level in a spatial framework made of light, music, smell. Together with words and material objects, gestures could illustrate invisible things in a comprehensible, shared, and emotionally charged manner. The coronation was 'ritual and spectacle at the same time', 'a symbolic and socio-psychological drama' enacted in a coherent system of communication made of minutely regulated symbols, gestures and words. If correctly performed and understood, they could preserve the social order⁶⁴. Ritual gestures were no longer seen as mere fixed expressions of the political ideology of the ruler. They gained a more dynamic and 'embodied' dimension, distinct from that of the *insignia* to which they were usually related.

The most fruitful developments of those 'practice-oriented' trends occurred in the decades around the '90s in the German scholarship. The works of Karl Leyser, Gerd Althoff, and Geoffrey Koziol enriched the research with a multidisciplinary approach which conferred a 'performative' dimension to rituals and public occasions described in narrative sources. Even the seemingly more spontaneous ones are analysed as carefully staged events. Performers used a shared repertory of symbolic acts and non-verbal forms of communication to handle with ranks and friendships, to maintain and strengthen the social order, to impress and warn the aristocratic members of the audience, or even to express protest, dissent and menace rebellion. The elements involved in ritual and public events, therefore, not only revealed cultural and political ideas: they could influence the exercise of power, strengthening an inadequate legislative apparatus or determining conflicts in a competitive political panorama⁶⁵.

Studies on ritual and symbolic communication are also more susceptible to problems based on the old epistemological concern about the relationship between reality and its perception and representation. Both American and German historians have been aware of the degree to which the writer's mentality

⁶² WILENTZ 1985, pp. 7-8. On the 'new directions' in the early German scholarship and its attention to the role of even the 'mental horizons of the historians' in constructing the written evidence of the past, see ALTHOFF, FRIED, and GEARY 2002, esp. pp. 4-5. On the concept of 'charisma' as 'fiction' and a sociological perspective on the 'symbolic forms' used by rulers to justify their existence, to order their actions, and to advance their claim, see GEERTZ 1985.

⁶³ See especially NELSON (1975) 1986; NELSON (1976) 1986; NELSON 1987; NELSON 1990; BAK 1990. For the purposes and the developments in the field of coronation see also STURDY 1990.

⁶⁴ GIEYSZTOR 1990.

⁶⁵ LEYSER (1993) 1994; ALTHOFF 1997; ALTHOFF 2002; ALTHOFF 2005; KOZIOL 1992. See also REUTER 2001; BARROW 2002.

and ideological stances could affect the narration distorting and even omitting certain facts. Therefore, the importance of a circumstantiated analysis of narrative sources⁶⁶. Those accounts remained nevertheless an important alternative source to complement the 'one-sided ecclesiastical and liturgical analysis of the traditional and theoretical prescriptions'. 'The power to shape the past is itself a historical fact' declared indeed Janet Nelson. And the audience of those recounts was 'a coterie of sympathizers sharing his (the author's) local concerns' who 'would have expected bias, not cynicism'⁶⁷. The problem of the methodology resurged more systematically in the controversial work of Philip Buc. The author called in question both the application of a structuralist method to studies on medieval ritual as well as the credibility of narrative sources describing rituals and public ceremonies, considered as entirely subjective and biased fictions hardly providing reliable information about contemporary practices⁶⁸. The polemic started a hermeneutical debate over the perception and representation of the ritual which forced historians, especially those of the 'Althoffian School', to rethink and to define the nature and the method of their research⁶⁹. And studies on ritual and symbolic communication 'mushroomed' in the following decades remained divided between the two standpoints: Buc reiterated his stance to the point of questioning even the correlation between orality and ritual and the supposed efficacy of the 'sensual nature of the rites' to communicate and to compensate a weakness of authority⁷⁰. The position taken by Althoff and Koziol had been underpinned by the recent rise of the concept of performance to the top of the cultural debate and by the current 'turn' in the studies of the performative character of rituals and public acts⁷¹. Public performances are seen as having an effect on the political order also through ambiguities, breaking the rules, and lack of movements⁷². Codes of conduct, codified behaviour, and signifying bodily movements are seen 'on work' in everyday interactions: they helped the self-identification, revealed hierarchical relationships, and provided cohesion among the members of primarily oral societies⁷³. Finally, a parallel wave of interest in the physical dimension of the body and the corporality in material culture studies have been originated in the field of Greek and Roman studies, which have been also recently marked by the presence of 'bodies' and by a multidisciplinary approach revolving especially

⁶⁶ ALTHOFF, FRIED, and GEARY 2002, p. 9.

⁶⁷ NELSON 1990, p. 25, referring to the audience of Hincmar of Reims.

⁶⁸ BUC 2001.

⁶⁹ KOZIOL 2002; BUC 2007.

⁷⁰ BUC 2002. Similar concerns and an original discussion on the debate had been provided by Christina Pössel. She moved away from a functionalist perspective focused on the motive and the meaning of the ritual, toward issues concerned with the processes by which the ritual practices could achieve their outcomes and with the ritual's long-term effects in their written re-interpretations; PÖSSEL 2009.

⁷¹ MARTSCHUKAT and PATZOLD 2003.

⁷² BRADDICK 2009.

⁷³ DEPREUX 2009; DEVROEY 2005. On the multiplicity of medieval bodies (seen as discursively constructed entities inscribed with cultural notions and with an elusive and fluid nature) and the multiple approaches that can be taken in discussing them, see NYFFENEGGER and RUPP 2011.

on Foucault, Mary Douglas, Erwin Goffman, and Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. Those works have especially unveiled the functioning of a wide spectrum of body languages, 'corporeal codes', and body's performances. Far away from being mere literary 'strategies', descriptions of bodies, gestures, and physical modifications, are here read as witnesses of their actual use in society not only to persuasively enhance the orator's words, but also to convey values, establish social and political boundaries, and even shape identities⁷⁴.

3. THE CASE OF BYZANTIUM BETWEEN REALITY AND REPRESENTATION

Early Byzantine scholarship has considered gestures and postures first of all in terms of their use as components of imperial ceremonies and of the visual representation of power⁷⁵. Considering however that for a long time the emperor remained seen as an almost abstract and static being who manifested himself within the framework of a fixed hierarchy 'like a holy icon, like a god'⁷⁶, his gestures and postures were also valued as fixed and unchanging visual formulas. They were considered as attributes of the symbolic iconography of power used by the ruler to enchant his audience and display his 'grandeur sensible'⁷⁷. The practical function of specific gestures (like those of disdain, greeting, and command) to replace the imperial word, signal social status, or reinforce the sense of distance of the authority, could occasionally be included in the analysis of the imperial ceremony⁷⁸. Mostly, however, the focus was on the most outstanding acts (especially those performed during the ceremony of coronation) through which the ruler expressed his supernatural condition and his exclusive relationship with God⁷⁹. Gestures mostly attracted the attention as expressions of ideological statements and as parts of imperial ceremonies that mystically and visually displayed (μυστικῶς

⁷⁴ FERRARI 2009, with bibliography. For the way in which gestures and bearing could contribute to the social construction and the conveyance of masculine identity, see especially GLEASON 1995. For the interest in the somatic aspect of acting in Greek and Roman theatre, see VALAKAS 2002. Recently, archaeologists have also developed an interest in gestures and bodily movements; CONNELLY 2011.

⁷⁵ Synthesis and general reflections on methods and approaches used in Byzantine historiography are rare, but see: RONCHEY 2002, pp. 147-176; JEFFREYS, HALDON, and CORMACK 2008; CAMERON 2014.

⁷⁶ DIEHL (1919) 1957, p. 32. Diehl recognized, of course, the gap between the ideal kind of sacral ruler, exemplary and perfect, who emerged in the protocol and political treatises' theory, and the corrupted and vicious ruler occasionally present in narrative accounts. But this was generally explained by the fact that Byzantine mentality and culture were ruled by contrasts.

⁷⁷ RONCHEY 2005, esp. pp. 714-719. Even Gibbon displayed an early awareness of the power of distance, mystery and pomp in captivating and maintaining the reverence of the 'credulous multitude'. Diocletian is thus an 'artful' state-man who adopted the ostentation and the formalities of the Persian court not so much for personal pride but rather for a political purpose. Also, the act of serving the emperor conferred much authority and prestige; GIBBON 1776-1789, ch. 5; ch. 7; ch. 13; ch. 17.

⁷⁸ TREITINGER (1938) 1956, pp. 54-55.

⁷⁹ TREITINGER (1938) 1956, pp. 7 ff., pp. 32 ff., and pp. 49 ff.

εἰκονίζει) the power in the 'Spiel und Ausdruck der Wirklichkeit (...) auf neuer und höherer Ebene des Seins'⁸⁰.

Furthermore, the unwieldy presence and normative character of the classical tradition in the iconographical Byzantine sources led art historians to also focus more on the allegedly slower process of transformation, marked more by the repetition of traditional patterns and symbolic formulas than by the expression of the artist's personal response to the world around him⁸¹. Despite the acknowledgment of the fact that classical tradition led also to a high degree of likeness in the representation of details like clothes and physical features⁸², art historians remained for a while focused more on the search for the origins and the transmission of lost 'archetypes', rather than on how visual sources could reflect actual practices in society and imperial politics⁸³. In his work on the symbolic representation of the emperor in art, for example, Grabar recognized the possibility that actual ceremonies could influence iconographical details: he perceived a 'progrès du 'réalisme' dans l'art officiel' of the sixth century (specifically in the numismatic field). He nevertheless mostly continued to distinguish between 'acte réel' and 'moment symbolique de la liturgie impériale'. The emperor remained a splendid statue 'immobilisés debout dans une attitude de cérémonie' expressing a god-like majesty and a status above the other participants. The gestures he performed or received remained static visual expressions of facets of the imperial ideology⁸⁴. Even the increased interest in the physical space in which the court moved, fueled even more by the archaeological excavations conducted since the 1930s in the area of the palace of Constantinople, has not been followed by a parallel interest in gestures⁸⁵. They remained limited to specific case-studies mostly revolving around the *proskynesis* (seen as a 'formalité de politesse' that assumed different shapes according to the rank of the performer)⁸⁶ and around the acts surrounding the inauguration of rulers (which soon sparked interest for their possible constitutional significance and as public expressions of political relationships

⁸⁰ TREITINGER (1938) 1956, pp. 1-2.

⁸¹ GRABAR (1963) 1971, pp. V-VI; pp. 1-3 and *passim*. This perspective has been particularly pronounced in the field of numismatics; see ALTIERI 1990.

⁸² This kind of imagery was for example alien to the German culture; BAK 1973, p. 55. For the degree of symbolism and realism in the representation of imperial clothes and *insignia*, see GALAVARIS 1958; BELLINGER and GRIERSON 1966-1968; DEÉR 1961; GRIERSON 1999, esp. pp. 28-31. For the degree of physical likeness in written descriptions of emperors, see HEAD 1980; BALDWIN 1981.

⁸³ See especially the long-standing philological approach of WEITZMANN 1947 (1970); WEITZMANN 1959; WEITZMANN 1971.

⁸⁴ GRABAR (1936) 1971, pp. 17-20.

⁸⁵ After the earlier studies of Ebersolt and Bury in the 1910s, the archeological findings allowed to supplement the written sources and to retrace buildings, itineraries and specific spaces used by the court in the ceremonies; EBERSOLT 1910; BURY 1912; JANIN 1950; GUILLAND 1961; MANGO 1959; SCHREINER 1979. For the history of the archaeological excavations in the area of the Great Palace in Istanbul, see VESPIGNANI 2001, pp. 12-17.

⁸⁶ GUILLAND (1946/47) 1967.

like that between Church and State)⁸⁷. Agostino Pertusi remarkably considered both topographical and ceremonial details to state the power of the repetition of ritual ‘acts’ through which art and texts symbolically expressed the perpetual, sacralised, and symbolic glorification of the imperial power⁸⁸. Shortly after Dean A. Miller also included the ‘repetition of potent gestures’ among the *insignia* of power (weapons, banners, costumes, and precious artefacts) and among the ‘clearest signs of dominance and control’. Miller also addressed the problem of the bivalent nature of the king: law-maker and bearer of rational order and hierarchy on one hand, ‘irrational’, ‘magical’, and charismatic being who persuaded his audience with the anomalous powers of his acts and his ‘Christomimetic’ nature on the other⁸⁹.

Insights from social studies, the epistemological concerns about the perception and the ontological status of past events, and the role of the authorial bias, remained only marginally discussed in Byzantine scholarship, for a long time informed by a positivist approach⁹⁰. Sure, it was not as if historians had been unaware of the contemporary debates in Western medieval studies. Some ‘ogres’ have smelled human flesh even in the seemingly ethereal and spiritual world of Byzantium: appealing to anthropological insights and social science’s lens, Peter Brown pioneered a series of studies interested in the physical dimension and the material culture of Late Antiquity⁹¹, while Alexander Kazhdan and Evelyn Patlagean have turned the attention ‘from the state to the individual’, and to a *homo byzantinus* with a social and physical identity⁹². Early attention was also paid to social behaviour, recognized as a ‘system of traditional, inherent, and partly unconscious responses, reactions, or adjustments of human beings to situations that occur repeatedly in society’⁹³. But even if Kazhdan urged Byzantinists to participate in the renewal of historical studies with new methods and new perspectives, he still presented as innovative some historical debates about structuralism that already dominated the historical research in the West⁹⁴.

⁸⁷ BRIGHTMAN 1901; CHARANIS 1941; YANNOPOULOS 1991. On the developments, also iconographical, of the themes of the coronation, the rising on the shield, and the unction, see TSIRPANLIS 1972; NICOL 1976. A comparative approach to the ceremonies in East and West is first provided by NELSON (1976) 1986.

⁸⁸ PERTUSI 1976, pp. 512-513.

⁸⁹ MILLER 1979.

⁹⁰ JEFFREYS, HALDON, and CORMACK 2008. ‘Byzantinists have tended to shy away from developments in modern theory’, wrote Vasileios Marinis, ‘sometimes with good reason’; MARINIS 2012, p. 338.

⁹¹ Brown followed the insights provided by Foucault and Mary Douglas to analyse the relationship between individual and structures of society, the sexuality and the body (especially with regard to expressions of faith), as well as the concepts of shame, stigma, exclusion; BROWN 1988. On similar concern in Le Goff’s work, see RUBIN 1997.

⁹² KAZHDAN (1968) 2007; PATLAGEAN 1987. Kazhdan noted the contemporary Byzantinists’ attraction for ‘man’s reaction to the machinery of the state (...) than the activity of the machinery itself’, i.e. to ‘the material conditions of human existence, the social organization of people, their collective psyche or mentality, their hopes, fears, and beliefs, their highest personal achievements’; KAZHDAN and CONSTABLE 1982, p. 16. For the pro and contra of using the concept of ‘homo bizantinus’, see *ibidem*, pp. 16-17.

⁹³ KAZHDAN and CONSTABLE 1982, p. 59.

⁹⁴ JEFFREYS, HALDON, and CORMACK 2008.

It is rather in the art-historical field of the '80-'90s that scholars 'who carry on as if nothing had happened in the past thirty years as if they were part of a strange isolated world untouched by the intellectual life around them', coexisted with scholars whose works were well informed by contemporary intellectuals debates⁹⁵. A number of scholars in the field have already and continues to address the relationship between reality and its representation, and the process through which the artist re-interpreted or created models within a specific cultural context⁹⁶. This perspective not only assumed that the pictorial exegesis did not prevent the artist to make decision according to the context in which he lived, but also that he could get some iconographical details from contemporary practices, especially ceremonial and liturgical ones⁹⁷. Doors were open to the possibility of looking at imperial ceremonies, whether described through images or words, as sources for the actual political situation as well as for the functioning of actual performances and ceremonial details. The understanding of the meaning and function of ceremonial details (among which one can also include gestures and postures) was also affected: thanks also to the developments in semiotics, they came to be recognized as tools indispensable for the performance and as sources for the cultural and political context in which they were used⁹⁸. Ceremonial details were finally contextualized in the flow of time and connected with changes in contemporary society, with an increasing attention to transitions along with continuities⁹⁹. Imperial ceremonies were no more seen as 'ready-made' events, floating in an abstract and extra-temporal dimension – an easily deceiving point of view often stressed by the imperial propaganda. They were rather acknowledged as the variable products of the effort of several professional 'planners' who actively selected the symbolic devices suitable for the occasion and the circumstances. Clothes, objects, and gestures were involved in the process and recognized as elements actually and dynamically involved in the exercise of power and subject to the individual agency¹⁰⁰. The emperor himself, 'surrounded' by the ceremonial 'whether he liked it or not', could give a personal touch to the events¹⁰¹. Furthermore, the audience was no longer seen as 'a mob to be fed and amused'¹⁰². It

⁹⁵ BRUBAKER 1992, pp. 229-230.

⁹⁶ DER NERSESSIAN 1962; DER NERSESSIAN 1970; SCHAPIRO 1973; KITZINGER 1977; CORRIGAN 1992; BRUBAKER 1989a; BRUBAKER 1993; CUTLER 2009. Leslie Brubaker's works have especially addressed methodological concerns about the creation and perception of works of art's meaning, gender studies, and the question of the patronage; LINARDOU 2011, pp. XVII ff.

⁹⁷ DER NERSESSIAN 1962, esp. pp. 223-224; MacCORMACK 1981; CORMACK 1985, p. 81; RAVEGNANI 1989; RAVEGNANI 1994; RAVEGNANI 1997; CARILE 1997; DE MAFFEI 1997. On the reconstruction of imperial clothes on the ground of the descriptions of the *De Ceremoniis*, see also FAURO 1995.

⁹⁸ CORMACK 1992; CUTLER 1975; CUTLER (1981) 1992; WALTER 1982; MAGUIRE 1977; MAGUIRE 1981; MAGUIRE 1989; MAGUIRE 1996.

⁹⁹ McCORMICK 1985; McCORMICK 1986; McCORMICK 1992; CAMERON 1979 (1981). On general questions, see also KAZHDAN and McCORMICK 1997.

¹⁰⁰ See especially CAMERON 1987, included in the above-mentioned collection edited by Cannadine and Price. See also her earlier remarks on the meaning and the actual employment of gestures in CAMERON 1976a.

¹⁰¹ For example, Manuel Comnenus' 'striking combination of honour and humiliation with which he treated his foreign guests'; MAGDALINO 1993, p. 246 and n. 56.

¹⁰² DIEHL (1919) 1957, p. 35.

appeared as an active element of society with an important role to play in the ceremonies and in the political panorama as well¹⁰³. A strict functionalist point of view, therefore, enlightened how ceremonies were carefully organized to induce a psychological mood in those present, to make a powerful statement about the nature of the authority, and to strengthen the imperial legitimacy¹⁰⁴. Gestures and postures slowly began to gain a specific, even if limited, place into the historical research: the entries 'gesture' and 'body language' included in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium tried for the very first time to give a composite (even if rather blurred) picture of the topic. They distinguished between 'natural' movements (expressing emotions), and 'gestures based on deliberate cultural, legal, political and religious conventions' (used in the state ceremonies, ecclesiastical investitures, liturgy, and everyday behaviour)¹⁰⁵. Antonello Calore analysed the gesture of the oath performed through the touch of the Gospels in its physical dimension and historical development, so to reveal how it underpinned Justinian's theocratic conception of the law¹⁰⁶. George Majeska availed itself of an anthropological approach to look at the ritual behaviour followed by the emperor during his accession in St Sophia (in particular the ambiguous acts and positions assumed during the Divine Liturgy) as a 'rite of passage' that conferred to him a 'quasi-sacerdotal' charisma. The shift of focus from 'what the emperor does' to 'what these elements of ritual behaviour mean to those who witness them' is meaningful, even if Majeska seems to overemphasize the ambiguity of the performance and underestimate the sensitivity of an audience who must have shared a clear gestural language¹⁰⁷. Similarly, Antonio Carile's studies on imperial symbolism will later address not only the rhetorical dimension that often lies behind the descriptions, but also the use of music, buildings, clothes, and gestures, to reify the hierarchical conception of the cosmos and to impose on the audience the faith in the sacredness of the imperial function¹⁰⁸.

After those early and isolated attempts, the gesture remains a topic mostly overlooked in historical research. And this despite the turn taken by the new generation of Byzantinists toward anthropology and social sciences¹⁰⁹ and toward topics traditionally left aside like the material culture, the body, the gender, the performativity, and the performance. Relics, gifts, clothes, and *insignia* are now investigated on an archaeological, iconographical or literary level, in terms of functions and meanings

¹⁰³ CAMERON 1976; ROUECHÉ 1984; ROUECHÉ 1993.

¹⁰⁴ MAGDALINO 1993, pp. 245-248. See also the articles collected in DIERKENS and SANSTERRE 1991.

¹⁰⁵ CUTLER and KAZHDAN 1991; KAZHDAN 1991b.

¹⁰⁶ CALORE 1995. The article is informed by the approach of Bertelli and Centanni (see above, p. 10).

¹⁰⁷ MAJESKA 1997. On the sacred nature of the Byzantine emperor, the most comprehensive study remains that of DAGRON (1996) 2003. For the imperial unction that 'washed up' the sacrilegious murder of the previous emperor, see PATLAGEAN (1989) 1992.

¹⁰⁸ Carile provided a reading of the ritual through anthropological notions like that of *proxemic*, *rites de passage*, initiation, and magic; CARILE 2002; CARILE 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Recent studies on Late Antique society have carried out the earlier insights of Peter Brown and have applied the anthropological method to early Christian practices and customs; HUMPHRIES 2006; KRUEGER 2006, esp. p. 3; GLANCY 2010.

as well as in terms of intentions (of those who commissioned) and responses (of the beholders who experienced them)¹¹⁰. The traditional view of a Byzantine culture mainly concerned with souls and ascetical bodies has been overcome by a new interest in physical senses, sensual bodies, corporeal beauty, and even gender¹¹¹. The performative character of the Byzantine civilization has been stated by the recent studies inaugurated by Margaret Mullett in the field of rhetoric¹¹², closely followed by the 'performative turn' in studies on the oral and 'theatrical' aspects pervading Byzantine literature and art¹¹³. New ways are sought in the field of literary theory 'of interpreting texts that seem on the surface to be intractable', recently recognized Averil Cameron. And 'an emphasis on performance and performativity (...) over reading is currently overtaking rhetoric as key to elite literary activity'¹¹⁴.

Aside from the topographical studies on the Great Palace and the interactions between authority and space¹¹⁵, however, analysis of imperial ceremonies had been mostly anchored to a perspective that looks at written and visual sources in line with that of Buc. Buc's approach had been proved to be particularly suitable to Byzantine art and culture: Cecily J. Hilsdale used it for her analysis of the famous Vatican manuscript 1851 representing the ritual welcoming of a foreign princess in Constantinople. She strongly affirmed the impossibility in reconstructing anything of the ritual from its depiction and pointed the attention rather on the material dimension of the object, gift and 'political tool' for social cohesion¹¹⁶. The same disillusion in reconstructing actual performances from their iconographical depiction is present in the only article devoted to the iconography of gesture wrote by Brubaker: she underlined the 'fragility of our understanding' of the Byzantine gesture and the formulaic and abstract

¹¹⁰ WOODFIN 2012, esp. pp. XXXI-XXXV; KALAVREZOU 1997; KLEIN 2006; BAUER 2006.

¹¹¹ JAMES 1999; JAMES 2011. On the sense of smell see ASHBROOK HARVEY 1998; ASHBOOK HARVEY 2006. On the hearing and the consequences of the music on the bodies of the participants, BERGER 2006. The taste plays a role in studies on the history of food and eating habits; DALBY 2003; BRUBAKER and LINARDOU 2007; KOKOSZKO and GIBEL BUSZEWSKA 2011, with a general bibliography on the topic. In 2016, an entire symposium had been held at the Dumbarton Oaks on the Byzantine 'sensorium'; ASHBROOK HARVEY and MULLETT 2016. On sensorial engagement of icons, see PENTCHEVA 2006. On the perception of beauty in Byzantine society, where physical features easily identifiable and repeated could transmit information about the social class and the dynasty, see HATZAKI 2009; HATZAKI 2010. On the gender, see STRUGNELL 2006, with bibliography. On the body of the eunuch; KUEFLER 2001; RINGROSE 2003; RINGROSE 2013. On the power of the empresses' bodies, see JAMES 2001. On the literary construction of bodies of female saints in the light of Goffman's subjects, gender studies, and performance theory, see CONSTANTINO 2005. Even the more incorporeal being in Byzantium, the angel, is now considered by a physical point of view; PEERS 2001.

¹¹² MULLETT 2003; MULLETT 2010. A work specifically dedicated by Mullett to this topic, meaningfully entitled *Performing Byzantium*, is forthcoming.

¹¹³ MARCINIAK 2014. See also DENNIS 1997; BOURBOUHAKIS 2010; TOUGHER 2010; BERNABÒ 2004-2005. This acknowledgement does not mean to affirm the presence of a theatre understood in traditional terms, a problematic quest which had been proved doomed to fail; PUCHNER 2002.

¹¹⁴ CAMERON 2014, pp. 23-24. Cameron refers mainly to writings like orations, poetry, homilies, literary epistolography or rhetorical pieces, more suitable to an emphasis on performance. Theological writings, hard to imagine to be 'performed' despite their being produced by the same authors who wrote in a secular vein, remain mostly outside the debate; *ibidem*.

¹¹⁵ DAGRON 2000; HALDON 2000; ANGELIDI 2013; FEATHERSTONE 2006; FEATHERSTONE 2007; BARDILL 2006; MAGDALINO 2011; MACRIDES 2011; ROUECHÉ 2014.

¹¹⁶ HILSDALE 2005. See also LYMBEROPOULOU 2011.

nature of both its iconography and its literary description, without anyway denying its importance as visual indicators of ranks and hierarchical relationships¹¹⁷. In the field of the literary studies on the Byzantine 'narrative', scholars have also warned against the seduction of accepting stories as history¹¹⁸. The focus remains mainly on unveiling the influence of cultural, political and ideological stances on the writer's historical perception, especially in the field of the *Kaiserkritik*¹¹⁹. Isolated remains the point of view of Ljubarskij, for whom 'stilisierung betrifft wohl die realen Züge des Kaisers', and who looked at the description of the 'eccentric' and theatrical behaviour of Michael III as the reflex of actual ritual practices¹²⁰. Mainly, descriptions of gestures, bodies, and behaviour found in narrative sources continued to be investigated more as instruments of the author than as instruments of the authority who performed them.

Few exceptions stood out in this panorama. Studies devoted to the practices involved in the diplomatic context largely deal with verbal and non-verbal strategies. Those were decisive devices for the dialogue between the parts and for the outcome of the encounter: the belonging of ambassadors and members of the elite to different places and different cultures made indeed often crucial to rely on visual communication and a shared repertory of symbols in order to successfully exchange messages, convey ideas, and display social hierarchies¹²¹. In this *milieu*, emperors, elite members, high officials, and guests, are recognized as using their bodies to impress the audience and interfere with the political situation¹²². The sense of agency of the imperial body, in line with Althoffian School's point of view, have then been recently considered in the analysis of the emotions in the imperial context. The acts of weeping and rage are recognized as phenomena far away from natural actions. They were rather part of a highly symbolical display of distress or repentance, employed by the emperor and the high officials to emotionally bear down on the audience and to express specific political messages – for example, the desire to change a situation¹²³. Finally, a recent article by Charles Pazdernik (edited significantly in

¹¹⁷ BRUBAKER 2009. For an earlier interest in communicative gestures at an iconographical level, see TINNEFELD 1995. A more positive point of view toward the iconographical representation of ceremonial details like secular artefacts (*realia*), costume, and *paraphernalia* in religious art, and the possibility to see them as evidence of material culture rather than as mere significative elements of the pictorial language, is assumed by Parani. She addressed the artist's attitude toward the sensible world and the 'creative processes and the cultural conditions' around them; PARANI 2003, esp. p. 1-2; p. 227; PARANI 2007.

¹¹⁸ BURKE et al. 2006.

¹¹⁹ TINNEFELD 1971; GREATREX 2000; CONRAD 2000. The *mimesis*, however, remains acknowledged as a complex process beyond a mere formal renounce to originality and creative autonomy, involving the mentality, the taste, and the personality of the author, see CRESCI 1986; MAISANO 1985; GARYZA 2000, esp. pp. 5-7. On the relationship between a 'genuinely contemporary' Procopius and the classical literary tradition through which he expressed himself, see CAMERON 1985, pp. 34-40; ROQUES 2000, p. 18; p. 39; BOURBOUHAKIS and NILSSON 2010.

¹²⁰ LJUBARSKIJ 1987.

¹²¹ BEIHAMMER 2004; BEIHAMMER 2013; CANEPA 2009; LUCHTERHANDT 2006; ANCA 2010; POHL 2013.

¹²² BEIHAMMER 2013, pp. 2-3. The articles collected by Beihammer combined the traditional approach to courtly ceremonial (focused on ideological, visual, literary elements) with the paradigm shift introduced by the concept of the ritual politics, and with the comparative studies in the cultural politics.

¹²³ GRÜNBART 2008; HINTERBERGER 2010.

a study devoted to Greek-Roman bodies) provided a fresh evaluation of the *proskynesis*: Pazdernik reviewed the use of bodily dynamics at Justinian imperial court and looked at the changes in the rules of etiquette that governed the interactions between ruler and subjects as a reflex of an effort to construct the boundaries of the emperor's body¹²⁴.

In front of this outline it is clear that even if important studies have dealt with different aspects of bodies, performances, and imperial ceremonies, no attempt has been undertaken to present a study focused on the analysis of gesture and imperial body in a composite picture. No comprehensive study has addressed the rationale that drove the performers to choose a particular gesture and the author to include a specific physical description, or on the Byzantine tendency to expect certain subjects to behave under specific 'rules' aligned with their role in society. The active and performative force of the imperial body had also rarely been recognized. It remains commonly limited to traditional and conservative treatments. Even Kathryn Ringrose, who masterfully treated many important facets of the Byzantine body, merely defined the imperial body as perfect, 'confirmed' as holy through the ritual crowning, and rarely touched or seen, by certain persons and under regulated conditions¹²⁵. On the contrary, an analysis of the physical movements and the patterns of behaviour followed by the emperor, based upon a specific methodology suitable for the topic, could unveil important facets of the imperial theory and the actual practices of power.

4. METHODOLOGY

For our enquiry, a middle path will be chosen between the approach of Buc and that of the Althoffian school¹²⁶. The rhetorical dimensions of the discourse, the polemical intents and the ideological stances of an author set in a specific cultural and political environment, are all important aspects to consider if we want to understand the narrative sources at our disposal¹²⁷. References to or descriptions of bodies, body's movements and gestures have always been powerful literary devices in praise and criticism. Especially in the formal context, amplifications, elisions, subtle references and parallelism to past events, as well as mentions of irregularities or misuses could be good instruments in the hands of the author. He could use those means to turn a ceremony or public event against the authority who

¹²⁴ PAZDERNIK 2009.

¹²⁵ RINGROSE 2013, p. 367.

¹²⁶ The political situation in the West, where Althoff's 'Spielregeln' (unwritten 'norm, rules and customs' and more specifically those with ritual character) could be in some cases accepted by the performers as a substitute of the state, was nevertheless very different from that in Byzantium, where the emperor was a stable and central presence; BEIHAMMER 2013, pp. 5-6.

¹²⁷ 'La seule manière de l'aborder historiquement', indeed, 'c'est de l'aborder culturellement' and unveil all 'les réalités rhétoriques, c'est-à-dire purement littéraires' like literary allusions, formulas, and clichés; ROQUES 2000, p. 18; p. 39.

had used it to elevate his status¹²⁸. On the other side, it is equally important not to overlook the fact that those descriptions may reflect actual performances, patterns, and strategies in which gestures, postures, and attitudes played a significant role in defining social identities and interactions and even in influencing the outcome of political events. Even if an author could re-interpret a meaning, give a personal flavour to a description, or even manipulate the account of an event according to his own bias, indeed, we cannot ascribe to him an absolute and unlimited arbitrariness in shaping the historical account. *'Between the word and the truth'*, recognized Gregory of Nazianzus, *'stands the hearer, like an experienced arbiter, who rejects praise when it is unjust, but claims it when it is just'*¹²⁹. The educated and urban audience of Constantinople must have been aware of the events and the main characters moving inside and outside the palace, and the recounts had to ultimately maintain a continuity with the reality in order to remain understandable, credible, and therefore enjoyable and efficacious too¹³⁰. 'If a chronicler tells us that a noble fell on the ground we should not doubt him' declared Koziol. And 'if a sketch, without iconographic precedent, shows a king granting a diploma to a prostrate supplicant, there is no reason not to believe that the illustrator was recording a common occurrence'¹³¹. The problem in the Byzantine artistic and literal production is that more often than not those precedents were very present. To recognize their origin, mostly from the Roman and the biblical past but also from previous Byzantine historians, is important. Their very belonging to the tradition, indeed, gave them strength and could evoke a specific meaning through a connection with a precedent or an incident well known by the audience¹³². The audience (a homogeneous and restricted social group made of men who had the highest role in the court, the army and the clergy) was well aware of the literary and cultural tradition behind some descriptions. The author, like the artist, was part of a 'cognitive and credal community' and shared with his audience a 'visual lexicon' and a common mentality shaped in the same cultural context and based upon an established tradition¹³³. Stories, descriptions, and all the details he included in his narrative were likely not a mere mechanical selection

¹²⁸ ICKS 2011. According to Icks it is possible to untangle facts from fictions by facing every account on a case to case basis, through comparisons and finally 'arguing which course of events seems the more plausible'; *ibidem*.

¹²⁹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 8.1; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 278-279.

¹³⁰ I agree with Koziol on the importance of the audience's reaction in giving an event, inherently ambiguous, a specific meaning. Koziol's statement is on the other hand criticized by Buc who considers rather the audience's reaction as part of the propaganda; BUC 2001, pp. 106-107. For the entertaining purpose of histories, likely read aloud in front of an educated audience and capable to rise emotional reaction, see NEVILLE 2018, pp. 17-20 (with bibliography). For the view of history as narrative and related 'facts' as fiction without affecting the 'true' historical content, see NILSSON 2006. On credibility and persuasiveness as the most important virtues in narrative, see MULLETT 2006.

¹³¹ KOZIOL 1992, p. 18.

¹³² Byzantine historians recognized the knowledge of their audience and exploited literary traditions and very well-known stories for their own purposes; SCOTT 2010, with essential bibliography.

¹³³ On the 'visual lexicon' and 'cognitive and credal community' in the artistic field, see CUTLER 2009. Visual images and a commonly understood visual language were employed in the ceremonial setting of the Great Palace to impress foreign ambassadors on diplomatic occasions; CORMACK 1992.

of a pre-established corpus of iconographic and literary themes. They involved a re-fashion which reflected the author's point of view as well as the expectations of his audience¹³⁴. The text, recognized also Ruth Webb, can always reveal the 'range of arguments that were likely to be found acceptable and persuasive by the audience', and thus the range 'of the contemporary views, anxieties, and problems'¹³⁵. Another historian of the late Antiquity, Hartmut Leppin, clearly explained how historical sources are not only to be read as sources about events and persons, but also and mostly as sources for *thinking about* such events and persons¹³⁶. The act of recounting a past event, a fact, as well as that of describing the deeds, the character, and the outward appearance of a person, should not be seen as having the sole motivation of conveying historical memory and preserving the past. This had not to be seen as the only reason behind the author's intention. Through more or less detailed descriptions, it was indeed always possible to transmit ideas and values which were as much as important.

So, while descriptions of gestures were influenced by the cultural, social, and political contexts in which they were performed, the actual performance of gesture was also influenced, in turn, by the way in which gestures and behaviour were described. Recent studies on narrative forms have investigated how a story presented by authoritative specialists (whether in written or visual form) could shape the historical memory of the Byzantine society, the identity and the self-definition of its members¹³⁷. Christian literature had a powerful normative character, stories could inform actions and perceptions of people, and the narrative form could help to understand the world and offer guidance for life and death¹³⁸. Rhetoric could affect gestures too. In Anthony Giddens' terms, we could say that the moral, theological and philosophical values, deeply embedded in gestures and behaviour mentioned and described in literature through a slow and gradual process started in classical Antiquity, became part of the *homo byzantinus*' 'practical consciousness'. Those values came to rule every occasion in which his body was publicly displayed¹³⁹. The body was the place where the biological man met the social

¹³⁴ BOURBOUHAKIS and NILSSON 2010.

¹³⁵ WEBB 2008, p. 15.

¹³⁶ LEPPIN 1996, p. 5.

¹³⁷ People 'will tell stories, and when those stories become important enough to their sense of who they are, and what they can know about their world, past and future, they may become increasingly self-conscious about the appropriate form those stories should take'; BOURBOUHAKIS and NILSSON 2010, p. 274. On the concept of 'authoritative specialists', see BUC 2007.

¹³⁸ BOURBOUHAKIS and NILSSON 2010, p. 264. By referring to a story from the past, explained Gregory of Nazianzus, is it possible to draw an advice for a present situation. Stories are not written merely to move the hearers (as happened for the pagan literature), but helped the reader to make the right choice through observation of similar situation, following the examples of the past as norms and models; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 2.105; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 72-73.

¹³⁹ See Althoff's definition of 'ritual' as 'chains of actions of a complex nature that are repeated by actors in certain circumstances in the same or similar ways, and, if this happens deliberately, with the conscious goal of familiarity'; ALTHOFF 2002, p. 71.

man, 'a cultural object (...) shaped in part by ideology and values'¹⁴⁰, while ideology and values influenced, in turn, the way in which the body was actually used in the space and in a socially acceptable manner. Descriptions of bodies and gestures provide, therefore, the 'rules' of self-presentation which were expected from the different 'gestural categories' of the society. They were actively employed to express relationships and ideas and to display or to judge moral qualities, religious belonging, and social identities.

Even the *topoi* present in the anecdotes and the lively stories which scatter historical accounts about emperors and members of the court can be revealing in this sense. Often snubbed by scholarship as a not faithful account of the reality, those kinds of sources can especially disclose the 'humanity' of a character, provide exemplar behaviour, and unveil the developments and the effects of actual practices on the society and the politics: even the most stereotypical, flattering, or polemic description of an emperor's behaviour or act can offer glimpses outside the official context and reveal the perception of the power's appearance, the standard behaviour expected from the authority, and the actual manipulation of those elements for political purposes¹⁴¹. Those accounts could then also shape opinions and lead those who read them to behave in a certain manner. Among the main purpose of historical writing was indeed not only the will to preserve the memory of good deeds against the oblivion of time, or the entertainment of the audience. History was also 'a teacher of character' intended to educate the audience (emperors and functionaries as well) 'about how they ought to behave'. And 'the past figures were taken as models for people to either emulate or shun'¹⁴². Emperors eager to legitimize their power or to handle dangerous situations could thus look at the examples of the tradition to find the more proper and effective gesture and behaviour to exercise their power.

The question will be, therefore, not *how* gestures and bodies *looked like*, but rather *how they functioned* in Byzantine society and politics, both at a physical as well as a literary level. It is important to look at their rhetorical dimension (especially in the case of the imperial body), but it is also important to embody the *topoi* anew into the context of a court made of expressive and perceiving entities. The fertile Giddens' perspective about the mutual interaction between structure and agency will be particularly useful to unveil how gestures and postures were shaped both by the social, religious, and

¹⁴⁰ LE GOFF (1983) 1988, p. 85. The importance of the socio-political context to understand how men act and behave in their times has been then stated by several scholars in the field; KOZIOL 1992, pp. 289-307; LÖSSL 2010, p. 119.

¹⁴¹ 'L'aneddotica nasce e si nutre (...) del bisogno di tener viva e di accrescere l'esperienza delle più varie e diverse manifestazioni dell'anima umana', declared Benedetto Croce; M. GIGANTE, 'Per una interpretazione di Diogene Laerzio', in DIOGENES LAERTIOS, *Vitae philosophorum*; tr. GIGANTE 1976. For a synthesis of the recent debate on the historical values of the anecdotes, divided between a pessimistic and a more positive point of view, see ICKS 2011. Recently Wallace-Hadrill has made use of the accounts of Epictetus, Seneca, and Suetonius, to turn some 'fixed cornerstones' based upon the 'republicanism of Tacitus' and prove how the Roman court was a system of redistribution of power; WALLACE-HADRILL 2011, esp. pp. 91-92; p. 97.

¹⁴² NEVILLE 2018, pp. 17-18.

cultural structures, as well as by the individual agency of the performers¹⁴³. An emphasis on the sense of agency of those involved in the imperial ceremonial and courtly life, in particular, could unveil how the rhetorical dimension and the systems of values elaborated 'in, and through' the Scripture and the classical tradition could also have a performative effect on society and politics.

5. THE SOURCES

The topic of the present study has a multifaceted nature and requires a wide perspective. It scatters throughout the Byzantine literature covering different literary genres, chronological periods and, especially in the formative period of Late Antiquity, different geographical contexts. The present work does not mean to be exhaustive. Due to space and time limitations, I will discuss only some characteristic examples and I will put forward some questions to demonstrate the potential of including the topic in Byzantine studies. I will include only a limited discussion of works of art and I will focus mainly on the period from Late Antiquity until the middle of the ninth century, with an *excursus* into the tenth and eleventh centuries. As for the longstanding problem of the spelling of the author's personal names, for reasons of uniformity I adopted for most of the cases the modern and more easily recognizable English form¹⁴⁴.

For the first part, concerning terminological and philosophical questions and issues about attitudes, perceptions, and judgments, I considered a selection of early Christian authors who received a high-level rhetorical and philosophical education in the main centres of culture and secular learning of the empire. Those writers used their background to defend their new faith and to solve doctrinal and disciplinary issues in front of the pagan society and the Christian communities. They testified the developments in the platonic concepts of *schema* and *schemata* in the Christian context and clarify the role and the importance of body and body's movements in the social and religious life of Christians, especially in connection with the soul. The selection includes Paul of Tarsus (whose epistles had been widely read and commented on in the following centuries), Justin Martyr (who opened a school of 'Christian philosophy' in Rome and addressed in his writings also the emperor and the Senate), the refined and multicultural Clement of Alexandria, rigorous apologists like Tertullian, the Cappadocian

¹⁴³ Valerios Marinis has recently applied Giddens' categories to the complex interactions between liturgical architecture, ritual and belief. In such a perspective, also an architectural form could be seen as the 'result of a negotiation between inherited social, religious, and cultural structures and individual agency'. In this case, the structure resulted from what was theologically and socially acceptable, and the agency from the desire and the possibilities of the patrons and the artists; MARINIS 2012.

¹⁴⁴ For an equally legitimate different point of view, which looked at the 'Latinization and Anglicization' of personal names as a 'redundant form of affectation' and claimed the necessity of using names which would capture the Greek spelling, see A. KALDELLIS, 'Introduction' in PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. LX-LXI.

Fathers (especially Gregory of Nyssa), John Chrysostom, Theodoret bishop of Cyrrhus, as well as some treatises on the virginity and collections of rules of conduct to be followed in the ascetic life. I followed the terminological continuities in the sixth-century works of the rhetorician Choricus of Gaza and the refined antiquarian John the Lydian, as well as in the eighth-century disciplinary canons of the 'Quinisext' Council in Trullo (691-692) with its later commentaries of Balsamon and Zonaras.

But writers were also 'aware that busy Romans had more time for ethics than for metaphysics, and would learn more readily from a human paradigm than an abstract dissertation'¹⁴⁵. Therefore, interesting material is yielded by the biographies written in the first half of the third century by Philostratus, a pagan sophist in the circle of the empress Julia Domna who described the functioning of visual physical *schemata* on the stage of the performance. Early passions of the martyrs, fifth-sixth centuries edifying stories of monks and desert fathers by the bishop Palladius and the abbot of Mount Sinai John Moschos, hagiographies, they all equipped the readers and Constantinopolitan elites with powerful models of behaviour and instructions about clothing, demeanour and gestures. Stories of repentant harlots, transvestite women, and holy fools, outlined the bad conduct of wicked people (heretics, demon-possessed and deceivers), described the supernatural and effective power accorded to the bodies and the gestures of the virtuous saints, and provided lively material for the use and the manipulation of the *schema* and the body in society to identify gender and status and to reach holiness. Interesting pieces of information come also from popular sources widely read and consulted: the second-century treatise on dreams by Artemidorus; the pieces of advice offered by the seventh century *Erotapokriseis* of Anastasius, abbot of the monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai, to his lay community; the *Suida* lexikon (or, better, encyclopaedia) arranged around 1000 on earlier and often lost writings; and the romance of Barlaam and Ioasaph, a Christian text inspired by the life of Buddha and transmitted through different versions (the Greek one likely produced in the seventh or in the ninth century)¹⁴⁶. Finally, the function and the importance of a proper understanding of material, visual, and symbolic devices – the sign of the cross and the gesture of prayer *in primis* – used in the liturgical Christian context emerge from mystagogical treatises and commentaries of the baptismal Catechesis produced between the fourth and the eighth centuries.

The part of research devoted to the imperial body and gestural patterns is conducted especially on historical narrative, full of lively stories and details about the topic¹⁴⁷. Pagan authors who followed

¹⁴⁵ EDWARDS 2000, p. XXIII.

¹⁴⁶ For the history of the text (traditionally but also speculatively ascribed to John of Damascus) with its different dating and attributions, see WOODWARD and MATTINGLY, 'Introduction' to *BARLAAM AND IOASAPH*; tr. WOODWARD and MATTINGLY (1914) 1967, pp. XVIII-XXVII; KRUMBACHER (1907) 1970, p. 40; JEFFREYS 1991; SIMPSON 2017.

¹⁴⁷ I do not address here the thorny question around the definition of texts labelled as 'history' or 'chronicle'. See especially MARIEV 2015; NEVILLE 2018, pp. 8-16 (with bibliography). For the problem of delimitations between literary genres in the work of Malalas, see BURGESS and KULILOWSKI 2016.

prestigious careers at the imperial court of fourth-fifth centuries put at disposal of the emperor, the Senate, and the military commanders, *compendia* of Roman and contemporary history with moralistic and didactic purposes: the African Aurelius Victor, the *magister memoriae* Eutropius, the anonymous compiler of the *Epitome De Caesaribus*, and the thirty biographies of emperors, *principes* and tyrants collected under the name of *Historia Augusta* (likely a forgery produced at the end of the fourth-fifth century despite the dedication to Diocletian and Constantine)¹⁴⁸, they all selected material out of classical sources like Suetonius, Tacitus, and Herodian, and, possibly, a supposedly lost *Kaisergeschichte* of the third-fourth centuries. In this way, they outlined a rich repertoire of historical examples of behaviour and virtues to be imitated or to be avoided in order to be considered a 'good' or a 'bad' ruler (mostly according to the level of respect toward the constitutional forms of government)¹⁴⁹. The anti-Christian rhetoric teacher Eunapius of Sardis sometime after 395 described the extravagant outward appearance of Christian monks in his *Lives of Philosophers*, but he also recounted the period between 270 and 414 in a *Historia Universalis*, preserved in fragments, in which emperors and powerful men are judged, often according to their religious affiliation, and deemed as responsible for the good or bad functioning of the State¹⁵⁰. Lively stories and references to virtues, behaviour, physical appearance, and visual acts required by and revolving around emperors and authorities of the fourth-fifth centuries can also be found in the surviving books of the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus (a high-born tolerant pagan member of the military elite who described the years between 353 and 378 according to the ideals of the senatorial aristocracy of Rome); in the fragments of the 'material for history' covering the period between 407 and 425 and written by the Egyptian Olympiodorus of Thebes, great traveller and ambassador under Honorius and Theodosius II; in two orations addressed to Constantius II by the emperor Julian the Apostate (likely written after he was appointed as Caesar in 355 and before the official break between the two in 360); in the work of Julian's friend and rhetorician Libanius of Antioch¹⁵¹. In the fifth-century, Zosimus' *Nea Historia*

¹⁴⁸ For the attribution, dating, and problematic issues raised by this work, see P. SOVERINI, 'Introduzione' to *HISTORIA AUGUSTA*, tr. SOVERINI 1983, pp. 9-57.

¹⁴⁹ For Aurelius Victor's moralistic interpretation of history, personality, and preferences, see H. W. BIRD, 'Introduction' to AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, tr. BIRD 1994, p. VII; pp. XIII-XV. For Eutropius' education, career, political context, and aims, see H. W. BIRD, 'Introduction' to EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium*; tr. BIRD 1993, pp. VII-XLIX. See also ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 42-72.

¹⁵⁰ BLOCKLEY 1981, esp. pp. 8-10; pp. 15-20. Eunapius lived away from the centres of power (he spent his life in his hometown in Lydia and had only a brief educational experience in Athens) but likely received reliable material for his work from his sophistic friends and the sources available at his times; *ibidem*, pp. 1-26; ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 64-72. For use of Eunapius as a source, see also BLOCKLEY 1981, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵¹ On Marcellinus, see ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 14-20; pp. 28-29. Rohrbacher suggested that Ammianus was born in Antioch, a city filled with Latin-speaking soldiers and bureaucrats, to whom he addressed his work; *ibidem*, p. 14. Selem claimed that Ammianus was born in a Greek-speaking family in Syria and then moved to Rome, where he tried to please the senatorial class by writing in Latin, by criticising emperors like Valentinian and Valens, and by emphasising the role of the *humanitas* as the highest virtue required from a good emperor; A. SELEM, 'Introduzione' to AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*; tr. SELEM 1965, pp. 14-30. Blockley suggested that the *Res Gestae* could be a Latin translation of a Greek first draft, produced in Antioch around 371; BLOCKLEY 1981,

anachronistically described the events from the reign of Augustus until 410 on the ground of the republican, monarchic, and anti-Christian mentality of his sources¹⁵². The pagan philosopher Themistius, who claimed to be the 'head of the Senate' and champion of the senatorial opinion, managed to follow a successful career by following the Aristotelian perspective over the political participation of the philosopher. In the panegyric speeches delivered in front of the court, he pursued a compromise between the virtues the emperor was required to own as a Christian ruler, the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy, and the Hellenic traditional *paideia*¹⁵³. Those ideas will have an echo in the panegyrics written by Claudian for the third and fourth Honorius' consulships (396 and 398)¹⁵⁴.

The Christian church historians of the fourth and fifth century endorsed the values and the judgments of the pagan historical production and developed this existing 'strands of thought' by giving 'a new twist to old anxieties'¹⁵⁵ and by defining the standards for the imperial behaviour in the light of the new faith. The courtly bishop and theological counsellor of Constantine Eusebius of Caesarea (whose interest in gestures, behaviour and holy men's bodies was already attested in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*) outlined the historical model for the good Christian ruler and the impious *tyrannos*¹⁵⁶. After him, Socrates (who was born, educated and lived in Constantinople), Sozomen of Gaza (who was born in Palestine, travelled around the empire, and then settled down around 425 in Constantinople to work as a lawyer), and Theodoret bishop of Cyrrhus (who was born in Antioch and used his monastic education to confer an almost saintly 'aura' to the figure of the 'good' emperor) continued the narrative under Theodosius II and filled their works with anecdotes on the imperial court and on the religious and secular controversies of their times which involved gestures and physical appearance

p. 25. For the connection between Ammianus' and Eunapius' works, see *ibidem*, pp. 24-25. For other sources employed, often first-hand, see ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 38-41. For the work of Olympiodorus of Thebes (arranged on commentaries and digressions) and the sources employed, see BLOCKLEY 1981, pp. 27-47. For the life and the work of Julian, see W. C. WRIGHT, 'Introduction' to JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Orationes* 1 - 2; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, p. 2. The problems of dating and understanding Julian's writings (a parody or 'a *speculum princeps* written not for but by the prince'), as well as its connection with previous and contemporary literature, had been highlighted in BAKER-BRIAN and TOUGHER 2012, esp. pp. 1-46. On the figure of Julian, both author and subject of the historians, see ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 237-273. For the life of Libanius see A. F. NORMAN, 'The life of Libanius' in LIBANIUS, *Orationes*; tr. in NORMAN 1969, pp. XXXIX-XLV.

¹⁵² For the sources of Zosimus (Dexippus for the first book, Eunapius for the second one to 5.27, Olympiodorus until the end), see R. T. RIDLEY, 'Introduction' to ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, tr. RIDLEY 1982, pp. XI-XV.

¹⁵³ HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 3-4; p. 20; pp. 39-40; pp. 74-75. Themistius faced accusations of sophism and flattery by other contemporary philosophers at court who were focused on otherworldly and individual problems. He retired from public life in 384, when the regime adopted a more radical Christianising agenda and more violence was directed against pagans; *ibidem*.

¹⁵⁴ For a brief summary of Claudian's life, his career at the imperial court in Milan after 395 and until 399 (when he returned to Rome), and the main characters of his literary production, see M. PLATNAUER, 'Introduction' to CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus ...*; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. XI-XIX.

¹⁵⁵ WEBB 2008, p. 174, referring to the Christian polemic around the theatre in Late Antiquity.

¹⁵⁶ On the features and the critical problems connected with the *Vita Constantini*, see L. TARTAGLIA, 'Introduzione' to EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, tr. TARTAGLIA 2001, pp. 7-23.

carefully employed by the authorities¹⁵⁷. The Constantinopolitan layman Philostorgius and the Galician Orosius offered a model of Christian virtue and a kind of ‘sacred’ and efficacious *schema* for the emperor in a context in which events of history, nature, and human endeavour were felt as revealing the divine power acting on the matter¹⁵⁸. References to gestures and behaviour conferred to bad or good emperors are included also in epideictic orations like those of the Roman bishop and theologian Hilary of Poitiers against Constantius II and that delivered around 400 in front of Arcadius by the bishop of Ptolemais Synesius of Cyrene. This latter was a pagan born with a firm philosophical education and shared the mind-set of Themistius and Claudianus, mixing Neoplatonism and Christian theology¹⁵⁹. In the sixth century, several exceptional sources testified the continuities and the developments occurred in the visual imagery and ideology. The Syrian Romanos the Melodist, John the Lydian, the Latin-speaker Illyrian Marcellinus Comes, the African Corippus, the Antiochean John Malalas, Procopius of Caesarea, and the Syrian Evagrius Scholasticus (born in Epiphania, educated in Antioch, lawyer in Constantinople after the 550s, and then counsellor of the patriarch Gregory in Antioch) were all educated in the provinces of the empire and moved to Constantinople to fulfil prestigious political, military or religious career at the court of Anastasius, Justin, Justinian, and Justin II¹⁶⁰. Their works

¹⁵⁷ For a thorough analysis of the different interpretations of the imperial action and the Christian ideas on the concept of the empire developed by those three ecclesiastical historians, see especially LEPPIN 1996. On Socrates of Constantinople, the variety of written and oral sources he employed, and his attention to secular affairs, seen as strictly connected with doctrinal issues and church events, see also ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 108-116. On Sozomen, see *ibidem*, pp. 117-125. For a summary of the similarities (in some cases resulted from the use of similar sources) and the differences between Socrates and Sozomen, see *ibidem*, p. 123 and *passim*.

¹⁵⁸ On Philostorgius, an Eunomian who judged the emperors according to his religious point of view, see P. R. AMIDON, ‘Introduction’ to PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*; tr. AMIDON 2007, pp. XIII-XXIII. On Orosius, his life, his work, and his view on historical events driven by God and influenced by the faith and the moral qualities of rulers see A. LIPPOLD, ‘Introduzione’ to OROSIUS, *Historiarum adversus paganos*; ed. and tr. LIPPOLD – BARTALUCCI – CHIARINI (1976) 1993, vol. I, pp. IX-XLII; ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 135-149. For the religious and political situation at that time, see L. R. WICKHAM ‘Introduction’ to HILARY OF POITIERS, *Liber adversus Valens et Ursacius*, tr. WICKAM 1997, pp. XV-XXII.

¹⁵⁹ Synesius came to Constantinople on behalf of his city to ask for a reduction of taxes; A. GARZYA, ‘Introduzione’ to SYNESIUS OF CYRENE, *De Regno*; ed. and tr. GARZYA 1989, pp. 1-36.

¹⁶⁰ Romanos the Melodes and Marcellinus Comes moved to Constantinople under Anastasius and reached high position under Justin and Justinian. On Romanos and the main characteristics of his *kontakia* (a genre of hymns that mixed prose and poetry) see V. MANGOGNA, ‘Introduzione’ to ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia*; tr. TROMBI 2007, pp. 5-30. On Marcellinus’ *Chronica*, published in two editions (the first one covering the period from 379 until 518, the second one down to 534) see B. CROKE, ‘Introduction’ to MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, pp. XIX-XXVII. On Corippus’ ‘narrative poem’ dedicated to Justin II seen as ‘turning point’ in the relationship between Roman and Christian ideology, see CAMERON 1976a, pp. 1-20; CAMERON (1979) 1981. John Malalas received his education and fulfilled a bureaucratic position in the cosmopolitan cultural centre of Antioch, and then moved to Constantinople at the court of Justinian. His conventionally titled *Chronographia* (an extremely popular text which covered secular and biblical events from the creation down to the author’s times) had raised many issues due to the corruption of his main witness, the Bariocianus 82 (mutilated of the last part from the 563 to 565, and likely composed in at least two editions, the second one updating the narration from 532 and produced when the author moved to Constantinople). The text had been for a long time considered as the product of a ‘naïve’ author merely addressed to the masses, instead of a work with historical and literary quality addressed to the bureaucrats of the capital; M. JEFFREYS et al., ‘Introduction’ to JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. XXI-XXIII. Procopius held the position of private secretary and adviser of the general Belisarius, followed him in military campaigns, and then

encompassed a different kind of genres and recounted contemporary events, sometimes even on the base of oral information or by the perspective of an eyewitness, and testified how Christian emperors, writers, and members of the audience, were able at this point to exploit the historical precedents at their disposal, to fully master the biblical language, and to cleverly use meaningful and evocative gestures and posture in a by now strong visual imagery. They offer lively descriptions of the functioning and the perception of gestures and bodies in political encounters, public imperial actions, conflicts, and triumphs, and testify how the imperial *schema* could be used in the theatre of power and then overthrown as a tool for the critique. Even the ‘outsider’ Agathias, who was born in Myrina, educated in Alexandria, and then lived in Constantinople an uneventful life away from the court as a lawyer under Justin II and Tiberius II, put much effort to render his work (which continued Procopius’ narrative from 552 to 558) attractive to his audience through a ‘sense of dramatic fitness’ and ‘a pleasing pattern’. His work remained thus a good source of lively descriptions of the use of gestures in public encounters¹⁶¹. Menander the Protector, palace guardsman under Maurice, continued Agathias for the period between 558 and 583 and testifies the increase of formalism in diplomatic activity and the role of the gestures in it¹⁶². Lively descriptions are provided also by the Monophysite and anti-Chalcedonian writers John of Ephesus (who experienced the persecution under of the patriarch John III Scholasticus and Eutychius and wrote in Syriac a Church History for the period between 571 and 586), and Michael, patriarch of Antioch, who wrote in the twelfth century a Universal Chronicle likely based also on John’s second lost book and that provides supplementary information for the reigns of the emperors from Leo I down to Phocas¹⁶³. The reign of Justinian produced several insightful works also at the level of ‘discursive consciousness’: the *Peri politikēs katastaseōs* (On Political Institution), codified by the *magister officiorum* Peter the Patrician, described the repertoire of gestures used for the appointments of officials, embassies, and imperial coronations and proclamations of fifth-sixth

settled down in Constantinople where he engaged himself in organizing the material and writing his works on Justinian; CAMERON 1985, pp. 7-14; CRESCI MARRONE and BARTOLINI 2005, pp. XIV-XVI. On the possibility that the *Wars* and the *Secret History* had been written at the same time and with a common purpose, and for the problem related with the title *Anecdota* (lit. ‘unpublished material’), see A. KALDELLIS, ‘Introduction’ to PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. XXIV-XXIX; p. IX. For the way in which both Procopius and John the Lydian praised but also presented a covert criticism of Justinian’s despotism, see *ibidem*, p. LVI, with bibliography. On Evagrius (whose Church History covers the period from 431 to 593) and his travels in contact with the official and spiritual elites of his times, see M. WHITBY, ‘Introduction’ to EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*; tr. WHITBY 2000, pp. XIII-XV.

¹⁶¹ J. D. FRENO, ‘Introduction’ to AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, tr. FRENO 1975, pp. IX-XI.

¹⁶² R. C. BLOCKLEY, ‘Introduction’ to MENANDER PROTECTOR, *Historiae* (fragmenta); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY (1985) 2006, pp. 1-30.

¹⁶³ On John of Ephesus, see PAYNE SMITH, ‘Preface’ to JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica pars Tertia*; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. V-IX; Van GINKEL 1995. On Michael the Syrian, see M. MOOSA, ‘Introduction’ to MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, tr. MOOSA 2014. Sections of the second part are retrievable from the excerpts quoted by Michael I the Syrian, as well as by the eight/ninth century History of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tell Mahré and Elias Bar Shinaya; GRIFFITH 1991.

centuries emperors¹⁶⁴. The training in 'political science' (or 'political philosophy') necessary for the emperor to improve his virtues and behaviour in order to maintain a harmonious political order are addressed by two fragments survived of the *Peri politikas epistemes* (On Political Science), a philosophical dialogue between two wealthy members of the highest administrative levels of the empire which presumably reflected the social status of the author and its intended audience¹⁶⁵. The seventy-two 'capitula admonitoria' offered to Justinian by the deacon Agapetus around the mid-530s expressed highly minded ideas about the duties of the ruler and the compresence, in his nature, of a mortal and a divine dimension¹⁶⁶.

In the early seventh century George of Pisidia, *skeuophylax* of Hagia Sophia and emissary of the patriarch Sergius, took part in the first Heraclius' expedition against the Persians in 622-623 and praised his emperor with panegyrics which conferred a mystical undertone to his body on the battlefield¹⁶⁷. It is possible that Sergius' entourage also included the anonym cleric author of the *Chronicle Paschale*, a universal chronicle likely written in the early 630s, which gives a credible and eye-witness account of the events following the death of Maurice, the rule of Phocas and the earlier years of the reign of Heraclius until 627¹⁶⁸. The Egyptian Theophylact Simocatta moved to Constantinople not long after the accession of Heraclius and wrote a classicizing history of the reign of the emperor Maurice and earlier years of Heraclius, which is full of details on gestures and public physical performances in political encounters and exercise of power. Simocatta relied on and expanded contemporary anecdotes and stories, the now almost entirely lost recount of John of Epiphania (who participated in the embassy in Persia of the patriarch of Antioch Gregory), a hagiographical collection connected with Maurice, and a biased pro-Heraclian text which combined panegyric and invective to support the new regime¹⁶⁹. Many are the problems related with the fragments attributed to the Universal Chronicle of John of Antioch, likely completed between the 610 and the 626 in Constantinople, which used previous sources to give a panorama of the emperors of the past until Heraclius. In any case, this text testifies the appeal of old stories on the early seventh century's

¹⁶⁴ The text had been partially transmitted in the tenth century by the *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus; A. MOFFATT and M. TALL, 'Introduction' to *De Cer.*; ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, I vol., p. XXVI.

¹⁶⁵ On the story of the text, the different theories of identification for the author, the dating, the sources, as well the allegedly implicit criticism of the imperial system, see BELL 2009, p. 5; pp. 9-13; pp. 19-27; pp. 49-79.

¹⁶⁶ On the identification of the author, the problems in dating the work, the source he employed and how he dealt with them and with the main political and social concerns of his time, see BELL 2009, pp. 8-9; pp. 18-19; pp. 27-48. For the way in which the author used previous sources to express opinions that were current in the sixth century, see HENRY 1967, p. 284.

¹⁶⁷ SPAIN ALEXANDER 1977.

¹⁶⁸ M. WHITBY and M. WHITBY, 'Introduction' to *CHRONICON PASCHALE*; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, pp. IX-XXVII. See also HALDON 1990, pp. XVII. Likely, the chronicle was mutilated and should have ended with the restoration of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem in 630; *ibidem*.

¹⁶⁹ FREND 1988; M. WHITBY, 'Introduction' in THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, pp. IX-XXVII.

audience, while the persistence of the places and the times of actions for the contemporary events seems to imply that the author employed also memories still alive in his mind and in the minds of his readers¹⁷⁰.

The so-called period of 'Dark Ages' between the last years of Heraclius and the end of the eighth century is unfortunately not so rich in sources¹⁷¹. For our topic, interesting remarks come from the Coptic Universal Chronicle written under Justinian II by the Monophysite Egyptian monk and bishop John of Nikiu, transmitted by an Ethiopic translation of an Arab version. John of Nikiu heavily relied on Malalas as a source – probably on the base on a longer and more complete version at disposal in Egypt¹⁷² – but also transmitted precious stances about the continuities in the idea over the mortal nature of the emperor, revealed especially in the moment of the anger and the death. The History attributed to the Armenian Sebeos, written at the end of the first phase of the Islamic conquest in the seventh century, provides extracts from various sources which included also some insights on the court of Heraclius and his son Constans II¹⁷³.

The period of the Iconomachy will be addressed first of all through an analysis of the sources written during or shortly after the controversy. Major sources will be the *Breviarium* of the iconophile Nikephoros, much-contested patriarch of Constantinople from 806 until his deposition by Leo V in 815 (a text written at the end of the eight – beginning of the ninth centuries, which covered the events from 602 down to 769)¹⁷⁴. Then, the Chronicle attributed to Theophanes Confessor, likely written before 814, during the iconophile 'break' under Michael I, by a well-born and well-educated iconophile in contact with both the ecclesiastical and the imperial courts. It continued George Syncellus' work '*Selections of chronography*', from the accession of Diocletian in 284 to the rise of Leo V in 813, and

¹⁷⁰ For the sources employed by John of Antioch (especially John Malalas), his originality, the attribution of the fragments to John, and the identification of the author, see U. ROBERTO, 'Introduzione' to *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta ex Historia chronica*, ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. XI-CCXI; pp. 618-649 (complete *index locorum*); CONTERNO 2014, p. 5 (with bibliography). On the critical issues involved in collecting and editing the fragments variously attributed to John in a *corpus*, see also MARIEV 2016.

¹⁷¹ KAZHDAN and CUTLER 1982. The situation seemed to have been due not only to a missed transmission of the texts (a similar situation was shared by the Islamic historiography which in those years was experiencing its formative phase); CONTERNO 2014, p. 1. While the decline was concerned especially with the secular literary production, a less drastic reduction marked indeed the theological and political writings, hagiographies and homilies, as well as apocalyptic and eschatological texts, which reflected the immediate worries and issues of belief and concerns about the meaning of life; HALDON 1997, esp. pp. 425-435.

¹⁷² BURGESS and KULILOWSKI 2016.

¹⁷³ On the work's attribution to Sebeos, its dating and its contents, see R. W. THOMSON, 'Introduction' to PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, esp. pp. XXXII-XXXVIII. On the kind of documentary sources used by the author, see *ibidem*, pp. LXV-LXX.

¹⁷⁴ On Nikephoros' life and the datation and the sources of the text, see E. A. FISHER, preface to IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*, tr. FISHER 1998, pp. 25-31; C. MANGO, 'Introduction' to NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 1-18; BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, p. 171. For a brief summary of the controversies around the purposes, the date and the sources of the Stephen the Deacon (who claimed to write in 806 and relied on many other texts like the Acts of the Council of 787 or one of the versions of the *Adversus Constantinum Caballinum*), see BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, p. 226.

constituted a major source for both contemporary and historical events, in some cases reported by enriching the narrative of the sources at disposal and by manipulating the events to suit the author's ideological concerns¹⁷⁵. The hagiographies likely compiled shortly after the definitive restoration of the icons in 843 lively described the iconoclast imperial physical acts and body through a highly critical point of view: the biography of St Stephen the Younger (abbot of the monastery of St Auxentius in Bythinia and martyr under Constantine V) written by Stephen the Deacon likely after the 843 and then re-edited in the tenth century by Symeon Metaphrastes. Then the Life of Michael the Synkellos, the Life of Theophilos' wife Theodora, the *Passio* of Saint Andrew in Crisis, and Ignatius the Deacon's Life of patriarch Nikephoros. Integrative source for the Iconomachy will be George the Monk's Universal Chronicle from Adam to 842, written shortly after the death of Theophilos, the so-called 'Chronicle of 811' (a description of Nikephoros I's unfortunate expedition against the Bulgarian khan Krum and the battle of Piliska of 811), and the fragment known as 'Scriptor Incertus de Leo V' (a long recount of the political events under Leo V)¹⁷⁶. A more biographical and detailed approach to the eight-ninth centuries emperors came to the fore in the tenth-century. The first three books of Genesios and the so-called Theophanes Continuatus (a name given to Bekker to the collection of texts preserved in the eleventh-century manuscript Vat. gr. 167) were produced on Constantine VII's orders and continued Theophanes Confessor's Chronicle until the reign of Theophilos, on the ground of a common source (likely a dossier provided by Constantine) and with a special taste for the physical details¹⁷⁷. Those texts will be analysed in parallel with John Skylitzes' account on the reign from Michael I to Theophilos, written by a high functionary under Alexius Comnenus who selected and adapted different sources (including a source common to the previous ones)¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁵ On the way in which the point of view of iconophile authors affected the descriptions of iconoclast emperors and historical details, see among others BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, pp. 166-170; pp. 201-202. On the debate concerning the possible source to which both Nikephoros and Theophanes draw for the years 668-720, and for the passages in line or not with Theophanes' iconodule faith, see also CONTERNO 2014, pp. 6-8. I will consider Theophanes as the actual author of the text, even if much debated has been raised around the authorship of the text. On the authorship, the sources, the composition, and the transmission of the text, as well as its relation to later middle Byzantine historians, see JANKOWIAK and MONTINARO 2015.

¹⁷⁶ For George the Monk's work and its relation to Theophanes Confessor and the Acts of the Church Council for the events of the seventh-eight centuries, see BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, pp. 172-173. The *Chronicle of 811* and the *Scriptor Incertus de Leo V* had been edited by Francesca Iadevaia under the name of *Scriptor Incertus* together with a third short fragment describing the defeat of Versinika endured by Michael I Rangabe in 813. Recent scholarship is divided in considering the two fragments as belonging to one original chronicle or to separate works. For the dating and the debates around those complex sources, and their role as sources for later middle Byzantine historians, see E. PINTO, 'Introduction' to *SCRIPTUS INCERTUS*, tr. IADEVAIA 1987, pp. 10-16; NEVILLE 2018, pp. 78-84; MONTINARO 2015, pp. 179-181.

¹⁷⁷ For a summary of the debate and the relation between the texts, see NEVILLE 2018, pp. 95-109.

¹⁷⁸ According to Scott, Skylitzes used his sources to recall the deeds of the Comnenian dynasty, and even if in some cases he added little to his original sources, the variations he brought had been proven to be deliberate manipulations of the past, a 'new way of using history in the service of families, and in line with the literary inventiveness of the Komnenian period'; SCOTT 2010.

Finally, the later *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos concludes the present work, as a masterpiece of narrative where gestures deftly interplay to describe memorable imperial bodies, and where the mortal dimension of the emperor powerfully surfaces in all its aspects¹⁷⁹.

PART II. SCHEMA AND SCHEMATA, BODIES AND PERFORMANCE OF THE SELF. THE CULTURAL FRAMEWORKS OF BYZANTINE SOCIETY

In the first part of the research, I will address the ‘invisible components of the human action’¹⁸⁰, i.e. the theological and moral values, the proprieties and the meanings attached to physical movements and behaviour. In semasiological/saussurian term, I will address the body language ‘code’ above which it was constructed the human movement system, its rules and its assigned values, its social *langue* and its individual *parole*¹⁸¹. Those elements have been gradually defined and developed in the Byzantine socio-cultural context starting from the ‘crucible’ formative period of Late Antiquity, when ‘a new culture and political system were forged out of old materials’¹⁸². Discontinuities came along with the radical changes experienced by society¹⁸³. Nevertheless, the attitude toward bodies and gestures belongs mostly to the field of the mentalities, notoriously characterized by a *long durée* and slow-changing nature¹⁸⁴. The background will therefore be the classical, Hellenistic, and Roman heritage, which functioned as a ‘cultural glue’ among an elite whose education was informed by a rhetorical, grammatical, and philosophical curriculum of studies based upon pagan texts¹⁸⁵. This framework will be selectively absorbed, enriched, and developed to fit the context of the Christian society and will provide the basic philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical assumptions toward bodies and

¹⁷⁹ The *Chronographia*, a classicizing history characterized by ‘a strong authorial presence’ where Psellos ‘appears as a character in the drama’, contrasts markedly with the *Historia Syntomos*, a chronicle where Psellos ‘kept such a low profile that scholars have doubted that he wrote it’. Anyway, it seems safe now to attribute both the text to the same author; NEVILLE 2018, pp. 14-15 (with bibliography).

¹⁸⁰ For the visible and invisible characteristics of human actions, and the impossibility of understanding gestures and postures through mere observation, see WILLIAMS 2004, pp. 7-9.

¹⁸¹ WILLIAMS 2004, pp. 160-161.

¹⁸² ANGOLD 2001, p. 2. ‘Late Antiquity’ (even called ‘early Byzantium’ or ‘later Roman Empire’) refers generally to the years between the accession of Diocletian (284) and the death of Theodosius I (395), but could be also expanded up to the reign of Justinian, to the rise of Islam in the seventh century, or even up to the tenth century; CAMERON 2014, pp. 4-5; pp. 28-29; p. 57; p. 80-81; pp. 113-114; n. 30, p. 133.

¹⁸³ Kazhdan chose to emphasise for example the deep changing occurred in the seventh century’s urban life, which led to an ‘utter indifference to clothes, food, and secular knowledge’, a new attitude of humility, the discovery of the beauty inherent in disharmony, and the strengthening of the relationship with God above that between people; KAZHDAN and CUTLER 1982. For an emphasis on the ‘dramatic break’ experienced between the everyday life of Late Antiquity and that of the Byzantine Middle period, see also MANGO 1981.

¹⁸⁴ BRAUDEL (1958) 1980.

¹⁸⁵ MANGO 2002b, p. 102.

gestures. It will determine the way in which they were not only theoretically conceived, but also described and performed in the Byzantine society in the following centuries.

1. TERMINOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

‘One may, it is true, find some word or phrase in one’s own language with which to translate concepts native to another language (...), but as anthropologists, *we are obliged to ask what the concept means to native speakers.* (...). The fact is that we are obliged to communicate verbally, even when we talk or write about (...) movement. *We are never free of the problems of language* (...)’¹⁸⁶.

In exploring the field of gestures we have first of all to be aware of the ambiguity inherent in gestural occurrences in both Greek and Latin texts, that is an ambiguity between a metaphorical sense (which hints at the general act understood in its abstract dimension) and the actual physical movement made with a specific body’s part. The term *neuma* (νεῦμα, with its verbal forms νεύω-νεύειν), like the Latin *nutus-nuere*, could express for example both the physical nod made by bending the head (from νεῦσις, ‘inclination’) as well as the general acts of commanding, confirming and giving consensus¹⁸⁷. Especially the term *proskynesis* (προσκύνησις) was often employed as a synonymous for adoration, veneration or obeisance, and this whether or not the performer made the physical action of falling down and prostrating the body on the ground. This ambiguity represents an ever-present problem to keep in mind in order to discern the degree of reality of a gesture quoted in a text, especially regarding the symbolic movements of the body’s limbs present in ceremonial, juridical, and ritual environments. Those ‘canonical’, ‘conventional’, ‘intentional’, and ‘shared’ gestures were both ‘substantially physical’ and ‘semantically pregnant’: they not only substituted words but had also an ‘effective’ power on the reality¹⁸⁸.

To speak about gesture means to consider any kind of physical movement, attitude, or outward disposition that transmits a message, a value, a moral quality, or a social, religious, or political condition¹⁸⁹. The definition of the concept cannot be limited to a specific hand’s or head’s movements. Already Schmitt emphasised how in Latin the term *gestus* (a derivation of the verb *gerere*, to bear, to manage, to govern), did not make a distinction between a single physical movement and a broader

¹⁸⁶ WILLIAMS 2004, pp. 56-57. Italics mine.

¹⁸⁷ In the ninth century, Photius still underlined the connotation of ‘command’ of the term equating νεύματα and βουλήματα (purposes, designs); *Photii Lexicon, ad vocem* ‘νεύματα’; ed. PORSONUS 1823, p. 255.

¹⁸⁸ On the difference and the interpenetration between the physical ‘gesto’ and the abstract ‘atto’ in medieval thought, see BERTELLI and CENTANNI 1995, pp. 13-14. ‘(...) il gesto non comunica soltanto (non ‘parla’ in sostituzione delle parole), ma essenzialmente costituisce. (...) Il gesto rituale è dunque un gesto costitutivo/efficace’; BERTELLI and CENTANNI 1995, p. 21.

¹⁸⁹ It remains impossible to analyse on a historical level gestures and attitudes originating from inner emotions; BERTELLI and CENTANNI 1995.

sense covering the whole appearance, including postures, expressions of the face (*vultus*), and the general bearing of the body (*incessus*). Furthermore, the term entailed a good or a bad moral value connected respectively to the controlled and restrained *gestus* of the orator on one side, and the disordered and excessive *gesticulatio* of the mime and the pantomime actor on the other¹⁹⁰. In the Greek language, we find a similar situation too. It is true that several terms derived from the term χεῖρ referred specifically to an action performed with the hand¹⁹¹; but among the generic terms referring to the movement (κίνησις and φορά) or to the arrangement of the body (διάθεσις, i.e. the disposition assumed during a dance, both mental and physical)¹⁹², the ‘keyword’ to understand the concept of gesture seems to be *schema* (σχῆμα; pl. σχήματα)¹⁹³. The term has been usually understood as a ‘rhetorical figure of speech’ or ‘verbal ornament’ which created ‘intimacy between orator/writer and listener/reader’ without affecting the inner meaning of the discourse; or, when referred to a person, as ‘dress’ or ‘costume’ and, in a metonymic procedure, to the social position and status of the person who wore it. This latter nuance was present especially in the monastic environment¹⁹⁴. When an author wanted to refer to the dress in its material dimension, anyway, he employed rather words like ἔνδυμα or στολή. The term *schema* was more associated with the bearing of the body¹⁹⁵, and with the form assumed by the body once the dress was put on. It encompassed a wide range of semantic possibilities (the Patristic Lexicon of Lampe records at least eighteen of them)¹⁹⁶, all related to the idea of outward appearance, display, and semblance. Often, especially in the derivational form *schematizein* (σχηματίζειν, μετασχηματίζειν), the term had a marked denotation of pretence. This nuance was already present in the rhetorical meaning of the term (in the fourth century BC, the Cynic rhetorician Zoilus of Amphipolis defined the *schema* as the act ‘to feign

¹⁹⁰ SCHMITT (1990) 1999, p. 16; pp. 22-23.

¹⁹¹ For example, *cheiragoghéō* (χειραγωγέω, to lead someone by the hand), *cheirotónéō* (χειροτονέω, to raise the hand in order to vote) or *cheironoméō* (χειρονομέω) → χειρονομία, lit. to move the hands. The latter has been employed in different environments, from sport (the *palestra*) to rhetoric, to especially dance, and referred to the act of physically moving the hands in an expressive way; JUCKER 1966a.

¹⁹² WEBB 2008, pp. 85-87. The term is directly associated with σχῆμα and σχέσις in Plutarch’s discussion of the dancing poses; *ibidem*.

¹⁹³ Schmitt mentioned only ‘κίνησις’ as equivalent to *gestus* and *motus* in Greek, while *schema* merely appeared in a small note in the appendix. Here Schmitt agreed with Karl Sittl and presented the *schema* as an equivalent of *habitus* (the ‘attitude’ and the ‘dress’) and with a specific technical meaning in the dance vocabulary; SCHMITT (1990) 1999, p. 23; n. 6, p. 338.

¹⁹⁴ Those are the meanings attached to *schemata* and *schema* in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, without any reference to their meaning of gesture or posture; KAZHDAN and JEFFREYS 1991; TALBOT 1991. For the distinction between *mikron* and *mega* or *angelikon schema* gained by the monk and visually displayed in the dress, see TALBOT 1991. The focus on the relationship between eloquence and painting, on the other hand, allowed Henry Maguire to recognize that the word *schema* ‘was both a figure of rhetoric and a pose in painting’; MAGUIRE 1981, p. 9.

¹⁹⁵ Together with σχέσις (‘situation, character, restraint’), σχῆμα and σχηματίζω derive from ἔχω (aor. σχεῖν, ἔσχον; fut. σχήσω; pf. ἔσχηκα) ‘to possess, retain, have’, or, in the intransitive form, ‘to hold oneself’; BEEKES 2010, I vol., p. 490.

¹⁹⁶ LAMPE 1961-1968, pp. 1358-1359.

one thing and mean another (σχῆμά ἐστιν ἕτερον μὲν προσποιεῖσθαι, ἕτερον δὲ λέγειν)¹⁹⁷, and brought the term close to the Latin concept of *figura*¹⁹⁸.

Such a variety has characterized the *schema* since the earlier stage of its development. A recent study of Maria Luisa Catoni on non-verbal communication in classical Greece has followed its use from its primary connotation of 'figure' and 'shape' in the Euclidean geometry (where it denoted the form contained within a geometrical outline or the outline itself) and in natural and astrological studies, down to its use to indicate the set of fixed, mobile, or semi-mobile components of the appearance (i.e. the general shape of the body and its limbs, the dress, and the dynamic attitude and movements made by the body), until its specific use in the context of performative systems to denote physical and dynamical gestures (especially in the plural form *schemata*). The *schema* needs to be ultimately understood as the selection of the main outward elements that immediately and icastically identified the social role, the *status*, or even the ethnic origin of a person¹⁹⁹. The language of the *schemata* underwent a strong process of crystallization of the iconographical language in the theatrical context (and from here, in all the fields of mimetic arts and visual communication, affecting the everyday life interactions too), where they were essential tools for the actor who had to change his identity and his appearance in order to play a role on the stage²⁰⁰. And the traditional contrast between the fixed and static *schemata* on the one hand and the dynamic *kinesis*, *diathesis*, and *rythmos* on the other²⁰¹ has been now replaced by a focus on how the verbs ῥυθμίζει and σχηματίζει diverged primarily for their being related, respectively, to the category of time and space: the ῥυθμός connected with the φωνή and with the inner disposition of the character portrayed; the σχήμα connected with the ὄψις and the visible appearance²⁰².

Outward appearance can also provide informations about the inner being and the personal moral qualities of individuals²⁰³. The physiognomic idea that the body was the mirror of the soul, that it could

¹⁹⁷ BRANHAM 1996, p. 84. For a later discussion on this meaning of the term in the Roman rhetorical environment, see QUINTILIAN, *Institutio Oratoria*, IX, 1, 13-14; ed. and tr. RUSSELL 2001, vol. IV, pp. 16-17. See also the discussion on this passage in MESTURINI 2001, p. 160.

¹⁹⁸ This connection had heavily affected the development of the meaning of the term *figura*, which also shared the same theme with *ingere*, *figulus*, *fictor* and *effigies*; AUERBACH (1944) 1971, esp. pp. 174-177, p. 179, pp. 193-184.

¹⁹⁹ CATONI 2005, *passim*. See also JUCKER 1966b; BREMMER 1991. See also the conference 'Figures – Models – Schemata. Ancient Foundations of Picture Act and Embodiment', organized by Humboldt University of Berlin in 2011 <http://bildakt-verkoerperung.de/en/2011/07/international-conference-figures-models-schemata-ancient-foundations-of-picture-act-and-embodiment/>.

²⁰⁰ CATONI 1997, especially pp. 1028-1029.

²⁰¹ *Schema* was seen as the 'forme fixe' that expressed 'le conception statique de la figure et de la structure', while *rythmos* was the 'forme du mouvement' that expressed 'l'expression dynamique de la forme'; SANDOZ 1971, quoted by MESTURINI 2001, esp. pp. 68-77; p. 71; pp. 78-90.

²⁰² MESTURINI 2001, esp. pp. 157. Mesturini remarkably replaced the original translation as 'dress' with 'character, role, part' in a fragment of Menander; MESTURINI 2001, pp. 210-211. Theatre and dance are defined as 'time conveyed into space', where the ῥυθμοί are translated in σχήματα and the sound became image; MESTURINI 2001, pp. 164-167.

²⁰³ For the association between *schema* and virtue or πάθος, see CATONI 1997.

convey feelings as much as ethical values, and that it could therefore be subject to a moral judgment, has deep roots in the Greek mentality. Pseudo-Aristotle declared in the fourth century BC that the physical conformation and general appearance of the body, the gestures (τὰ σχήματα), the posture (τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ σώματος), the voice, the face's expressions (τὰ παθήματα or τὸ ἐπὶ τοῦ προσώπου ἐπιφαινόμενον), the movements (τὰς κινήσεις) were all physiognomic signs that expressed not only feelings like pain or anger, but also the character (ἦθος) of a person. Specific gestures and postures could be charged with a positive value (e.g. the standing position and some slow movements), others with a negative one (e.g. a quick and wavering gesture, the act of looking at the ground and bending the body forward)²⁰⁴. Nevertheless, such a denotative function could also turn physical appearance into a powerful device in the sphere of simulation and imposture. In fact, the *schema*, which ideally mirrored the true interiority of the performer, could always be counterfeited for the sake of being identified with a social category, a quality, a moral value, a πάθος²⁰⁵.

The act of pretending was felt to be a serious ethical problem. It involved a discrepancy between reality and appearance, form and substance. This tension was recognized above all by Plato, who took the *schema* as one of the keystones of his philosophy. Plato's *schema* was one of the elements composing the *pragmata* and, therefore, one of the main categories of perception through which the *pragmata* could be perceived, acknowledged, and recognized. Since the things were perceivable both with the eyes (the major sensory organs) and with the ears, the *schema* could be combined with the *chroma* or with the *phone*: when paired with *chroma*, *schema* means the perimeter or the outline of a drawing filled then with the colour. The human body itself, therefore, could be defined by the *schema* and by the *chroma* of the flesh and skin. When paired with *phone*, it was associated with the dynamic and visible aspects of non-verbal communication: it referred to the way in which a body actively presents itself in public, whether or not according to the interiority, and to the gestures and postures employed in the performance (dance and theatre), especially in the plural form *schemata*. *Schema* and *schemata* were, therefore, the main instruments of the *mimesis*. Plato's use of the term *schema* differed from that of similar terms like *morphe* (μορφή, the perceptible form of the imprint), *eidos* (εἶδος, the intelligible form of the archetype), *demas* (δέμας, the form of a living body) or *physis* (φύσις, the natural form). It was the apparent, changeable, and imitable state of being, opposed to the material,

²⁰⁴ PSEUDO-ARISTOTLE, *Physiognomica*, esp. 806a; 807a-b; 808a; ed. and tr. HETT 1963, pp. 92-93; 98-105. Those ideas were later codified by Polemon of Laodicea' *Physiognomy* (133-136 A.D.) and transmitted to the eastern Christianity through the fourth-century Anonym Latin and the epitome of Adamantius; GLEASON 1995, esp. pp. 29-37. For a translation and a collection of articles related to this kind of literature, see SWAIN 2007.

²⁰⁵ A good example of a *schema*'s disguise is Herodotus' story of Phye. The woman was induced by Pisistratos to play the part of Athena by taking up her *schema* and therefore also the dignity and nobility attached to it; HERODOTUS, *Historiae*, I, 60.4; ed. and tr. ASHERI and ANTELAMI 1991, pp. 64-65, quoted in CATONI 1997, pp. 1031-1032.

the substance and the content, and was characterized by flexibility and manipulability²⁰⁶. Furthermore, the danger of *schema* lied in the power of visual performances and mimetic arts to create, codify, and spread models and values (ἤθη) within the community: and if the *techne* was disjoined from the *ethos* they could have a bad influence on the education of young people and subvert the order of the State. Therefore, the State had the moral duty to control the public performances through the work of legislators which selected and fixed the good *schemata* conformed to the *ethos* and with a positive influence on the everyday life²⁰⁷.

The semantic possibilities given by Plato to the concept of *schema*, as category of perception and identification through the senses and as physical and persuasive instrument of the *mimesis*, will find their way into the early Christian 'philosophy'²⁰⁸. Plato was the most important spiritual bridge between paganism and Christianity and strongly influenced the theology of the Church Fathers, who got their terminological instruments from a classical and pagan education and used them to develop a new conceptual vocabulary enriched with the Christian thought²⁰⁹.

At the beginning of the first century, Paul of Tarsus employed the term *schema* to refer to the apparent and transient condition of the present world that is passing away (τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου), in contrast with the eternal dimension of the reign of God that is about to come²¹⁰. Hence, Christians do not have to conform (μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε) to this world and have to change their way of thinking to discern the divine will²¹¹. Paul continued to use the term μετασχηματίζω (the act of assuming a *schema*) to refer to the act of arranging something or someone: especially, the term refers to the deceptive nature of Satan, who disguises himself as an angel of light, and his ministers, who disguise themselves as

²⁰⁶ CATONI 2005, p. 279; MESTURINI 2001, pp. 155-168. For the intimate association between *phone* and *schema* in Plato, see also BOEGEHOLD 1999, p. 14. Aristotle, who discarded Plato's doctrine of ideas, employed *morphé* and *eídos* indiscriminately and made rather a distinction between matter (the potentiality, the *substratum* supporting the qualities) and form, which actually contains all the qualities potentially present in the matter; LIGHTFOOT 1994, pp. 133-135.

²⁰⁷ For the relation between *schema/schemata* and *paideia*, especially in Plato's *Laws* and *Republic*, see CATONI 1997, pp. 1013-1060, in part. pp. 1021-1036.

²⁰⁸ On the problems and the developments which will firmly configure the Byzantine cultural identity, see MANGO 2002b, pp. 96-100.

²⁰⁹ KRUMBACHER (1907) 1970, p. 34; CLARK 2004, p. 4; p. 7; p. 30.

²¹⁰ PAUL OF TARSUS, 1Cor 7:31. The translation of the term *schema* in this quote is quite controversial. Some translated it as 'outward appearance', stressing the negative connotation of the term as deception and illusion. This interpretation is seemingly supported by the following statement in 2Cor 4:18 where is declared that what is seen (βλεπόμενα) is temporary and what is not seen is eternal. Others preferred to translate it as 'essential figure' of the world, or the world in its actual forms. Others think that the term more openly referred to the theatrical character of the world as a stage; BARBAGLIO 1995, p. 355; MONTAGUE 2011, p. 132. In the revised edition of the Lexicon of the New Testament, Danker defined the *schema* as 'the generally recognized state or form in which something appears, outward appearance, form, shape of a person' as well as 'the functional aspect of something, way of life'; DANKER 2000, p. 981.

²¹¹ PAUL OF TARSUS, Rom 12:2.

pseudo-apostles and as servants of righteousness²¹². Paul employed the term also to refer to the human likeness assumed by Christ. He was *'in the form of God* (ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ) but humbled himself by taking the *'form of a slave* (μορφὴν δούλου) and a human *schema*, i.e. a *schema* through which he was recognized as a man (σχήματι ἐβρεθεῖς ὡς ἄνθρωπος)²¹³. Finally, the act of assuming a *schema* (μετασχηματίζω) could also refer to the new attitude assumed by the faithful near God's glory²¹⁴. In the second century, the apologist and 'Christian philosopher' Justin Martyr managed to harmonize his Christian faith with the Platonic and Aristotelian terminology absorbed in his early education. He continued to employ the term *schema* to refer to the false and changeable appearance assumed by those who wanted to be renowned as philosophers without doing anything worthy²¹⁵. Pagan gods also imitated the names and the *schemata* of evil demons, in contrast with the immaterial, stable, and, therefore, inimitable essence (οὐσία) and form (μορφή) of God²¹⁶.

The *schema* came also to be associated with the symbol of the Cross: the *schema* of the cross (τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ σταυροῦ), explained Justin, 'figured' and gave a visual form to the strength of the crucified Christ. It was present in all of the instruments that ruled the matter and through which the man governed the cosmos: the mast of the ship, the artisan's and the farmer's tools, the battle-standards and trophies, and the human *schema* (τὸ δὲ ἀνθρώπειον σχῆμα). The cross was present both in the human face, composed by the nose and the eyebrows, as well as in the human posture: the man, unlike any other irrational being, could stand upright, outstretch the hands, and show in his body *'no other pattern than that of the cross'*²¹⁷. Words and *schemata*, therefore, are the instruments used by Justin to support his argument²¹⁸.

The fourth-fifth centuries Cappadocian Fathers also started from a cultural background deeply influenced by a classical education to build up a theological and liturgical vocabulary 'indelibly marked

²¹² PAUL OF TARSUS, 2Cor 11:13-15.

²¹³ PAUL OF TARSUS, Phil 2:6-7. For the difference felt by the author between *morphe* (the form and the attributes intrinsic and essential to his nature, human and divine) and *schema* (the external semblance which appeared to the eyes of men), see LIGHTFOOT 1994, pp. 132-138. The term *schema* is otherwise avoided in referring to Christ because it could always imply an idea of illusion and a sense of changeableness; LIGHTFOOT 1994, p. 125.

²¹⁴ PAUL OF TARSUS, Phil 3:21. The verb here indicates the profound transformation of human somaticity from earthly to glorious; BARBAGLIO 1995, p. 355 n. 132.

²¹⁵ JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apologia Prima*, 4, 8; ed. and tr. MINNS and PARVIS 2009, pp. 88-89; BARNARD 1997, p. 25. Barnard translates *schema* as 'dress', while Minns and Parvis more right understood it as general outward appearance.

²¹⁶ JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apologia Prima*, 9, 1; ed. and tr. MINNS and PARVIS 2009, pp. 96-97; BARNARD 1997, p. 27. For the distinction between *schema* and *morphe*; BARNARD 1997, n. 47 p. 112.

²¹⁷ JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apologia Prima*, 55, 2-4; ed. and tr. MINNS and PARVIS 2009, pp. 224-225; tr. BARNARD 1997, p. 63. For the role played by the form in the cosmological speculations of the Middle Platonists and the ideas developed by Justin (especially the idea of the head with a *schema* which imitates the forms of the universe), see BARNARD 1997, n. 336 p. 165.

²¹⁸ *'And having urged you on, to the extent that we can, by word and by the pattern of what is seen (καὶ διὰ λόγου οὖν καὶ σχήματος τοῦ φαινομένου), we know that we are from now on without blame, even if you should not believe'*; JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apologia Prima*, 55, 8; ed. and tr. MINNS and PARVIS 2009, pp. 226-227; cf. tr. BARNARD 1997, p. 63.

by Platonic influence²¹⁹. The term *schema* (together with its derivatives) also maintained its multifaceted connotation: it occasionally continued to refer to the geometrical figure²²⁰, but mostly it maintained and developed its Platonic meaning as the outward form of the *pragmata* and fundamental category of perception and recognition.

A good example of this development is the system of thought developed by Gregory bishop of Nyssa. He was the youngest among the Cappadocians and his work has been considered the first anthropological study of the Christian age²²¹. The Nyssen's positive evaluation of the corporeality harmonized the 'unresolved tension' experienced by Christians between acceptance and refusal of the physical dimension of the human being. On one side, the Platonic and Neoplatonic view looked at the physical world as made up of transient phenomena, which did not reflect the essence of things. Their multiplicity lured the mind of the philosopher in his way to knowledge. In this context the soul was considered as pre-existent and independent from the body, temporarily trapped in it as if it was in a prison or a sepulchre (the *σῶμα* as *σῆμα*), and desirous of freedom²²². This view will lead to the Christian emphasis on temptations and on renunciation of the turbulences caused by the body, until the complete withdrawal from the world chosen by those who, especially after the end of the third century, pursued an ascetical life in the desert. On the other side, already Aristotle had refused a 'bicameral universe of mundane particulars and transcendent forms', considering the soul as indissolubly tied with the body since 'its perceptions are depended on, and leave traces in, the bodily sensorium'²²³. The Scriptural tradition also looked at the man as holistically made by body and soul. The human body was 'flawed by human sin but essentially good', created and shaped by God in His own image, given as a gift to the human being, and even chosen as the instrument of Salvation in God's incarnation as a man²²⁴.

²¹⁹ PROKURAT 1996, p. 265. Greek philosophy was seen by Cappadocians both as something to be avoided as well as a useful instrument. If properly used, it can support the study of the Scripture; see KAZHDAN, BALDWIN, ŠEVČENKO 1991; BALDWIN 1991a. For the complex relation between Platonism and Patristic Philosophy, see among other RAMELLI 2007, pp. 959-1082; DE VOGEL 1985; VON IVÀNKA (1964) 1992.

²²⁰ Basil of Caesarea recalled, for example, the old definition of the circle as a figure (*σχήμα*) circumscribed (*περιερχόμενον*) by a single line (*ὑπὸ μιᾶς γραμμῆς*); BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, I, 3.1 (cf. also II, 8.7); ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 12-13; pp. 66-67.

²²¹ MASPERO 2010a, pp. 37-47. Gregory was a pupil of the famous pagan rhetor Libanius, the brother of Basil the Great, and friend of Gregory of Nazianzus; PEROLI 1993; SICLARI 1989.

²²² For a synthesis of the platonic thought over the relation between the essence of things and the material world, the concept of *eidos* and *ousia*, the nature of god, and its developments see EDWARDS 2000, esp. pp. VII-XII; pp. XXVIII-XXIX. Nevertheless, the alleged Platonic indifference to the body did not have to be considered so monolithic since local distinctions and nuances existed; ARMSTRONG 1972.

²²³ EDWARDS 2000, p. X.

²²⁴ CLARK 2004, p. 32. For a review of the main influences on the Orthodox understanding of the body, see WARE 1997, pp. 90-110, esp. pp. 90-95. For the man in the Greek-Roman and the Christian conceptions, see AVERINCEV 1977. In the Roman culture was very difficult to accept the idea that an immortal and invulnerable divine being could suffer and be contaminated by mortality; CLARK 2004, pp. 32-33.

As for the Nyssen, the negative stance toward the body remained in the biblical image of the ‘tunics of hide’ (or ‘tunics of skin’) provided by God after the original sin²²⁵. Yet, the author mostly accepted the idea of the human being as an exceptional and inseparable mixture of earthly body and divine soul created by God’s will in His own image, in the same moment and upon the same principle²²⁶. He even developed a ‘theology of the body’ based upon the faith in the role of this latter as the *locus* of Salvation through the Incarnation of the Word and the Resurrection of the Flesh²²⁷. This point of view allowed the Nyssen to overcome the platonic distinction between a physical (material, created and limited) and a spiritual (invisible and uncreated) dimension, and to give a structured reflection on how the rational soul was responsible for the physical movements and dependent upon the sensible body for its action²²⁸.

The process of perception, explained the Nyssen, starts when the soul (the νοητή, the intelligible and intellectual faculty) infuses vital energy into the sensory organs (τά ὀργανικά αἰσθητήρια) through the sensations (διὰ τῆς αἰσθήσεως), which are in turn re-elaborated by the soul to gain knowledge²²⁹. All body’s organs are recognized as necessary and harmoniously created by Nature to fulfil specific and valuable functions for the sensorial perception, for the procreation, and for the physical movement²³⁰. The process leading to movement, in particular, starts from the brain, the heart, and the kidney. Through the spirit of the free activity (τῷ προαιρετικῷ πνεύματι) and through the bones and nerves, which stretch and relax, all limb movements (ἄρθρων αἰ κινήσεις) are stimulated and caused the

²²⁵ The tunics were outward elements applied to the primordial pure and sinless body. They referred to the sensual desires and the animal nature of the carnal flesh (the σάρξ), tempted by the passions and by the evil after the original sin. Only with the Resurrection the mortal body will be purified and redeemed; MATEO-SECO 2010c. See also GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 38.12; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 890-891.

²²⁶ The divine and eternal nature naturally tends to an infinite growth toward God, while the created and limited nature could turn the man down, toward the matter and away from the communion with God. Neither body nor matter is the cause of evil, which is originated only by the free choice of the human will; MASPERO 2010a. Gregory of Nazianzus also defined the man as a second world and a worshipper with a mixed nature (προσκυνητὴν μικτόν); GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 38.11; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 888-891. For the classical Greek idea of the man as a microcosm that mirrors in itself the harmony of the world, see also GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 7 (28); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, p. 363; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 28.22; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 680-681; n. 60 p. 1351.

²²⁷ MATEO-SECO 2010a. Christ shared the same nature of divine and human mixture; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Oratio catechetica magna* 32.5; ed. MÜHLENBERG 1996, p. 78; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, pp. 191-192. Gregory of Nazianzus defined Christ as an ‘unusual union (ὁ τῆς καινῆς μίξεως)’ and ‘admirable mixture (ὁ τῆς παραδόξου κρᾶσεως)’ of body and soul; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 38.13; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 892-893.

²²⁸ ZACHUBER 2010, p. 83.

²²⁹ See, among many passages, GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 8 (29); 16 (44); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, pp. 362-365; pp. 380-383. On the philosophical influences on those ideas, from Aristotle’s *De sensu et sensibilibus* to Theophrastus’ *De sensibus* and Galen (this latter especially as regard for the physical dimension of the perception, described by the Nyssen in a detailed manner in the 31st chapter of the *De hominis officio*), see BALTUSSEN 1993.

²³⁰ See for example GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione* 69 (144), ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, p. 498-501. See also GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis officio*, 6; ed. PG 44:138-140; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 39; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Oratio catechetica magna* 28.3; 39.6; ed. CALLAHAN 1992, p. 72; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, pp. 185-186, p. 210.

bending of the neck (αἰ τοῦ ἀυχένος περιστροφάι), the reclining of the head (τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐπικλίσεις τε καὶ ἀνανεύσεις), the dilation of the eyelid, and the nods (νεύματι)²³¹. Therefore, bodily movements reflected and outwardly expressed the inner movements of the soul. The soul in turn re-elaborated the incomes perceived by the sensory organs and revealed its motions (proving also its existence) through the bodily organs²³². In such a theory of perception and physical movements, the body was something that has not to be totally refused, but rather controlled, transformed, and purified²³³.

As for the *schema*, the Nyssen too, like Plato, regarded it as the first and essential element of the outward appearance. It was the element through which an object or a person can be perceived and recognized: it was given by God to the matter since the Creation to allow the perception²³⁴; and it could appear alone or combined with other categories (sometimes gathered together in dualisms) like the *morphe*, the quantity, the quality, the weight, the voice (*phone*), and, first of all, the colour (*chroma*)²³⁵. The *schema*, the *eidos*, the qualities (ποιότητας), and the colour, were the elements that allowed to distinguish a tree in a garden where all the trees have been nourished by the same force²³⁶. The *schema* contributed to outwardly denote the inner disposition of a patient attended by a doctor (who in turn perceived and interpreted the symptoms with his physical senses)²³⁷. The *schema* was also the element essential for the identification of the human bodies during the Resurrection: every human being is like a vase, made of common matter (ἀπό τῆς κοινῆς ὕλης) but also distinguished from what is similar to him (πρός τὸ ὁμογενὲς τὴν διαφορὰν ἔχων) thanks to a figure that is absolutely his own (ἐν

²³¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 30; ed. PG 44:214; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 126.

²³² GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 8 (29); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, p. 362-365.

²³³ RAMELLI 2007, pp. 28-29.

²³⁴ Before the Creation, the world was invisible (ἀόρατον), without *chroma* (ἀχρωμάτιστον) and without *schema* (ἀσχημάτιστον). The *chroma* then arises as an *effluvium* from the *schema* (τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν σχήματος γίνεται), which in turn does not exist without the body (τὸ δὲ σχῆμα οὐκ ἄνευ σώματος); GREGORY OF NYSSA, *In Hexaemeron*, 15; ed. DROBNER 2009, pp. 25-26; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, p. 602. For the *schema* and *chroma* in the human body, GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 23; ed. PG 44:213; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 100. For the role of *schema* and *chroma* in later development in the Byzantine theory of perception, see MARCHIONIBUS 2011, esp. p. 6.

²³⁵ The matter (ὕλη) can be defined in its distention (ἐν διαστηματικῇ) and can be experienced in the colour (ἐν χρώματι), in the *schema* (σχῆματι), in the weight (ὄγκω), in the quantity (πηλικότητι), in the size (ἀντιτυπία) and in a variety of attributes which did not pertain to the divine nature; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 23; ed. PG 44:209-210; tr. SALMONA 1982, pp. 99-100. In the *De Anima*, this idea is connected with the question of the creation of the visible from the invisible, the corporeal from the incorporeal; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 14 (41); 25-26 (60); 58-59 (123-125); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, pp. 376-379; pp. 400-401; pp. 474-477. See also GREGORY OF NYSSA, *In Hexaemeron*, 7; ed. DROBNER 2009, p. 16; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, p. 594.

²³⁶ For example, GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 30; ed. PG 44:252; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 132.

²³⁷ The doctor judged the patient by touching the patient's artery with his finger, by looking at the posture assumed by the patient's body (τὸ σχῆμα τῆς κατακλίσεως), at the colour of his skin, at the eye movements, by hearing his moaning, and by smelling his odour; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 8 (32); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, p. 365.

ἰδιάζονται πάντως τῷ σχήματι)²³⁸. And when the body breaks apart, the soul still recognizes this figure thanks to the peculiar signs located into the remains²³⁹.

The *schema* continued therefore to play a central role also to reproduce a specific outward appearance in the process of the *mimesis*. The artist, like Nature, eliminated the superfluous from a formless stone-block until he achieved the likeness of the figure he wanted to represent²⁴⁰. In a similar way, the machine-maker, like the Soul, imitated the nature (μιμεῖται τὴν φύσιν) with *schemata* (ἐν τῷ σχήματι), motion (τὴν κίνησιν), and sound (τὸν - χον). He imitated the figure (τὸ σχῆμα), the form (τὸ εἶδος), the sound, and the movement with his imaginative and inventive power, even if he was not able to instil into the matter any intellectual faculty²⁴¹. The difference between created things and living beings is clearly declared by the Nyssen, for whom we are not legitimised to call ‘bread’ what is sculpted in stone, because even if it has the same *schema*, size and *chroma* as the prototype, it did not have the power of nourishment²⁴².

The Nyssen developed further the idea that *schema* was a specific attribute of the matter: neither the intelligible God, neither the soul, possess indeed a *schema* or any other category of perception²⁴³. The *schema* was ‘the boundary that delimitates the body (πᾶν δὲ σχῆμα σώματος πέρας ἐστίν)’, and could be found only in the body (τὸ δὲ σχῆμα ἐν σώματι)²⁴⁴. It was carefully chosen by God as a gift in the same way as the artist chooses the *schema* of an object according to its function²⁴⁵. The most important *schema* of the human body was the erect posture (τὸ τοῦ σχήματος ὄρθιον) obtained by standing and looking upward (πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνατείνεται, καὶ ἄνω βλέπει): this posture was related with the man’s ruling activity and superiority above all other living beings²⁴⁶. The connection between the free use of the hands and the human activities of writing and speaking had been long

²³⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 10 (36), 36 (80); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, p. 371; p. 425.

²³⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 39 (85); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, p. 431. About the fixity of the *eidos* in the human body see also GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 27; ed. PG 44:225; 227; 229; tr. SALMONA 1982, pp. 112-113.

²⁴⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 30; ed. PG 44:253; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 134.

²⁴¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 10 (35-36); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, pp. 371.

²⁴² GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 15; ed. PG 44:176; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 71.

²⁴³ The divine beauty does not shine for the beauty of *schema*, for the *morphe*, or for the colours, i.e. it is not based on any outward or physical category of perception. It can be contemplated only through the virtues; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 5; ed. PG 44:137; tr. SALMONA 1982, pp. 37-38. To think about a *schema* of God (ὁ σχῆμα περὶ τὸν θεὸν) would be to think to him in a material, corporeal and thus corruptible way, a fact that cannot be; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Moysis*, II, 221-222; ed. MUSURILLO 1964, p. 111; tr. SIMONETTI 1984, pp. 194-197. In the same way, the soul cannot be perceived by the senses, since it has no colour (χρῶμα), nor shape (σχῆμα), nor any other element that belongs to the matter – such as the solidity, the weight, the size, the three-dimensionality, or the disposition in the space; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione*, 13 (40); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, pp. 376-377.

²⁴⁴ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Moysis*, II, 221-222; ed. MUSURILLO 1964, p. 111; tr. SIMONETTI 1984, pp. 194-197.

²⁴⁵ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 4; ed. PG 44:136; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 36.

²⁴⁶ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 4; 7-8; ed. PG 44:136; 140; 144; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 36, pp. 42-44.

discussed in pagan schools of rhetoric and philosophy²⁴⁷. The hands were the quintessential instruments of human rationality: when the protagonist of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Lucius, was transformed into an ass by his lover Photis, he found himself unable to humanly express his upset because of the loss of his gestures and voice²⁴⁸. The Nyssen agreed to the idea that the erect posture (ὄρθιον τῷ σχήματι) was the attribute of the man *logikón zoon* (λογικόν ζῶόν) and that the free hands were the instruments (ὄργανα) of human activity. The body is an instrument (τὸ τοῦ σώματος ὄργανον), explained the Nyssen, well-arranged for the language (κατασκευασθῆναι τοῦ λόγου), and the hands are conveniently articulated with the body to enable men to speak and to write (the latter activity defined as a conversation through the hands)²⁴⁹. The erect posture, therefore, was numbered among the distinctive and natural features (τὰ εἰρημένα σημεῖα τῆς φύσεως) that make the man perfect (ἄρτιον): it allows him to rule the world, to express the rationality given by God, and to manifest the movements of his intelligence (νοῦς), thought (φρονήσεως), and faith²⁵⁰. Through the *schema* of his physical form (τῷ σχήματι τῆς σωματικῆς διαπλάσεως), explained Basil of Caesarea too, the human being stands out among the animals, look upward, and express the dignity and the superiority of his soul over feral instincts. The human lifestyle has thus to be regulated (διεσχηματίσθης) according to this physical conformation (διάθου)²⁵¹.

Later authors confirm the underlying continuity of those ideas and concepts. Theodoret of Cyrillus used the term *schema* in the fifth century with his peculiar Antiochene *akribeia* to refer to something outward, temporary, and illusive. With high terminological awareness, Theodoret of Cyrillus explained for example that Paul of Tarsus' *schema* had to be considered as something circumscribed (περιώρισται) within an established time span²⁵². And while the soul (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὀπτικόν) judged words, thoughts, and the quality of utterances and riddles, the eyes had been entrusted with the task

²⁴⁷ Reversing the statement of Anaxagoras for whom the man is the more intelligent animal because he has the hands, Aristotle declared in the *De Partibus Animalium* that the man has the hands because of his superior intelligence, for whom he had been therefore wisely provided with those useful devices by nature; ARIETI 2005, p. 121. In the second century AD, the interpreter of dreams Artemidorus explained that hands 'signify crafts, writing and speeches (λόγους) (...) writing, because people's writing is referred to as their 'hand'; speeches, since a speaker's hands move at the same time as his words (ἅμα τοῖς λόγοις αἱ χεῖρες κινοῦνται)'; ARTEMIDORUS, *Oneirocriticon*, I, 42; ed. PACK 1963, p. 48; tr. WHITE 1975, p. 37.

²⁴⁸ 'I wanted to complain about what Photis had done', explained Lucius, 'but I lacked human gestures as well as words (sed iam humano gestu simul et voce privatus)'; APULEIUS, *Metamorphoseon*, 3.25; ed. and tr. HANSON 1989, pp. 170-171.

²⁴⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 8; 10; ed. PG 44:144-146; 152-154; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 44, p. 50.

²⁵⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Macedonianos de Spiritu Sancto*, 15; ed. MÜLLER 1958, p. 101; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, p. 557. On the variety of expressions and contexts of this long-standing *topos* in the Christian tradition, see also PELLEGRINO 1964.

²⁵¹ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, IX, 2.5-7; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 274-277.

²⁵² THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Isaïam*, 7, 315-316; ed. and tr. GUINOT 1980, vol. 2, pp. 194-195. For Paul of Tarsus, see above, pp. 39-40.

of discerning and judging outward signs like *chromata* and *schemata*²⁵³. Furthermore, in the context of the Christological and Trinitarian controversies, the struggle to define the nature of Christ according to the Pauline statement about the *morphe* and the *schema* assumed by Christ led to reflect over the definition of the term and to stress its meaning as visual appearance distinguished from nature (φύσις). Christ, explained Theodoret, ‘*imitated the schema* (ἐμίμησεν σχῆμα)’ like a spy to disguise himself²⁵⁴. He despised his being God by nature (φύσει) and chose extreme lowliness by taking the form (μορφή), the likeness (ἐν ὁμοιώματι), and the *schema* of a human being. But even if ‘*this* (the human nature) *was in truth the nature assumed by him, he himself was not that*’²⁵⁵. The *schema* was also the perceptible and visible physical appearance assumed by God, who was otherwise an incorporeal (ἄσώματος) and uncircumscribed (ἀπερίγραφον) being, with no *schema* (ἄσχημάτιστον) and unknowable in his *ousia*. He could make himself visible for the people’s benefit and could employ *schemata* to give form to prophets’ visions (σχηματίζει τὰς ὄψεις)²⁵⁶. Even angels could employ *schemata* to appear to humans: they appeared to the prophet Ezekiel not in the likeness of (ὁμοίωμα) but as something like (ὡς ὁμοίωμα) four living being, and the prophet ‘*had a vision not of the actual natures of the invisible things but of some kind of figures and impressions* (εἰκόσματα τινὰ καὶ ἐκτυπώματα)’ conveyed by God, who ‘*tells us also the appearance of the living beings seen by him* (τῶν ὀφθέντων ... τὰ σχήματα)’²⁵⁷. Finally, Theodoret of Cyrillus also approved the

²⁵³ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Ezechielem*, praefatio; ed. PG 81, col. 808; tr. HILL 2006, vol. II, p. 27. In the same way, the ears recognize voices and sounds, the nose perceives pleasant or unpleasant smells, and the tongue judges the taste. All the body’s parts, therefore, contribute to the harmony of the entire body thank to their specific purposes; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *De providentia orationes X*, VI, 17; ed. PG 83, coll. 652D-653A; tr. HALTON 1988, pp. 78-79; cf. NINCI 1988, p. 160.

²⁵⁴ ‘*As spies adopt* (κέρηγνται) *the schema* (Hill translate it as ‘dress’) *and language* (καὶ σχήματι καὶ φωνῇ) *of the nations on which they are spying, so God the Word clad himself* (περιθέμενος) *in human nature and adopted human language* (τῇ αὐτῆς γλώττῃ χρῆσάμενος) *to secure our salvation*’. Theodoret referred here to the episode in which God sent Hosea as a spy and called him ‘Joshua’ (*Nm* 13.1-20). At this moment indeed Hosea ‘*was a type* (τύπος) *of the true Joshua*’, since both have disguised themselves; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Questiones in Octateuchum*, Num XXV; ed. and tr. HILL 2007, vol. II, p. 129.

²⁵⁵ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio Epistolae ad Philippenses*, Phil 2.6-7; PG 82, col. 569; tr. HILL 2001, vol. II, p. 70. The fact that Christ was a man in his *schema* (τὸ σχήματι εἶναι ἄνθρωπον), wrote also John Chrysostom, did not mean that he became a man by nature (οὐκ ἔστι φύσει ἄνθρωπον εἶναι); JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homiliae XV in Epistolam ad Philippenses*, VII; ed. PG 62, col. 230; tr. BROADUS 1979, p. 213 (commenting on Phil 2:5-11).

²⁵⁶ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Isaiam*, 3, 42-50, ed. and tr. GUINOT 1980, vol. I, pp. 258-259; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Danielelem*, Dn 7.9-10; ed. and tr. HILL 2006b, p. 186-187. In the early eighth century, John of Damascus still defended the images against their detractors and affirmed that the Word of God gave suitable form to what is formless (τὰ σχήματα τῶν ἀσχηματίστων). The idea will be then strictly connected with the mystagogical reflections developed by the Pseudo-Dionysius (see below, p. 104); JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, I.11; ed. KOTTER 1975, p. 85; tr. FAZZO 1983, p. 40.

²⁵⁷ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Ezechielem*, I, 1; ed. PG 81, coll. 824-825; tr. HILL 2006, vol. II, pp. 37-38. Recounts of angels (or even the Virgin) assuming the *schemata* of soldiers to fight alongside the army against the enemies of the empire remained a widespread *topos* in literature.

importance of erect posture and hands: those latter continued to be defined as instruments providentially fashioned to work, to write, and to sustain the rational nature of the human being²⁵⁸. The term *schema* also maintained its negative nuance referring to the superficial appearance (περιφάνειαν) and impermanence of present realities (τῶν παρόντων τὸ πρόσκαιρον) such as power and wealth²⁵⁹. *Schemata* were opposed to *pragmata*, i.e. the real, stable and durable future things, which were in turn linked with the *morphe*. So Nebuchadnezzar complained about the futility of the earthly things by declaring that they are only *schemata* (i.e. appearance) and not *pragmata* (i.e. realities), with ‘*nothing lasting or stable in them, everything fluid and failing and fading*’²⁶⁰. The unreal and apparent character of the *schema*, distinct from the *morphe*, was even more emphasized in their derivational forms συσχηματίζεσθε and μεταμορφοῦσθε, where the *morphe* referred to the form which ‘*betrays things in reality (ἀληθῶν πραγμάτων σημαντικῇ)*’, and the *schema* referred to the figure which is ‘*something easily lost (εὐδιάλυτον χρῆμα)*’²⁶¹. The *schemata* pertain thus not to realities but to images²⁶², and ‘*an image (εἰκὼν) does not enjoy the operation of substance (πραγμάτων τὴν ἐνέργειαν), but brings out only the schemata (μόνα δὲ τὰ σχήματα δείκνυσι) of kingdoms, rulers and subjects, and in addition to this it has a schema that easily dissolves (εὐδιάλυτον)*’²⁶³.

In the sixth century, a terminological continuity can be found in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, philosopher and theologian informed by the Neoplatonic ideas of hierarchy and order and by the anagogical Alexandrian interpretation of the liturgy. Angels, explained Pseudo-Dionysius, assumed human form because this was the form of a natural leader and ruler endowed with reason (τὸ νοερόν), capable of looking toward the higher things (τὸ πρὸς τὸ ἄναντες ἔχειν τὰς ὀπτικὰς δυνάμεις, i.e. he owned the visual power of upward orientation), and whose *schema* was characterized by sturdiness and uprightness (τὸ τοῦ σχήματος εὐθὺ καὶ ὄρθιον)²⁶⁴. The rhetorical connotations of the *schema* are recorded especially by Choricus of Gaza. He defined one of his declamations λόγος ἐσχηματισμένος (‘figured’ oration whose true intent is disguised)²⁶⁵. John the Lydian, undoubtedly

²⁵⁸ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *De providentia orationes* X, IV, 18; PG 83, col. 597B-613D; tr. HALTON 1988, p. 52. When hands take the pen, they substitute the tongue and become the vehicle of the word; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *De providentia orationes* X, IV, 32; ed. PG 83, col. 621B-C; tr. HALTON 1988, p. 57; cf. NINCI 1988, p. 127.

²⁵⁹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio Epistolae ad Corinthios, 1Cor 31*; PG82, col. 282; tr. HILL 2001, vol. I, p. 188.

²⁶⁰ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Danielelem, Dn 7.2-3*; ed. and tr. HILL 2006b, p. 174-175.

²⁶¹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio Epistolae ad Romanos, Rm 12,2*; PG 82, col. 185; tr. HILL 2001, vol. I, p. 118.

²⁶² ‘*An image has form, not substance (ἡ εἰκὼν σχήματα, ἀλλ’οὐ πράγματα, ἔχει)*’; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Danielelem, Dn 2:31-33* ed. and tr. HILL 2006b, pp. 48-49.

²⁶³ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Danielelem, Dn 2:31-33* ed. and tr. HILL 2006b, pp. 48-51 (also referring to 1Cor 7.31 and Rm 12.2).

²⁶⁴ PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, XV, 3; ed. HEIL 2012, p. 53; tr. LUIBHEID 1987, pp. 184-185.

²⁶⁵ PENELLA 2009, p. 18.

through his typical antiquarian attitude and in line with his philosophical education²⁶⁶, understood the term in its geometrical connotation when he defined the circle as ‘a plane figure (σχήμα), being contained by a single line’ and most perfect among the figures (σχημάτων)²⁶⁷. He also used the term in its Platonic philosophical meaning as category of perception: ‘This universe’, declared the Lydian, ‘is viewed (θεωρεῖται) in seven aspects, in body (ἐν σώματι), in distance (ἐν διαστάσει), in form (ἐν σχήματι), in size (ἐν μεγέθει), in colour (ἐν χρώματι), in motion (ἐν κινήσει), and in stationariness (ἐν στάσει), and nothing else than these is the attribute of visible things (συμβέβηκε τοῖς ὀρωμένοις)’²⁶⁸.

John of Damascus later considered the *schema* together with the form (μορφή) and the colour (χρῶμα) as part of the accident (συμβεβηκός) constitutive of the Being: ‘Whereas the body and the soul and the wax remain the same’, he explained, the *chroma*, the *morphe*, and the *schema* are ‘subject to change’²⁶⁹. They outwardly define the appearance of the species (τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ἀνδριάντος)²⁷⁰. Like the skill (τέχνη) and the virtue (ἀρετή), they are involved not in the substance (κατ’ουσίαν) but in the quality (κατὰ ποιότητα) of the likeness²⁷¹. The quality ‘is that by which things are termed as being of such sort’ and comprised also the habits (ἔξεις) and the dispositions (διαθέσεις) of animate and rational bodies²⁷². The *schema* remained therefore among the accidents that define ‘a person (πρόσωπον)’, who ‘exhibits to us an appearance (ἐμφάνεια) which is distinct and set off from those of the same nature’²⁷³. It could be something inseparable from the body, like the form of the nose or the colour of the eyes, or separable, like a seated or a standing posture²⁷⁴.

A similar distinction is set in a passage in the tenth-century Third Recension of the *Life of Maximus the Confessor* (written around the tenth-eleventh century on the ground of earlier sources dating back to the half of the seventh century)²⁷⁵. Here elements like the form of the nose or eyes are also defined as

²⁶⁶ When John moved from Lydia to Constantinople, before beginning his career at the imperial court of Constantinople, he attended the lectures of Agapius, an Athenian philosopher who had been a former student of the Neoplatonic Proclus. While he was ‘going over the basic principles of the Aristotelian doctrines’, reported the same John, ‘I happened also to hear lectures on Platonic philosophy’; JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De Magistratibus*, III, 26; ed. and tr. BANDY 2013, pp. 202-204, p. 251; ‘Introduction,’ pp. 2-3.

²⁶⁷ JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De mensibus* II, 22-23; ed. and tr. BANDY 2013, pp. 74.33-34; p. 76.1-2; pp. 91-93.

²⁶⁸ JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De mensibus* II, 27; ed. and tr. BANDY 2013, p. 80.19-21, p. 101.

²⁶⁹ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dialectica*, IV; ed. KOTTER 1969, p. 58; ed. PG 94, col. 537A-B; tr. CHASE 1970, pp. 13-14. The *Dialectica* was the first part of his treatise *Fountain of Wisdom*.

²⁷⁰ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dialectica*, X; ed. PG 94, col. 560C; ed. KOTTER 1969, p. 75; tr. CHASE 1970, p. 31. Here *schema* is properly translated as ‘appearance’.

²⁷¹ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dialectica*, XXXI; ed. PG 94, col. 597A-B; tr. CHASE 1970, pp. 57-58.

²⁷² JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dialectica*, L; ed. PG 94, col. 629B; tr. CHASE 1970, p. 80.

²⁷³ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dialectica*, XLIII; ed. PG 94, col. 613A-B; tr. CHASE 1970, p. 67.

²⁷⁴ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dialectica*, XIII; ed. PG 94, col. 576B-C; tr. CHASE 1970, p. 43. The position (θέσιν) can be natural (for example the position of the earth), accorded to the rules of art (as for a statue or a column), stationary or in motion, with the body standing or sitting; JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dialectica*, LIII; ed. PG 94, col. 641A-B; tr. CHASE 1970, p. 86.

²⁷⁵ The life described the events occurred to the saint who suffered the mutilation under Constans II for his opposition to the Monothelism. It incorporated three texts of the half seventh century (the *Record of the Trial*,

'*hypostatic indicators* (τὰ ὑποστατικὰ σήμαντρα)' and '*defining incidentals* (ἀφοριστικὰ εἰσὶ συμβεβηκότα)' which are different according to the individual. Besides, '*the living, the rational, and the mortal aspect*', like the ability to move, speak, and feel, were part of '*an activity* (ἐνεργεῖν) *according to the categorical rationale*' and '*all characteristic of the rationale commonly understood in us*'²⁷⁶. When a person acts (ἐνεργεῖ) not hypostatically (τὴν ὑπόστασιν) but naturally (τὴν φύσιν), he acts thus in a generic 'human manner (ἄνθρωπικῶς)', '*according to the common and definitive rationale of the nature, but not hypostatically according to what each does personally*'²⁷⁷.

The persistence of the values and the complexity entailed in the term *schema* and its derivative forms are well stated by the entries included in thesauruses of the ninth-tenth centuries. They were based on previous dictionaries and literary texts, but they also testified the actual understanding of the terms at the time in which they had been composed. In the *Lexicon* of Photius, the verbal form σχηματιζόμενος is defined as 'προσποιούμενος ἢ συνταττόμενος'²⁷⁸. It was associated therefore both with the act of assuming and simulating an appearance and with the act of disposing and arranging something.

The *Lexicon* of Photius was not so widely used²⁷⁹. The more heavily read and employed Suida reports however several more remarkable references. The term *schema* continued to be understood here as a component of the 'Aristotelian' syllogistic syntheses²⁸⁰, as a rhetorical arrangement of the *logos* (σχῆμα τοῦ λόγου)²⁸¹, and as a form, geometrical shape circumscribed by a line, military formation, object, or body part²⁸². It continued to denote one of the categories of perception (αἰσθήσεις) '*common to sight and touch*' (together with other '*common sensibles*' like the movement, the rest, the number and the magnitude)²⁸³. It can refer to the outward appearance of a body: Scylla, the monster in the Tyrrhenian Sea, had the *schema* of a beautiful woman with six dog's head and a sneaky body²⁸⁴; the jurors of Athens could be mocked with staffs, cloak and *schema*²⁸⁵; the man who accomplishes nothing could be compared to the immovable figure of a painted image, standing in one position

the *Dispute at Bizya* and the *Letter of Maximus to Anastasius the Monk*); NEIL and ALLEN 2003, 'Introduction' to *VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, RECENSION*; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003. On the life, the career and the approach to liturgy of Maximus the Confessor, see BORNERT 1966, esp. p. 37; pp. 84-85; STEAD 1982, pp. 5-56.

²⁷⁶ *VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, RECENSION* 3, 30; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 109.

²⁷⁷ *VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, RECENSION* 3, 38; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 123.

²⁷⁸ PHOTIUS, *Lexicon, ad vocem* 'σχηματιζόμενος'; ed. PORSONUS 1823, p. 486.

²⁷⁹ CORMACK 1985, pp. 144-146.

²⁸⁰ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, Σ, 1784. In such a meaning is present also in *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, II 2960; II 2862; T 1055; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1928, A 1951.

²⁸¹ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1928, A 2021; A 2664; M 974; Λ 467.

²⁸² *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, E 953; Δ 546; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1933, M 1462; K 2277; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1928, A 2833; A 3289; T 338; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, Σ 524.

²⁸³ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, Aι 326.

²⁸⁴ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, Σ 709.

²⁸⁵ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1928, B 81.

(λαβόνθ' ἐν σχῆμα)²⁸⁶; and Scipio appears according to an old statement of Appian as if possessed both in his bearing and in his appearance (καὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὸ βλέμμα)²⁸⁷.

The *schema* could also refer to the bearing²⁸⁸ and, in more physical and dynamical terms, to the shameful sexual positions displayed by courtesans²⁸⁹. The statue dedicated to Glaukos was portrayed in the *schema* of a shadow-boxer expressing his ability in sparring (χειρονομεῖν)²⁹⁰. And the sword-dance was performed with the hands stretched out (τὸ χειροτονεῖν) in a *schema* similar to a sword²⁹¹. The *schema* is then once again linked, in line with John Philoponus' Commentary to Aristotle on atoms, with rhythm (ῥυθμός), with τροπή (the 'turning of the position'), and with διαθηγή (the arrangement)²⁹². It continued also to refer to the outward appearance (the king Numa put on the *schema* of the Isaurians, i.e. the way to wear the chlamys with the purple dye underneath which he had seen during an embassy²⁹³) and with the disguise: Menippus the Cynic assumed the *schema* of a Fury²⁹⁴, and Marcellus yielded to Julian 'only in name and schema (ὀνόματος μόνον καὶ σχήματος) but keeping the true authority in his own hands'²⁹⁵. The words εἰκονίζειν ('to represent'), together with χαρακτηρίζειν ('to characterize'), are said to have been taken from the *schemata* (ἀπὸ τοῦ σχήματος)²⁹⁶, while persistent remained the meaning of the derivatives form σχηματιζόμενος as 'to act under false pretence' (παρασχηματίζειν)²⁹⁷, 'behaving in an artificial way and appearing to be orderly (ἔσχηματισμένος)²⁹⁸, 'pretending (προσποιούμενος) or contriving (συνταττόμενος) something'²⁹⁹, and assuming the 'disguise of one's character (παρακάλυμμα τοῦ ἥθους, πρόφασις or πρόσχημα')³⁰⁰. Πρόσχημα is defined as mask (προσωπεῖον)³⁰¹ and connected with the dresses and the means of covering the body. Finally, still in the middle of the twelfth century, the anonym *Etymologicon Magnum*, will pair the *schema* with *bema*, and translated *schemata* as 'gesture'³⁰².

It is clear therefore that the term *schema*, commonly understood and translated as rhetorical figure or dress, entailed and maintained through the centuries several meanings connected with the visual

²⁸⁶ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, T 174.

²⁸⁷ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, E 1363.

²⁸⁸ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, Θ 72.

²⁸⁹ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, T 1197; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, Δ 1442.

²⁹⁰ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1928, Γ 281; ADLER 1935, X 256.

²⁹¹ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, Ξ 73, 74.

²⁹² *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, P 312.

²⁹³ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, X 333.

²⁹⁴ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, Φ 180.

²⁹⁵ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, E 1771. More than a mere 'dress', the meaning of *schema* comprehended the general appearance and bearing of the body.

²⁹⁶ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, Eι 82.

²⁹⁷ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, ΙΙ 455.

²⁹⁸ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, E 3260.

²⁹⁹ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, Σ 1785.

³⁰⁰ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, ΙΙ 2852-2853.

³⁰¹ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, ΙΙ 2774. When referred to God, the πρόσωπον could also refer to the outward appearance (ἐπιφάνεια); *ibidem* (quoting Theodoret's commenting on Ps 30:21).

³⁰² *Etymologicon Magnum*, ad vocem 'βῆμα'; 'σχήματα', ed. GAISFORD 1848, sect. 196.38; 463.25.

dimension of the perception, the corporeal and dynamic dimension of the human movements, and the transient, even deceiving, aspects of the physical appearance. Its ethical and philosophical connotations have been recognized and exploited by the Christian authors, who strengthened its connection with the human body and charged it with deep theological and moral values. Those values affected in turn how bodies and gestures were judged and employed as devices in literature as well as in everyday life and social performances.

2. PUBLIC IDENTITIES, EARTHLY BODIES, AND INNER SOULS

The identities, expectations, values, and beliefs which gradually shaped the Christian *habitus* emerged not only from the education in ancient Greek philosophy and culture. The pagan society of the first centuries deeply influenced the mind and the habits of the first Christians who in this society lived as citizens³⁰³, and traditional Roman values remained constant in the Byzantine mindset throughout the centuries³⁰⁴. Roman culture was not a 'static backdrop painted with a broad brush' where Christianity lighted as a star performer, instantly recognizable by clearly defined boundaries³⁰⁵. The context was often marked by ambiguities and by mutual relations of refusal and tolerance³⁰⁶.

Physical appearance, public self-presentation, and non-verbal communication played a central role in Roman life. They were devices for communication but could also visually express a man's *ethos*, status and social role³⁰⁷. The Roman man was thus constantly aware of what his body expressed in front of the community and had the moral duty to follow a strictly conventional and shared system of behaviour. Cicero, for example, urged his orator to avoid anything that could be offensive for the ears and the eyes (*ab omni, quod abhorret ab oculorum auriumque approbatione, fugiamus*) and to maintain the *decorum* in standing, walking, sitting or reclining, in the expression of his face and his eyes (*vultus oculi*), and in his gesture (*manuum motus*)³⁰⁸. Gestures were like a body language (*est enim*

³⁰³ The *Constitutio Antoniniana* (or Edict of Caracalla) of 212 formally declared Roman citizens (subject to the same laws and taxation) all the free inhabitants of the empire, Christians included. Furthermore, several high members of the cult belonged to the same social strata as the elites of pagan bureaucracy; CLARK 2004, pp. 27-28. On the integration of Christians in the economic urban life see MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, p. 125.

³⁰⁴ They continued to call themselves *rhomaioi* and to exalt their own *rhomaiosyne*; RONCHEY 2002, p. 158.

³⁰⁵ CLARK 2004, p. 14. For the blurred divisions between Early Christianity and Jewish tradition, see HUMPHRIES 2006, p. 11; pp. 186-224.

³⁰⁶ Early Christian literature displayed a general hostility toward the dominant culture of the Rome-Babylon, but this attitude seems to be circumscribed to economic and social problems. Pagan authors, in turn, criticized Christians, not because of their customs, but rather because their religious exclusivism and their refusal of pagan cults (a central aspect of the life of the community) subverted the social order; HUMPHRIES 2006, esp. ch. 6.

³⁰⁷ See BRILLIANT 1963 and, more recently, ALDRETE 1999; CORBEILL 2002.

³⁰⁸ CICERO, *De Officiis*, I, 35 (128); ed. and tr. MILLER 1956, pp. 130-131. See also GLANCY 2010, p. 13; p. 29. In republican Rome, explained Corbeill, 'the reading of morality becomes an aesthetic practice (...) that can be learned'; CORBEILL 2002, p. 183. Seneca also wrote that the gentleman is recognizable by the way in which he walks, by the sight, and by the *conveniens prudenti viro gestus*; SENECA, *ep.* 66, quoted in SITTL 1890, p. 8.

actio quasi sermo corporis), which had to be perfectly fitted to the mind (*quo magis menti congruens esse debet*)³⁰⁹. Manner and behaviour had the power to show public identities and the position of the individual in society, maintaining order and social boundaries. They could even indicate ethical connotations charged with moral judgments. Movements outside the norm were seen as a sign of barbarism and of an ignorant and inferior nature, and those who performed them were marginalized. The public life was, therefore, all 'revolved around efforts to avoid being cast as the 'Other' and to abide by the normative boundaries defining the limits of acceptable behaviour'³¹⁰.

Similar concerns seem to mark also early Christians. The effort to avoid accusations of doubtful morality led Christians to exclude from their emerging etiquette any gesture, manner, or *schema* that could bring their Church into disrepute. Their lifestyle had to be compatible with and suitable for the high social status of the pagan elite. The Scripture itself called for integration with the public life: Christ established the boundaries between politics and religion in the concept of the 'celestial homeland'³¹¹; and Paul of Tarsus urged Christians to not conform to the world but also to submit to the authorities and the empire, who were appointed by God and part of his divine plan³¹².

The apologists in the second half of the second century and at the early third century described Christians who apparently did not reject the rules of the society in which they lived, but adapted themselves to the Roman customs and cultural environment. Their outward appearance and public behaviour were marked by integration and continuity. Their distinctiveness has rather to be sought in their interiority: so the second-century famous *Letter to Diognetus* declared that Christianity was an 'invisible' religion whose members 'are in the flesh', follow current customs, language, dress, and manner of life, but 'do not live according to the flesh'. They are like foreigners living between the earthly and divine worlds³¹³. 'We are human beings and live alongside of you (*vobiscum*)', cried out also Tertullian when confronted with the allegations moved against Christians to be unprofitable in public business. Christians are 'men with the same ways, the same dress and furniture (*eiusdem victus, habitus, instructus*)' and live with pagans in this world (*cohabitamus in hoc seculo*). They rather

³⁰⁹ CICERO, *De Oratore*, III, 59 (222-223); ed. and tr. RACKHAM 1948, pp. 178-179; see also QUINTILIAN, *Institutio oratoria*, XI, 3, 1-14; ed. and tr. RUSSELL 2001, vol. V, pp. 84-91.

³¹⁰ FÖGEN 2009, pp. 38-39. Fögen connected his work to the social studies of Norbert Elias.

³¹¹ MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, p. 124, quoting *Mc* 12:17; *Fil* 3:20.

³¹² PAUL OF TARSUS, *Rom* 13:1-7; CLARK 2004, p. 1; p. 100. See also LÖSSL, esp. p. 125; HOLMES 2007, p. 15.

³¹³ *LETTER TO DIOGNETUS* V-VI, tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. I, p. 219-220, 738-739. Christians spread in the world like the soul spreads through the members of the body, they dwell within the body without being part of it, and remain invisible and temporary prisoners in the world like the soul in the visible body; *ibidem*. For the condition of living in a moral detachment from the world and the development of the idea that Christians lived as strangers before and after Constantine, see MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, pp. 88-90; MCGUCKIN 2000.

distinguished themselves by being *'temperate'* and by avoiding the use of God's gifts *'to excess or amiss* (plane temperamus, ne ultra modum aut perperam utamur)³¹⁴.

Clearly, customs and behaviour followed by early Christians were not indiscriminately taken. They were selected especially among the more *'stoic'* and restricted ones provided by the contemporary highly educated pagan elite. The self-confidence in the superiority of their condition given by the *metanoia* – the conversion and *'commitment to a (morally and socially) radically improved lifestyle'* enhanced toward the *'quest for human perfection'*³¹⁵ – was indeed achieved not only by resisting the temptations offered by the mundane world, but also by standing out in society through impeccable conduct. Initially, behavioural choices and religious and devotional practices of Christian laity were more a matter of *'common sense'* and a way to solve practical problems connected with the healing and salvation of the soul³¹⁶. Early treatises on liturgical practices of the third-fourth centuries prescribed a code of conduct for both the faithful and the minister that established to avoid any kind of behaviour that could negatively affect the listening of the Word and the awe required during assemblies. So, a young priest had to show his maturity *'by meekness and a restrained conduct'*, and a deacon had to control that *'that no one whispers, falls asleep, laughs, or nods. With order and decorum all should be attentive while in the church, always listening to the word of the Lord'*³¹⁷. Christians were urged to follow the advice and *'conduct themselves with good order'* during the assemblies *'for in church it is necessary to be attentive, sober, and alert, with ears attentive to the Lord's word'*³¹⁸. Those basic attitudes began early to be enriched with a deeper moral and theological significance. Gestural patterns and general appearance had to express outwardly the inner spiritual and moral strength of the Christian faithful, and the body had to fulfil its role as visual and perceptible instrument of the soul on its path to God.

The early stage of this process is well exemplified by Clement, the open-minded Christian head of the Catechetical School in the Hellenistic and humanist society of Alexandria of the second half of the second century. He was familiar with both the pagan and the scriptural tradition and described the rules of behaviour followed in the most eminent and educated Christian circles in his *Paedagogus* (i.e.

³¹⁴ TERTULLIAN, *Apologeticum*, XLII, 1-4; ed. and tr. GLOVER 1980, pp. 190-191. *'Even if I do not attend your rituals* (caerimonias)', concluded Tertullian, *'I am a man on that day as much as any other'*; *ibidem*. On the passage, see also HUMPHRIES 2006, p. 197; LÖSSL 2010, p. 105.

³¹⁵ LÖSSL 2010, pp. 123-124. Different the opinion of the emperor Julian, who hit Christians precisely in this presumption and declared that their writings could not be taken as a proper guide for becoming better men; JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Contra Galilaeos*, 229 D-E; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1923) 1953, pp. 384-385, quot. also in LÖSSL 2010, p. 124.

³¹⁶ *'At the center of the issue of Christianization on the part of both the preacher and laypeople were old customs, the force of habit, and differing conceptions of common sense'*; KRUEGER 2006, p. 20. See also MAXWELL 2006b, n. 2, p. 224.

³¹⁷ *DIDASCALIA OF APOSTLES*, IV. (I.ii.) 2; XII. (II.LVII.) 9; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. I, p. 226; p. 232.

³¹⁸ *APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS*, II.LVII.2; II.LVII.10-13; VIII.XI.10; II.LVII.15; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, pp. 221-222, 1611-1614; 1740.

the ‘one who supervises moral training’)³¹⁹. Those were clearly modelled on the values of pagan education. For example, in line with the Stoic moral doctrine, actions and gestures performed while eating, drinking, sleeping, dressing, even speaking, crying, and laughing had to be distinguished by inner moderation, *decorum* (ευσχημοσύνη), sobriety, and self-control³²⁰. The shameful *schemata* (σχήμασιν) performed in the gymnasium by youths who acted indecently (ἀσχημονοῦντας) and beneath their dignity – bending backwards and forwards, stripping bare to public view (εἰς τὸ συμφανῆς) the unmentionable parts of nature, hopping about, and bending toward the ground – contrasted with the ‘good movements’ of the wrestler, who moved in a proper, orderly, and masculine (κοσμιωδέστερα καὶ ἀνδρωδέστερα) manner and with controlled strength (μετ’ εὐσχήμονος ῥώμης)³²¹.

The body continued to disclose the individual’s inner qualities: when shameless women displayed their nudity in the bath, for example, they revealed their moral ugliness since ‘*the lewdness of their desire*’ was ‘*made manifest in the body itself*’ and ‘*the disease is known by its visible effects*’³²². Clement developed traditional physiognomic ideas further. The beauty of the body, it is true, was less important than the soul, the main concern for the Christian³²³. ‘*It is not the appearance of the outer man* (ἡ πρόσοψις τοῦ ἐκτὸς ἀνθρώπου) *that should be made beautiful but his soul*’, declared Clement. Yet, the soul was made beautiful ‘*with the ornament of true virtue* (τῷ τῆς καλοκάγαθίας κοσμήματι). *It should be possible, too, to speak of an ornament for his body, the ornament of self-control* (τὴν σάρκα ... τῷ τῆς ἐγκρατείας κόσμῳ)’³²⁴. The outward appearance played, therefore, an important role too: Christ himself made clear the relationship between body and soul³²⁵; and a good Christian had the moral imperative to control how to ‘*conduct himself in reference to the body*’ and the ‘*manner in which he should exercise control over it*’, so to purify himself ‘*in the path that leads to the perception of God*’³²⁶. Christians had to present the highest degree of dignity in the way in which they stand (στάσιν) and move (κίνησιν), in the gait (βάδισμα), in the dress (ἔσθητα) and in the whole course

³¹⁹ S. WOOD, ‘Introduction’ to CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, tr. WOOD 1954, p. XIV.

³²⁰ Other stoic values were the *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency), the *sophrosyne*, the frugality, and a moderate *apathy* according to which emotions had to be controlled but were also recognized in their important functions.

³²¹ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 20.1; III, 10.51.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 160; p. 178; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 215; pp. 240-241.

³²² CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 5.33.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 167; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 226.

³²³ ‘*Look not at the things that are seen* (τὰ βλεπόμενα), *but at those that are not seen* (ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα)’, explained Clement quoting Paul of Tarsus. ‘*For the things that are seen are temporal* (πρόσκαιρα), *while those that are not seen are eternal* (αἰώνια)’ (cf. 2Cor 4.18); CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.11.2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 154; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 208. See also CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.12.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 155; tr. WOOD 1954, pp. 208-209.

³²⁴ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.4.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 149; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 202.

³²⁵ ‘*He* (Christ) *advised that external things were to be provided for the body, the body to be governed by the soul, and then instructed the soul* (...). *The body is more than the raiment*’; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 10bis.102.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 130; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 178.

³²⁶ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 1.1.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 66; tr. WOOD 1954, pp. 93-94.

of their life³²⁷. The *decorum* (τὸ εὖσχημον) of the *prosopon*, the control over the hands' movements, a lowered gaze (τὸ βλέμμα), the steadiness of the neck: they were all means through which the Christian could express his quiet, gentle, and peaceful nature³²⁸. So, for example, when forced to attend a banquet, good Christians have to keep a *schema* made of few movements, with the eyes fixed on the couch, leaning on their elbow 'without too much fidgeting', without crossing the feet or the legs and without resting their chin on the hands. This latter was a sign of education: 'It is lack of good breeding to fail to support oneself, yet a fault common in the young'³²⁹. Likewise, 'to be forever restlessly shifting one's position (τὸ μετακινούμενον ἐναλλάττειν τὸ σχῆμα) argues for levity of character (κουφότητος σύμβολον)³³⁰. Clement lists also some moralized ideal gestural patterns that a Christian has to follow when going to church. Here especially he had to assume a proper outward appearance in dress, walk, *schemata*, and manners (τοὺς τρόπους)³³¹.

It was not, however, a matter of mere appearance: unlike pagans, who could be praised for behaving like actors (ὡσπερ τοὺς ὑποκριτὰς) and for speaking with a loud voice modulated without opening too much the mouth³³², Christians have to walk with a dignified gait (τὸ βᾶδισμα) (i.e. without swaying or rolling the eye) but they also have to avoid staring at everyone to see if they looked at them, 'as if we were on the stage (καθάπερ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς) parading about grandiosely (ἐμπομπεύοντα) and pointing with our finger (δακτυλοδεικτούμενον)³³³. Christians had indeed to show themselves 'pure of body and pure in heart (ἄγνοὺς τὰ σώματα, ἄγνοὺς τὰς καρδίας)³³⁴ and 'ought to have such an appearance and behavior (φαίνεσθαι καὶ διαπλάττεσθαι) throughout their whole lives that they will conduct themselves (σχηματίζουσιν) in a dignified way when in church, and really be, not just seem to be (καὶ εἶναι / μὴ δοκεῖν εἶναι), meek, devout and charitable³³⁵.

Furthermore, despicable *schemata* revealed the belonging to a bad 'moral category'. Rude (ἄκοσμίαν) gestures such as spitting, violently coughing or blowing the nose not only disgusted the

³²⁷ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.59.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 182; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 246.

³²⁸ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 7.60; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, pp. 104-105; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 146. For example, hands had to be put out from the vest only from time to time; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 1.13.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 74; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 104. This concern was shared with pagans: Diogenes Laertius reported in the third century that the philosopher Chilon urged not to shake the hand while speaking (μὴ κινεῖν τὴν χεῖρα) because it was something insane (μανικὸν); DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Vitae philosophorum*, I, 70; ed. DORANDI 2013, p. 108; tr. GIGANTE 1976, vol. I, p. 32.

³²⁹ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 7.54.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 102; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 141. During wedding Christians also 'shall not clap and dance but shall partake of the meal or breakfast with a modesty becoming Christians'; SYNOD OF LAODICEA, canon 53; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, p. 303.

³³⁰ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 7.55.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 102; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 141.

³³¹ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.80.2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 193; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 260.

³³² DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Vitae philosophorum*, VII, 20; ed. DORANDI 2013, p. 487; tr. GIGANTE 1976, vol. I, p. 250; Diogenes Laertius spoke here by the mouth of the moderate cynic philosopher Zeno, and referred to the better way to hold conversations.

³³³ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.73.4; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 189; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 255.

³³⁴ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.79.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 192; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 259.

³³⁵ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.80.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 193; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 260.

companions but also testify to a lack of self-control³³⁶. From the *schema* (ἐκ τοῦ σχήματος αὐτοῦς) it was possible to discern an effeminate and adulterous character, and from the face (καθάπερ μετωποσκόπος) it was possible to recognize the soul³³⁷. The harlot was defined as a ‘foolish and bold’ woman who communicated her shamelessness through her *schema* (διὰ τοῦ σχήματος) and the whole manner of living³³⁸. The catamite, for his part, entertained with ‘obscene words and gestures (ἀκολάστοις ῥήμασι καὶ σχήμασι)’ which stimulated everyone ‘to giddiness, the precursor of fornication’³³⁹. ‘Men of this sort’, clarified Clement, ‘advertise openly the sort of character they possess, for they stand self-condemned by their fine robe, their sandals, their bearing (σχήματι), their way of walking (βαδίσματι), the cut of their hair, and their glances (βλέμματι). ‘For from his look shall a man be known,’ Scripture says, ‘and from meeting a man, a man shall be known (ἀπὸ ὀράσεως ἐπιγνωσθήσεται ἄνθρωπος). The attire (στολισμὸς) of the man, and the gait of his feet (βῆμα ποδὸς), and the laugh of his teeth show what he is’ (Eccli19:26-27 or LXX Sir19:29-30)³⁴⁰. In contrast, a good man did not manifest any sign (σημεῖον) of softness in his ‘prosopon, in his movements (ἐν κινήσεσιν) or in his posture (ἐν σχέσεσιν)³⁴¹, while his ‘appearance and gestures (καὶ σχηματισμοὶ καὶ κινήσεις)’ are not ‘a stimulant for the lustful’³⁴². Shameless and effeminate’s behaviour was despicable, especially when performed in public³⁴³. Like pagans, also vain and shameless women ‘feel a need of theatre’ and any occasions in which they could put themselves under the eyes and attract the attention, ‘priding themselves more on their appearance (ἐν προσώπῳ) than on the state of their

³³⁶ When sneezing or belching, the mouth had to be disposed in an appropriate way (σχηματιζομένῳ κοσμίως τῷ στόματι), ‘not wide open and gaping like the masks of the tragedy (οὐχὶ δὲ τραγικῶν ... προσωπείων)’; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 7.60.1-2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, pp. 104-105; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 145.

³³⁷ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 3.15.2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 157; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 211.

³³⁸ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.71.4; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 188; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 253. Cf. *Prov* 7:10; 9:13. The image of shameful women displaying their arrogance through improper behaviour was a long-standing *topos* in the Old Testament: for example, the daughters of Sion displayed their arrogance with the head held high, with the wink of their eyes and with their walk. Their true *schema* will be revealed by God who caused their hair to fall down (*Is* 3:16-17).

³³⁹ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 4.29.2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 165; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 223.

³⁴⁰ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 3.23.4; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 162; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 218-219. This biblical passage will be quoted also in the following centuries and was included in a glossa of Basil of Ancyra in the fourth century; SHAW 1998.

³⁴¹ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.73.5-74.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 189; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 255.

³⁴² CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.74.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 190; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 256 (quoting Zeno).

³⁴³ ‘Those who carry on in such a way out in the open’, indeed, ‘could scarcely have respect for anyone behind closed doors. Their utter shamelessness in public is a sure proof of their willful depravity in private’; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III.3.20.2-3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, pp. 79-80; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 216.

hearts³⁴⁴. Furthermore, they also ensnared men ‘who like senseless children are dazzled by exterior forms’³⁴⁵.

The visible character of the *schema* displayed in public continued to entail the high dangerous power of persuading and spreading moral values: Clemens still remembers Plutarch’s anecdote about the Spartans who kept the drunken Helots ‘as a cure and correction for themselves’, since ‘they disciplined themselves by watching the misconduct of these servants at close range, that they might not fall into similar misbehavior’³⁴⁶. Physical senses, the sight *in primis*, were like ‘unfortified doors’³⁴⁷ and a weak point to the outside world. They had to be continuously controlled with reason and self-control³⁴⁸. Glances, explained often Clement on the ground of an old topos well present in both Scripture and pagan literature, were dangerous, and the act of looking had to be controlled because it can arouse men and can lead to passions and to sins³⁴⁹. Making proper use of physicality and assuming the right *schemata* was therefore no longer just a matter of *decorum* or a social convention aimed at obtaining public recognition. Gestures and physical movements had to be rational and under the control of the soul and used as instruments to express the inner values, the dignity, and the faith of the Christian faithful in his path to God.

In the fourth and fifth centuries the Christian church finally ‘began to be an important institution of, rather than just opposed to, the Roman Empire’³⁵⁰, and Christians were no longer concerned in being approved or in avoiding to be considered as the ‘others’. Church Fathers continued to urge to live without ostentation (μὴ ἐπιδεικτικῶς πολιτεύεσθαι) or pride³⁵¹. Nevertheless, the new ‘Christian

³⁴⁴ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.10.3-4; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 154; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 207. This was achieved especially with the use of make-up, employed ‘to create a pleasing effect upon those who see them’; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.71.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 188; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 253.

³⁴⁵ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.11.2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 154; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 208.

³⁴⁶ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 8.41.5-8.42.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 173; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 233-234.

³⁴⁷ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 8.66.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 109; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 150-151. On the importance of closing the doors to body sensations, see also GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 2.7; 11.5; 38.5; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 12-13; pp. 316-317; pp. 882-883.

³⁴⁸ ‘The man without self-control (ὁ ἀκόλαστος) is easily led about by anything: eating, sleeping, social gatherings, as well as by his eyes and ears and stomach, and particularly to the point, by his sense of smell (ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν μυκτῆρων)’; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 8.67.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 109; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 151. See also WEBB 2008, p. 203. John Chrysostom also warned against the pollution through the sight. It was a passive receptor of sensations through which the heart was constantly assaulted, especially during wedding and imperial feasts; WEBB 2008, p. 14; ch. 8.

³⁴⁹ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 5.33.2; III, 11.69.3-11.70.1-4; III, 11.83.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, pp. 167-168; pp. 187-188; p. 194; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 226; pp. 252-253; p. 262. For this reason, even the act of staring at women in church is reprehensible like that of touching them; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.82.5; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 194; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 262.

³⁵⁰ HUMPHRIES 2006, p. 10. On the role of Constantine and his successors in creating a Christian city and a Christian society see, among others, ANGOLD 2001, pp. 1-37.

³⁵¹ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, V, 6.11; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 150-151.

philosophy' defined and strengthen previous ideas about behaviour and appearance. Those who were now political inferiors and considered as 'others' – pagans, Jews and heretics – were charged with a distorted concept of the body and of improper and immoral behaviour. So the shameful nature of the Falli and Infalli – pagan members of Aphrodite's processions – can be recognized by their *schemata* and their deeds (καὶ τοῖς σχήμασι καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν)³⁵². Heretics could be described as criminals and accused of moral corruption (like the extreme sexual license ascribed to the Gnostics), while pagans could be said to have deplorably low moral standards, which reflected the behaviour of their gods³⁵³. Against them, Christians emphasised the harmony between their soul and their body which reflected the image of Christ, the most remarkable example of self-restraint and demeanour used as a demonstration of power³⁵⁴.

The Nyssen devoted an entire ascetical treatise, the *De Perfectione*, to the topic. Here he developed further the ideas already stated by Paul of Tarsus about the role of Christ as head appointed by God over the Church-body (*Eph* 1:22-23) and the analogy between the church formed by members and the human body formed by limbs, both sharing the Eucharist body of Christ (*1Cor* 10:17)³⁵⁵. Since Christians were 'the parts who make up the body of Christ', they had to act in harmony with the head³⁵⁶. And if the head was the symbol of Christ and the faith in Him, and the body (which shared the same nature of the head) was the way of life (the *politeia*) of the believer, the faith had to correspond to a proper way of life³⁵⁷. If not, it was like as if 'combining with a Christian facade a bestial body'³⁵⁸. The Christian life is like two walls 'built out of our body and soul with elegance (εὐσχημοσύνης) and correctness (καθαρότητος)', in which Christ symbolizes the apex of the cornerstone:

But if one part of the building is deficient, if the external elegance (τὸ φαινόμενον εὐσχημοσύνης) does not correspond (μὴ συνοικοδομουμένης) to the correctness of the soul (τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς καθαρότητι), or if the soul's virtue does not balance the outward appearance (τῷ φαινομένῳ μὴ συνβαίνουσης), Christ, in fitting Himself to a single portion of a double structure, become the cornerstone of a half-completed life. For it is not possible for a cornerstone (γωνίας) to exist if two walls do not join³⁵⁹.

³⁵² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 39.4; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 902-903.

³⁵³ CLARK 2004, p. 31. These attacks, however, were not specifically Christians. They were taken from the Roman philosophical critiques of religious practices and from the Roman satire; CLARK 2004, p. 36.

³⁵⁴ FRUGONI 2010, p. 5.

³⁵⁵ WARE 1997, p. 94. Basil of Caesarea used the image of the Church's body to describe the heretical doctrines that affected the healthy body of the Church (σώματι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας); BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, V, 5.4; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 144-145.

³⁵⁶ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Perfectione* 273; ed. JAEGER 1952, pp. 197-198; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, pp. 111-113; cf. LILLA 1979, pp. 101-102.

³⁵⁷ LILLA 1979, n. 38, p. 83.

³⁵⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Perfectione*, 257; ed. JAEGER 1952, p. 179; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 99; tr. LILLA 1979, p. 83.

³⁵⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Perfectione* 269; ed. JAEGER 1952, p. 193; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 109; tr. LILLA 1979, p. 97.

The body had to participate in the life of the good Christian, who had to take care of both his visual and invisible appearance (κατά τὸν κρυπτὸν καὶ τὸν φαινόμενον ἄνθρωπον)³⁶⁰. He cannot be called Christian if he displayed (ἐνδεικνύμενος) a ‘head of faith’ (τῇ κεφαλῇ τῆς πίστεως) not conformed to (μὴ κατάλληλον) the ‘body of the conduct’ (τῆς πολιτείας τὸ σῶμα)³⁶¹.

John Chrysostom also urged his audience to assume a proper bearing in everyday life. Christians had to walk in a controlled manner in public urban spaces not only to elicit the gaze of everybody but also to display through good *schemata* the good disposition of the soul³⁶². ‘*The souls which are in bodies are unable to converse nakedly with each other concerning virtue*’, explained Basil of Ancyra, and for this reason they ‘*use the bodies that cover them like instruments, by means of voice and look* (πρὸς τὴν φωνὴν καὶ τὴ θέαν)’. The virgin, therefore, pleased Christ with her ‘*judgment and movement and form and demeanor* (καὶ γνώμης καὶ κινήσεως καὶ μορφῆς καὶ σχήματος)’. Her inner beauty and the image of the soul can be discerned by looking at the body’s movements, by listening to the voice, and by noticing the dress, the laugh and the gait³⁶³.

Physical movements included also the expression of the face (τῶν προσώπων ἢ θέσις): Theodoret of Cyrhus in the fifth century defined it as a sure sign (τεκμηριῶ) of the disposition of the soul (τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς διάθεσιν). Not only the colour (χρῶμα) of the face but also the motion (κίνησις) of the eyes and the blinking of the eyelids, indeed, answered (συνδιατίθεται) to the movements of the mind (τοῖς τῆς ἐννοίας κινήμασιν)³⁶⁴. Each movement displayed (ἐπισημαίνει) a specific feeling³⁶⁵, and the soul’s movements shone through the faces (ἐν τοῖς προσώποις παραδηλοῦνται). This is why Joseph employed his face as the messenger of the soul (ἀγγέλοις τῆς ψυχῆς τοῖς προσώποις)³⁶⁶ and Nebuchadnezzar was ‘*so filled with rage as to betray his soul’s dismay on his face* (τῷ προσώπῳ)³⁶⁷.

Sozomen declared then that the holy virgin who helped Athanasius to hide from his persecutors in Alexandria was beautiful because of her modesty and wisdom. ‘*For it is not true that ‘as is the body, so is the soul”*’, declared Sozomen. ‘*On the contrary, the habit of the body* (τὸ τοῦ σώματος ἥθος) *is imaged forth* (ἀπεικονίζεσθαι) *by the operation of the soul* (ἐν τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιτηδεύμασιν), *and anyone who is active* (ἐπιτηδεύων) *in any way whatever will appear* (διαφαίνεσθαι) *to be of that*

³⁶⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Perfectione* 280; ed. JAEGER 1952, p. 207; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 118; tr. LILLA 1979, p. 109.

³⁶¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Perfectione* 257; ed. JAEGER 1952, p. 179; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 99; tr. LILLA 1979, pp. 82-83.

³⁶² MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, p. 79.

³⁶³ BASIL OF ANCYRA, *De Virginitate* 36; ed. PG 30, col. 740D; 741A-741B; tr. SHAW 1998, pp. 490-491.

³⁶⁴ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *De providentia orationes* X, VIII, 28; ed. PG 83, col. 702A; tr. HALTON 1988, p. 109.

³⁶⁵ A grim expression displayed anger, a smile-like wrinkle of the eyelid displayed relax, eyebrows joined together expressed anxiety and lifted up conceit; *ibidem*.

³⁶⁶ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *De providentia orationes* X, VIII, 29; ed. PG 83, col. 702A; tr. HALTON 1988, p. 109.

³⁶⁷ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Daniele*, Dn 3.18; ed. and tr. HILL 2006b, pp. 76-77.

nature as long as he may be thus actively engaged (ἐπιτηδεύη)³⁶⁸. Not only, therefore, the soul shines through the body, but also the quality of the soul affect heavily the appearance of the body of men while they act. ‘The eyes announce (ἀγγέλλουσι) to us the passions of the soul (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς πάθη)’, declared in the sixth-seventh centuries Stephen the physician, ‘since they are the gateways (θύραι) to the brain, in which the soul resides (ἐν ᾧ κατοικεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ)³⁶⁹. According to Anastasius of Sinai, who worked in the second half of the seventh century, the invisible (ἀόρατος) soul ‘displays its own activities through the visible body which belongs to it (διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αὐτῆς τοῦνόρωμένου σώματος)’ while the mind ‘serve to dispose and control the body (ἔχουσα τὸν ἡγεμόνα νοῦν διοικοῦντα καὶ κυβερνοῦντα)³⁷⁰. Thus, it follows that when the soul ‘is separated from the whole body, it can no longer perform the acts it sets in motion through the limbs of the body – neither speak, nor remember, nor decide, nor desire, nor reason, nor feel anger. Instead, the soul exists by itself deathless in a sort of self-consciousness (ἐν συννοίᾳ τινὶ) until it once more regains its own body, made imperishable, and can then set in motion in imperishable fashion the acts of the body (τὰς ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνεργείας ἀποτελεῖ)³⁷¹. In other words, ‘the soul without the body can do nothing (χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐδὲν λοιπὸν ἡ ψυχὴ νῦν διαπράττεται)³⁷².

The *schema*, the body, the physical appearance, and the bodily movements were therefore felt to be important components of the Christian *politeia*. They came to be subject to a deep reflection aimed at understanding their functioning and their relationship with the soul. The judgment attached to them as expressions of the rational part of the human being was developed further to include theological values, so that they became expressions of the inner faith and instruments of the soul.

3. THE TELLING SCHEMA, REVEALER OF TRUTH AND INSTRUMENT OF DISGUISE

Philosophical and ethical standpoints remained deeply rooted in the mentalities and heavily affected the descriptions of good and bad *schemata* used as literary devices to mark a moral distinction

³⁶⁸ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 6.3; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 120; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 330. Cassiodorus also praised a candidate in front of the Senate by declaring that ‘his looks recall the glory of his blood (refert facie sanguinis decus); his face declares the nature of his soul (proditur animi natura per vultum)’; CASSIODORUS, *Variae*, III, 6.3; ed. MOMMSEN 1894, p. 82; tr. BARNISH 1992, p. 50.

³⁶⁹ STEPHEN THE PHILOSOPHER AND PHYSICIAN, *Ad Glauconem de methodo medendi*, ch. 12; ed. and tr. DICKSON 1998, pp. 64-65. Stephen testified here also the fact that in his time physiognomists could still ‘judge (ἐπιγινώσκει) character (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς πάθη) from the disposition (διαθέσεως) of the eyes’, and complained because the same was not possible in the medical field; *ibidem*.

³⁷⁰ ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, question 19, answer 4; ed. RICHARD and MINITIZ 2006, pp. 31-32; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, p. 90

³⁷¹ ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, question 19, answer 6; ed. RICHARD and MINITIZ 2006, p. 32; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, p. 91

³⁷² ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, question 21, answer 3; ed. RICHARD and MINITIZ 2006, p. 39; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, p. 96.

between good and bad characters. Descriptions of beautiful bodies continued to be used to underline the presence of a superior soul. Even the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus, a man so ashamed ‘*of being in a body*’ to refuse even to be portrayed³⁷³, was praised by his disciple Porphyry for his bodily attributes well-fitted to the soul: ‘*his mind*’, for example, ‘*was manifest even in his countenance* (τοῦ προσώπου), *which radiated light; lovely as he was to see, he was then especially beautiful to the sight*’³⁷⁴. Physiognomic ideas remained widespread in the Christian hagiographies, where saintly figures could reveal their exceptional nature by their outward appearance. When St Stephen the Younger was brought, at the age of fifteen, at the presence of John of the monastery of St Auxentius, the old man immediately recognized his inherent divine grace by his gait (τό βάδισμα), the cheerfulness of his face (τὸ ἱλαρὸν τοῦ προσώπου), and the disposition of his meeting eyebrows (τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τὴν σύνοφρυον κατάστασιν)³⁷⁵. In the tenth century, the hidden beauty and the grace of the soul of the ‘repentant harlot’ St Thomaïs of Lesbos was still disclosed by her ‘*external manifestation* (τῷ φαινομένῳ)’ and by her bodily features (ταῖς σωματικαῖς ιδιότησι). The invisible was revealed by the visible (ταῖς γνωρίμοις τὰς ἀφανεῖς), her internal (virtues) by her external (beauty) (ταῖς ἐκτὸς τὰς ἐντός)³⁷⁶.

Nevertheless, what mattered most for the Christian was to make proper use and to control the body and its *schemata*, and this was only made possible by the presence of reason and a strong soul. Christians, declared for example the author of the life of St Matrona of Perge, differed from the heretic Manicheans since they ‘*did not consider the body to be the most evil of foes*’ but rather ‘*constrained its unreasonable urges with great wisdom, correcting it as is necessary*’³⁷⁷.

A direct opposition existed therefore between ‘*good schema/schemata*’ and ‘*bad schema/schemata*’ displayed and performed respectively by good and bad characters able or not to control their bodies. So the unchaste woman distinguished herself from the good wife, for she employed her body in a distorted manner and seduced men’s souls through lustful gestures and words (καὶ σχήματι καὶ

³⁷³ The refusal of Plotinus was due mainly to the platonic idea that a body was the image of the image (εἰδῶλον εἰδῶλον), a mere simulacrum unworthy to be fixed by the artist; PORPHYRY, *Vita Plotini* I, 1; ed. HENRY and SCHWYZER 1964, p. 1; tr. EDWARDS 2000, p. 1.

³⁷⁴ PORPHYRY, *Vita Plotini* 13; ed. HENRY and SCHWYZER 1964, pp. 16-17; tr. EDWARDS 2000, p. 23. Proclus was also praised for his bodily attributes, ‘*visible even in his final and shell-like covering*’, which mirrored his innate cardinal virtues; MARINUS, *Vita Procli*, 3; ed. SAFFREY and SEGONDS 2002, pp. 3-5; tr. EDWARDS 2000, pp. 60-61. The biographies of Plotinus and Proclus had been written respectively in the third and in the fifth century.

³⁷⁵ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 12; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 196. The ‘eyebrows which met’ was a sign of arrogance which was transmitted to Byzantium from ancient Greek literature. Choricus of Gaza, for example, described Ares as having ‘*eyebrows which naturally met*’, an ‘*arrogant look*’ and the smell of war; CHORICIUS OF GAZA, *Dialexeis*, 9 (XVI), 4; ed. FOERSTER and RICHTSTEIG 1929, p.196; tr. PENELLA 2009, p. 42. The term had been then employed as a sign of sanctity and included among the iconographical attributes of Christ. Its ambivalent nature remains in its application to the description of the ‘evil’ emperor Constantine V; AUZÉPY 1997, n. 89, p. 196.

³⁷⁶ VITA S. THOMAÏDIS, 6; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, IV (1925), 235; tr. HALSALL 1996, p. 302.

³⁷⁷ VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, *Vita Prima*, 2; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, III (1910), 791B-C; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, pp. 19-20.

ὀνόμασι)³⁷⁸. St Basil's serious *schema* (ἐν σεμνῷ τῷ σχήματι) clashed with that of a prostitute who approached him in a languish and unmanned way (ἀκκιζόμενον τε καὶ θρυπτόμενον), pretending (σχηματιζόμενον) with words and acts (δι' ὧν ἐφθέγγετο τε καὶ ἐποίει) to be familiar with him³⁷⁹. And some laundresses at the fountain looked at the 'strangeness of the *schema*' (τοῦ σχήματος τὸ καινοπρεπές) of the holy hermit James without shame, with an impudent face (ἀπηρυθριασμένῳ προσώπῳ) and indecent eyes (ἀναιδέσιν ὀφθαλμοῖς), without covering the head or lowering their clothes – a sin (τῆς ἀσεβείας) which would be then aptly punished³⁸⁰. Chaotic and irrational movements could also display a general inner turmoil: the rich man described by Theodoret of Cyrillus spent the night tossing and turning in the bed and revealed (σημαίνων) through the movements of the hands (τῇ κινήσει τῶν χειρῶν) his inner flame (τὴν κεκρυμμένην πυράν)³⁸¹.

Mostly, chaotic movements were the outcome of an irrational and bestial nature overwhelmed by passions and unable to self-control. Not only were they socially disapproved. They were most of all a misuse of the precious gifts given by God. So, whistling, hissing, snapping the fingers, and all the sounds used to summon servants are defined by Clement as irrational signals (ἄλογοι σημάσια) that cannot be used by men gifted by reason (λογικοῖς ἀνθρώποις), since out-of-control behaviour lowered men at the level of animals³⁸². Bestly movements characterized especially the one who was swept away by anger: his voice turned out to be strident, the mouth spit unable to talk, and his hands, feet and disposition of the body (τοῦ σώματος ἢ διάθεσις) were composed according to the passion (συνδιατιθεμένου τῷ πάθει)³⁸³. Even worse, those taken by anger experienced the same bodily symptoms as demonic possession, i.e. a protrusion of the eyes fixed in a sanguine sight, agitation of the head (κλόνος κεφαλῆς), senseless movements of the hands (χειρῶν ἔμπληκτοι κινήσεις), shaking in all the body (βρασμὸς ὅλου τοῦ σώματος), and agitated feet (ἄστατοι πόδες)³⁸⁴. The calm and composed attitude of St Basil stood against the attitude of the harlot taken by a demonic

³⁷⁸ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 8.9; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 284-285 (cf. *Prov.* 6, 26; 7, 10-13).

³⁷⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Beati Gregorii*; ed. HEIL 1990, p. 10; tr. LEONE 1988, pp. 42-43.

³⁸⁰ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa* I, 4; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. I, pp. 166-167; tr. GALLICO 1995, pp. 76-77. In the romance of Barlaam and Ioasaph, we still read that a prostitute provoked the prince Ioasaph with her gestures and talk (σχημάτων / ῥημάτων), and with her whole self, figure (σχῆμα), look and voice (βλέμμα καὶ φθέγμα); *BARLAAM AND IOASAPH*, XXX, 269; 276; ed. and tr. WOODWARD and MATTINGLY (1914) 1967, pp. 452-453; pp. 460-461.

³⁸¹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *De providentia orationes* X, VI, 40; ed. PG 83, col. 663C; tr. HALTON 1988, p. 86.

³⁸² CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 7.60.1-4; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, pp. 104-105; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 145.

³⁸³ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Beatitudinibus*, II, 5; ed. CALLAHAN 1992, pp. 96-97; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, p. 633.

³⁸⁴ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Beatitudinibus*, VII, 8; ed. CALLAHAN 1992, p. 155; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, pp. 653-655. The bodily movements are the same in form but differ in their purposes: while the demon of the possessed makes move his body (in particular his hands, which are stretched in the air) in a meaningless way, indeed, the movements of the body (τὰς κινήσεις τοῦ σώματος) of the angered one are stimulated under a specific aim, i.e. to harm the one that is taken by this illness.

spirit, who cried out savages and animal screams until she fell on earth, tearing off her hairs and salivating³⁸⁵.

Insane gestures could also reveal the foolishness of the heretics: so the Messalians '*leap up and down and boast that they are outleaping the demons, or they go through the motions of shooting from a bow, asserting that they are shooting demons, and many other things filled with the same insanity*'³⁸⁶.

Folly and mania characterized also Eusebius's description of the founder of the Manichean demonic heresy (τῆς δαιμονώσεως αἰρέσεως), Mani (a telling name which recalled the μανεῖς): he '*armed himself with a perversion of reason*', but his life was also that of a barbarian '*in his speech and habits (λόγῳ καὶ τρόπῳ)*', while '*in his nature he was someone demonic (δαιμονικός) and insane (μανιώδης)*', so that '*he ventured things consonant with these characteristics*' and '*tried to make himself (μορφάξεσθαι) like Christ*'³⁸⁷. During the persecutions under Valens, Arians outraged altars with impudent gestures (σχήμασιν) and songs, with dances and contorsions³⁸⁸. Theodoret described in a particularly vivid way the incursion of a group of pagans in a church of Teona: they performed in the sacred space impure and abusive actions (undignified clapping (κρότους χειρῶν ἀσέμνους), offensive voices, noises and laughter) and then brought in a young man with an effeminate appearance (θηλυμόρφῳ τῷ σχήματι) who transformed the altar into a scene of a lascivious theatre, dancing a circular movement (εὐκύκλῳ τῇ στροφῇ) and shaking the hands (τὸ χεῖρε σχηματιζόμενον)³⁸⁹.

The most distinguished and exceptional Christians, the martyrs, achieved a spiritual and physical perfection largely described in the third-fourth centuries 'Acta' and 'Passions'³⁹⁰. They were athletes who, in the moment of pain and suffering, performed an admirable spectacle (θέατρον) under the sight of both angels and men³⁹¹. Their bodies gained in this way a supernatural and exceptional condition, maintaining also after their death an incorruptible state and even becoming an instrument to access the divine. '*Not only the words and the works*' of martyrs, still wrote the author of the

³⁸⁵ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Beati Gregorii*; ed. HEIL 1990, p. 10; tr. LEONE 1988, pp. 42-43.

³⁸⁶ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Haeticarum fabularum compendium*, quot. and tr. in IVANOV 2006, p. 191. Ivanov stated the relation between holy foolery and heresy through an analysis of the descriptions referring to Messalians' behaviour provided by Theodoret and other authors; IVANOV 2006, pp. 190-194.

³⁸⁷ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 31.1; ed. SCHWARTZ 1908, vol. II, p. 716; tr. SCHOTT 2019, p. 380.

³⁸⁸ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 25.12; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 612-613. For the 'Arian madness (μανία)' see, among many, ID, *Oratio* 25.8; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 606-607; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 30.5; ed. BIDEZ 1983, p. 366; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 280.

³⁸⁹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV, 22.7; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, p. 251; tr. GALLICO 2000, pp. 297-298. This story is similar to a less detailed episode reported by Gregory of Nazianzus, who identified those men as Arians; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 33.3; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 816-817. The identification with the Arians has been later followed by Theophanes Confessor, for whom they sung '*the songs of demons*', while the '*lewd youth*' performed '*obscenities within the altar precincts*'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5866, AD 373/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 60-61; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 94.

³⁹⁰ KRUMBACHER (1907) 1970, p. 40.

³⁹¹ 1Cor 4:9. See also THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV, 22.20; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, p. 256; tr. GALLICO 2000, p. 301. For acts and bodies of saints seen as performances achieved in specific places witnessed by an audience, see CONSTANTINO 2005.

romance of Barlaam and Ioasaph, 'but even the very blood and bones (τὰ αἷματα καὶ τὰ ὀστέα) are full of all sanctity, mightily casting out devils, and giving to such as touch them in faith the healing of incurable disease'³⁹². Their bodies had as much power as their souls, while their limbs or even a drop of their blood, when touched or worshipped, had as much power as their whole bodies³⁹³.

Holy men and women were also described in hagiographical accounts of the fourth and the fifth century as characterized by a peculiar attitude toward the bodies. Despite a general tendency toward the disincarnation of their physical appearance (they were often defined as ασώματοι)³⁹⁴, they used both souls and bodies 'in the process of transformation from an ordinary existence into holiness'³⁹⁵. Society invested them with a 'melodramatically afflicted body' and with postures and gestures which were part of 'a constantly enacted, public ritual of power', that separated them from their fellows and from common men³⁹⁶. So the virgins, explained a fourth-century treatise attributed to Athanasius, were required to outwardly display their condition by praying while standing with the feet covered, 'for this is seemly for a sacred person'. Every time she sat at the table or left it, she has to give thanks by crossing herself (σφραγίσασα αὐτὸν) three times³⁹⁷. And every time she recited the psalms, she had to stand, genuflect, and cry³⁹⁸, so as not to be like the person who acknowledges (ὁμολογοῦσιν) God with the mouth but denies him by his deeds³⁹⁹. Gregory of Nazianzus' sister Gorgonia was distinguished by her constrained gaze and because she did not even show the hint of a smile⁴⁰⁰. John Chrysostom declared that the virgin's eyes, tongue, *schema* and walk, 'and altogether everything is impressed with (χαρακτηρίζω) an internal discipline'. The virgin in the above-mentioned treatise of Basil of Ancyra 'should appear in her *schema* and in her word as the true bride of Christ'. In a recent article, Teresa M. Shawn explained how those treatises on virginity were concerned with the proper *schema*, here properly understood as 'demeanour', and were almost obsessed with bodily details. They built up a 'rhetoric of appearance' to crystallize the virgin's distinction from the worldly, human and everyday styles⁴⁰¹.

³⁹² BARLAAM AND IOASAPH, XII, 101; tr. WOODWARD and MATTINGLY (1914) 1967, pp. 170-171.

³⁹³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.69; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 130-131. On the relics and their functions, see especially VIKAN 1989.

³⁹⁴ For example, GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Orationes* 8.13; 15.8; 19.5; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 288-289; pp. 384-385; pp. 480-481.

³⁹⁵ CUNNINGHAM 2002, p. 79. The statement, quoted by Cunningham from the fourth-century Athanasius' *Life of Saint Anthony*, excluded once again 'the dualist belief that the material world, which includes the human body, is inherently evil and may never be redeemed'; *ibidem*.

³⁹⁶ BROWN 1971, pp. 368-369. In this way, they received an authority which allowed them to act as spiritual counsellors and to solve conflicts, or as sources of cure; *ibidem*.

³⁹⁷ PSEUDO-ATHANASIUS, *De virginitate*, 13-14; ed. VON DER GOLZ 1905, p. 47-48; tr. SHAW 2000, p. 91-92.

³⁹⁸ PSEUDO-ATHANASIUS, *De virginitate*, 20; ed. VON DER GOLZ 1905, p. 55; tr. SHAW 2000, p. 95.

³⁹⁹ PSEUDO-ATHANASIUS, *De virginitate*, 15; ed. VON DER GOLZ 1905, p. 50; tr. SHAW 2000, p. 92.

⁴⁰⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 8.9; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 284-285. In this Gorgonia is even superior to the monks, who in *Oratio* 6 are described as lightly smiling; *ibidem*, n. 57, p. 1244.

⁴⁰¹ SHAW 1998, esp. pp. 489-492. Shawn's analysis is conducted in line with Pierre Bourdieu's ideas of lifestyle, manners and taste.

Monks and hermits for their part developed a public attitude of indifference toward the *doxa* and the social conventions⁴⁰². Those men expressed their grief, showed publicly their ascetical tendencies and their poverty, and performed odd and ‘out-of-norm’ *schemata* felt by pagan contemporaneous in tension with the traditional rules of public *decorum* that tied the society together⁴⁰³. The pagan Eunapius described them as men only in aspect (κατὰ τὸ εἶδος) who led the life of swine, publicly showing their suffering (ἐς τὸ ἐμφανὲς ἔπασχον) and behaving unseemly (ἀσχημονεῖν) without being condemned but rather gaining influence and strength⁴⁰⁴. In the sixth century, the fifth-century Christian philosopher Isokasios was still described while he proudly displayed his indifference to the rules of self-presentation and presented himself to a trial ‘stripped and with his arms tied behind his back’. ‘Did you see, Isokasios, the state to which you have reduced yourself (ἐν ποιῶ στήματα καθέστηκας)?’, harshly reproached him the pretorian prefect. Isokasios replied that he did not care (‘for I am a human being who has met with human calamities’) and invoked an honest judgment despite his outward attire⁴⁰⁵.

But monks and saints also took special care (θεραπείας) of their bodies and trained them to become their instruments of faith and their weapons in the fight against demons (who, on the contrary, delighted fully in the ‘relaxation of the body’)⁴⁰⁶. The assumption of the monastic *schema* had a powerful effect on its bearer and went beyond a mere changing in the dress or in the *insignia* (like the black clothes, the tonsure and the beard)⁴⁰⁷. It implied a change of general physical appearance as well as a change of *habitus*, behaviour, and corporeal properties. They practised the *askesis*, a term which signified ‘the gradual and purposeful transformation of a person’s body aimed at improvement through various practices’. Renunciation of foods, sexual intercourses and social engagement, manipulation of sleep patterns, the endurance of pain: they were all practices aimed at self-

⁴⁰² KRUEGER 1996, pp. 78-83. For the pagan origins of this kind of attitude, widespread especially among the Cynics, see also DE VOGEL (1985) 1993, pp. 48-49.

⁴⁰³ The holy man represented the archetypal ‘outsider’ in the Syrian and Byzantine society; BROWN 1988. For the definition and the concepts of ‘outsider’ and identity, see MULLETT 2000. See also CLARK 2004, pp. 73-75.

⁴⁰⁴ EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Vitae Philosopharum*, VI, 112-113; ed. GOULET 2014, pp. 40-41; tr. CIVILETTI 2007, p. 137. Civiletti refers to the sexual meaning entailed in the expression ἔπασχον τε ἐποίουσιν (CIVILETTI, n. 287, p. 428), but is also possible to read the expression as a reference to the public show (τὸ ἐμφανὲς) provided by the monks’ ascetical bodies in front of the population (in this case the citizens of Alexandria). The pagan Libanius, in his oration *On the Temple*, also stated that he never felt any differences between his pagan or Christian colleagues and students, while on the other side he felt offended by the presence of the monks; MAXWELL 2006a, pp. 129-130.

⁴⁰⁵ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 14, 38; ed. THURN 2000, 292.81-293.12; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 203; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 382, where *schema* is translated as ‘Gestalt’. The story occurred during the reign of Leo I and is repeated by Theophanes Confessor, the *Chronicon Paschale*, and other sources; see MANGO and SCOTT 1997, n. a, p. 179.

⁴⁰⁶ PSEUDO-ATHANASIUS, *De virginitate*, 7; ed. VON DER GOLZ 1905, p. 41; tr. SHAW 2000, p. 89.

⁴⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, one of the harshest punishment for a monk was the loss of his distinctive *schema*, since it turned a man back to his condition as an ordinary citizen. The practice will reach a peak during the Iconomachy, when it was likely influenced by the confusion as to the status of the image, i.e. if to consider the image holy in itself and the signifier as owning the proprieties associated with the signified; CORMACK 1985, p. 121.

improvement⁴⁰⁸. So Maximus the Confessor wore his body down (τρύχων τὸ σῶμα), and subjected it to fasting, mortifications, vigils and intense prayers, *'in this way making his soul standing upright again, and detaching his mind from the material world, and releasing it from bondage even before dissolution* (that is, the separation of the body and soul at death)⁴⁰⁹. Closed among the monastery's walls in a context dominated by self-control, moderation and liturgical prescriptions, monks spent their life in the search for the perfect spiritual and physical condition. They followed behavioural guidelines under the sign of the *agape* and *koinomia*, like the duty to sit with composure holding the dress, to keep an appropriate distance, and to avoid talking, laughing or staring at other monks during the dinner. Strict rules guided then the prayers, involving a cross-like posture, the sign of the cross on the forehead, and the prostration performed with reverence on the ground without lifting up the head⁴¹⁰. More odd practices were to be found among the holy hermits who lived alone in the desert. The famous stylites who spent their life on pillars offered a new and strange spectacle which enlightened those who had fallen into the darkness of blasphemy⁴¹¹. Their physical position at the *'midmost* (μεσσηγύς) *of earth and heaven'* with *'both feet firmly planted on the column'*⁴¹² displayed their condition as a *'citizen of the supernatural Jerusalem while in flesh* (ἐν σαρκὶ), living *'betwixt heaven and those on earth'*⁴¹³. Other holy men assumed unnatural postures and uncomfortable *schemata* which caused visible physical modifications: so Saint James, recorded Eusebius quoting Hegesippus, was used to kneel in prayer in the Temple of Jerusalem so much that *'his knees became calloused like a camel's'*⁴¹⁴. And Stephen the Younger (ca 807) remained so long in his small cell (a building more similar to a tomb than to a house, where a man could not stand) and endured such great abstinence

⁴⁰⁸ VALANTASIS 2000, p. 8. See also CLARK 2004, p. 62. As for the fast (νηστεία), it produces many 'healthy' consequences on the body: *'it heals diseases, dries up the bodily fluids, casts out demons, chases away wicked thoughts, makes the mind clearer, the heart pure, and the body sanctified, and place the person before the throne of God'*; PSEUDO-ATHANASIUS, *De virginitate*, 7; ed. VON DER GOLZ 1905, p. 57; tr. SHAW 2000, p. 88. For the fasting as a way to master the body in Manichean asceticism, see VALANTASIS 2000, p. 7. For the social implication of sexual renunciation and fasting, see BROWN 1988. For the relation between *askesis* and sanctity, see also SHAW 1998.

⁴⁰⁹ VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, *RECENSION* 3, 5; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 47.

⁴¹⁰ PACHOMIUS, *Praecepta*, 2; 7-8; 30; 33; 95; tr. CREMASCHI 1988, pp. 67-68; p. 71; p. 80. Pachomius was an Egyptian monk who founded in the first half of the fourth century the coenobitic monasticism. He wrote down the rules for the prayer and the behaviour of monks who wanted to follow an ascetic common life. Gregory of Nazianzus also agreed that monks' signs announcing their life according to God included a harsh training, an appropriate dress, as well as a calm walking, a sweet smile without the intemperance of laughter, a speech guided by reason, and a silence more precious than speech; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 6.2; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 224-227.

⁴¹¹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa* XXVI, 12-13; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. II, pp. 184-191; tr. GALLICO 1995, pp. 256-257 (referring to saint Symeon).

⁴¹² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS in *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA*, I, 99; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1953, vol. II, pp. 42-43. This poem was found by Gregory written on the pillar of the holy Daniel on the Bosphorus. On the role of the saint as intercession figures see also MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, pp. 155-157.

⁴¹³ EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 13; ed. BIDEZ 1898, p. 21; tr. WHITBY 2000, pp. 34-35.

⁴¹⁴ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 23.6; ed. SCHWARTZ 1903, vol. I, p. 166; tr. SCHOTT 2019, p. 110.

(ἐγκρατείας) that the tibia of his leg melted with the tight and he was no longer able to walk when the men of Constantine V came to drag him outside⁴¹⁵.

Extreme physical performances of prayer are largely stated by Theodoret of Cyrrhus' *Historia religiosa* (written in 440), a collection of biographies of 'living images and statues (εἰκόνας αὐτῶν ἐμψύχους καὶ στήλας)' of holy men and women (a definition which underlined both their spiritual steadiness and their lively nature)⁴¹⁶ portrayed (σκιωγραφοῦμεν) in the form (τὰς ἰδέας) of their invisible soul⁴¹⁷. Those were skilful body's performers who prayed and beg for a miracle by standing or prostrating themselves on the ground for days⁴¹⁸, or constricted themselves by means of chains or small spaces which forced them in a bending position⁴¹⁹. Even to keep such positions after the death was a common *topos* in hagiography: saints and holy monks could be found in their caves after many years still kneeling with the hands stretched out to heaven⁴²⁰, or with the body outstretched (κειμένην τῷ σχήματι) facing the east and the 'hands folded in the proper manner (τὰς χεῖρας οὕτως ὥσπερ ἴδει τυπώσασαν)⁴²¹. They performed also more dynamic gestures, repeatedly bending the body in *proskynesis*⁴²² or touching the feet's fingers with the front (a special gesture which saint Symeon was able to perform thanks to his empty belly)⁴²³. Since 'more the outer man suffered, the more the inner man flourished'⁴²⁴ those men gained a special condition of 'channels' and mediators between the divine and earthly world and the power to perform gestures which affected the reality.

⁴¹⁵ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris*, 20; 31; tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 205; pp. 225-226. See also, in similar terms, the version later produced by Symeon Metaphrastes; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 564-568; 574-575; 1115-1120; tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 208; p. 230.

⁴¹⁶ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Religiosa* prol. 2; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. I, pp. 128-129; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 67.

⁴¹⁷ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Religiosa* prol. 3; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. I, pp. 130-131; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 68. This did not mean in their bodily features (a kind of description which characterized the pagan's portrays through statuary) but rather their secret and invisible battles.

⁴¹⁸ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa*, II, 18; IV, 12; XXI, 14; XXVI, 3; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. I, pp. 238-239; pp. 322-323; vol. II, pp. 92-93; pp. 162-163; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 103; pp. 130-131; p. 223; pp. 249-250.

⁴¹⁹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa*, III, 5; IV, 6; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. I, pp. 254-255; pp. 304-305; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 105; p. 126. Many examples can be found also in Sozomen, an author educated in Palestine and well used to monastic life and discipline. See for example the monk Apollus, who was 'never seen to recline on a mat or a bed, nor even to place his limbs in an easy attitude, or willingly to surround himself to sleep'; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 29.5; ed. BIDEZ and HANSEN 2005, p. 394; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, vol. II, p. 366.

⁴²⁰ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, ch. 89; ed. PG 87.3, col. 2915; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 71.

⁴²¹ *VITA MARIÆ ÆGYPTI*, 37; ed. PG 87, col. 3724; tr. KOULI 1996, p. 91.

⁴²² THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa*, II, 5; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. I, pp. 204-205; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 92. See also JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, ch. 105; ed. PG 87.3, col. 2963; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 83.

⁴²³ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa*, XXVI, 22; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. II, pp. 204-207; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 262. For other examples of body's performances, see THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Religiosa* IV, 12; XXI, 14; XXVI, 3; XXVI, 22; XXX, 2.

⁴²⁴ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, ch. 10; ed. PG 87.3, col. 2860; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 9. The saying is ascribed by John Moschos to Barnabas the Anchorite, who pronounced it while suffering from a harsh feet

The hands were the most powerful limbs of the saint. He could stop an enemy by simply stretching out his right hand ordering ‘*Stay!*’⁴²⁵. Even after death, the hand of Saint Theoktiste of Lesbos, stolen from her cadaver, could prevent a ship to sail away⁴²⁶. The power which was still conferred to the hands in the fifth century is testified by an anecdote, reported by different sources, concerned with the charge against the orthodox bishop of Alexandria Athanasius. During the trial his Arian enemies obtained by some means a hand, which they claimed to be the hand of the Melitian bishop Arsenius. They exposed it to the audience to prove not only that Athanasius murdered and crushed Arsenius to pieces⁴²⁷, but also that the hand had been used by Athanasius to perform certain magic (ἐσχηκέναι πρὸς μαγείας)⁴²⁸. The power of the saint’s hand was revealed especially when he performed the sign of the cross. The cross had curative power: the Holy Cross of Jerusalem revealed itself by healing on the spot a woman afflicted by a disease in front of Constantine’s mother Helena⁴²⁹. The gesture which visually depicted it (σφραγίσας), performed in the air or on the body, on the mouth and the forehead, was therefore largely employed by saints to heal sick people, to engage their battles with demons, and to perform miracles. The saint could defeat a dragon by making the sign of the cross with his fingers, in the air or directly over it, sometimes also spitting on its head or in its mouth, like for example Saint Donatus and St Elizabeth the Wonderworker (she also trampled the beast underfoot uttering the related Ps 90 (91):13)⁴³⁰. ‘*We cannot abide even the sight of the might of Christ, and the symbol of his Passion which they call the Cross*’ declared a demon itself in the story of Barlaam and Ioasaph. ‘*For, when that sign is made (τυπουμένου), immediately all we (...) are utterly routed and discomfited, even before the sign is completed (τυπωθῆναι)*’⁴³¹. The sign of the Cross could also free a monk from his inner struggle, as when St John made it three times on the body of a monk and freed him from any sexual temptation⁴³². It could affect the launch of a ship blocked ‘*on account of enchantment (ἀπὸ μαγείας)*’: John, an elder ‘*feared by demons*’ at the Skopelos monastery ‘*made three prostration*

infection. At the same time, anyway, the monk was also urged to keep the illness confined to the body and not let it touch the soul; JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, ch. 8; ed. PG 87.3, col. 2857; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 8.

⁴²⁵ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, 133; ed. PG 87.3, coll. 2996-2997; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 109.

⁴²⁶ NIKETAS MAGISTROS, *Vita S. Theoctistae*, 20-21; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, IV (1925), 230-231; tr. HERO 1996, pp. 113-114. The Life had been written in the tenth century by a Thessalian high-ranking official.

⁴²⁷ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 30.1-9; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, pp. 85-87; tr. GALLICO 2000, pp. 135-137.

⁴²⁸ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 27.18-21; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL 1995 (2004), pp. 230-231; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 30. The falsity of the charge was finally revealed when Athanasius brought Arsenius in and moved aside his cloak, revealing his hands hidden underneath; SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 29; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL 1995 (2004), pp. 234-237; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 31.

⁴²⁹ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 17.5-6; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL 1995 (2004), pp. 176-179; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 21.

⁴³⁰ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII, 26.2; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 206; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 395; VITA SANCTAE ELISABETH; tr. KARRAS 1996, pp. 129-130. The Life of the fifth-century abbess of Constantinople Elizabeth was recounted by a later medieval author.

⁴³¹ BARLAAM AND IOASAPH, XXXI, 283-284; ed. and tr. WOODWARD and MATTINGLY (1914) 1967, pp. 474-475.

⁴³² JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, 3; ed. PG 87.3, col. 2856; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 6.

before God (βάλλει τρεῖς μετανοίας τῷ Θεῷ) and three time he signed (σφραγίζει) the vessel with the sign (σημείον) of the cross, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ⁴³³. Together with words, it could make a poison ineffective and it even made fresh and potable the water of the sea⁴³⁴. In the seventh century, the Life of Theodore of Sykeon provided a repertoire of magical formulas, gestures and objects through which saints defeated the demons and healed the possessed⁴³⁵, the mute⁴³⁶, the blind⁴³⁷, the paralyzed⁴³⁸, and the feverish⁴³⁹; and Anastasius of Sinai told the story of a monk who had the ‘ability to speak face-to-face with devils’ and discovered in this way that the things that the devil feared most were the holy communion, the holy baptism and the cross hung around the Christian’s neck, all weapons ‘that have been entrusted to the Christians by God’⁴⁴⁰. The cross is ‘the most wonderful’ of all the wonders worked by Christ (θαυματουργία Χριστοῦ): It had many power, including that of absolving the sin of the ancestors, of granting the resurrection, of making recognizable the believers from the unbelievers, and of being ‘our shield and weapon and trophy against the devil’⁴⁴¹.

The outward appearance gained through the practice of the *askesis* and the gestures in which the saint was trained became also the peculiar elements which allowed his identification. ‘It is clear from your appearance (ἐκ τοῦ ἡθους), O spiritual mother, that you have long ago departed toward God, and have in great part mortified yourself to the world’ noticed for example the monk Zosimus when encountered St Mary of Egypt in the wilderness, in the more detailed version of the Life written by Sophronius of Jerusalem at the beginning of the seventh century. The saint revealed her true sainthood by making the sign of the cross (σφραγίζει ἑαυτὴν τῷ σημείῳ τοῦ σταυροῦ) ‘on her forehead, eyes, lips, and breast, saying thus, ‘Let God lead us away from the devil and his snares, Father Zosimas’ so that ‘when the monk heard those words and saw those gestures (ταῦτα τοίνυν ἀκούσας ... καὶ θεασάμενος), he threw himself on the ground (...)’⁴⁴². Theodore also reported a story of a holy monk, hidden in the desert of Sodom, who was recognized by a group of monks at distance thanks to his

⁴³³ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, 83; ed. PG 87.3, col.2925; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 66.

⁴³⁴ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, 94; 173; ed. PG 87.3, col. 2953; col. 3041; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 76; p. 142.

⁴³⁵ *VITA SANCTI THEODORI SYCEOTAE*, 43; 84; 86; 91; ed. FESTUGIÈRE 1970, pp. 38-39; pp. 70-72; p. 75; tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, pp. 118-120; pp. 146-147; pp. 149-150.

⁴³⁶ *VITA SANCTI THEODORI SYCEOTAE*, 65; 67; 95; ed. FESTUGIÈRE 1970, pp. 54-56; p. 78; tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, p. 133; p. 152.

⁴³⁷ *VITA THEODORI SANCTI SYCEOTAE*, 83; ed. FESTUGIÈRE 1970, p. 70; tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, p. 146.

⁴³⁸ *VITA SANCTI THEODORI SYCEOTAE*, 68; 85; ed. FESTUGIÈRE 1970, p. 56, pp. 71-72; tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, p. 133; p. 147.

⁴³⁹ *VITA SANCTI THEODORI SYCEOTAE*, 72; ed. FESTUGIÈRE 1970, pp. 59-60; tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, pp. 135-137.

⁴⁴⁰ ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, coll. b, Qu. 20 (appendix 10a), answers 8-9; ed. RICHARD and MUNITIZ 2006, p. 182-183; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, p. 151.

⁴⁴¹ ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, questio isolata (appendix 27), answers 2-3; ed. RICHARD and MUNITIZ 2006, p. 230-231; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, pp. 166-167.

⁴⁴² *VITA MARIÆ ÆGYPTI*, 15; ed. PG 87, col. 3709; tr. KOULI 1996, pp. 78-79.

hands raised upwards⁴⁴³. And Theoktiste of Lesbos appeared to the man who discovered her after thirty-five years as having still the *'shape of a woman (σχῆμα γυνή) but the appearance of a superhuman being (τὸ δὲ φαινόμενον ὑπεράνθρωπον)*'. She was *'almost a shadow (σκιᾷ παραπλήσιος), her shape (εἶδος) alone resembling (ἐμφέρειαν) a human being (τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην σῶζον)*'⁴⁴⁴.

Literary descriptions of the life and the deeds of holy men and women provided powerful visual models. They could affect the everyday conduct and behaviour actually performed in society, in a manner similar to how the biographies of the philosophers and excellent men functioned for pagans. So, for example, the philosophers Proclus cared for the κοσμιότης (the conduct which included both inner and outward qualities) of his students *'not teaching by words alone but rather instructing them by his conduct throughout his life, and becoming as it were a prototype of discretion (προτύπωμα σοφροσύνης) to the rest'*⁴⁴⁵. The new religious and theological concerns and the authority gained by the saints gave even more power to their behaviour: they were *'profitable and useful, in as much as it encourages virtues and inspires imitation of the good (τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ μίμησις)*'. They were *'able to bring much pleasure, and to inspire a great love of virtue in souls that love God'*⁴⁴⁶. They provided a marvellous spectacle: so when Gregory Thaumaturgus raised the hands in prayer, staring at the sky and standing with the hands outstretched (καὶ τεταμέναις ταῖς χερσὶν ἐν ὀρθίῳ τῷ σχήματι), he gave example (ὑπόδειγμα) to a deacon who was looking at him⁴⁴⁷. The holy Matrona of Perge's miracles attracted a crowd so eager to see her that everybody *'trod one upon the other and stood on the tips of their toes in their attempt to get a glimpse of her'*⁴⁴⁸.

*'Any persons at that time derived profit merely from the sight of the blessed one and, goaded by divine longing, they began to live better lives. For the schema of that blessed and true servant of God was venerable (τὸ σχῆμα αἰδέσιμον), her speech accessible and conversation with her full of profit, and association with her gave pleasure in but a short time; in a word, one never had enough of seeing her, and upon thinking of her one was filled with longing'*⁴⁴⁹.

⁴⁴³ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa* VI, 8; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. I, pp. 356-357; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 142.

⁴⁴⁴ NIKETAS MAGISTROS, *Vita S. Theoktistae*, 17; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, IV (1925), 228; tr. HERO 1996, p. 110.

⁴⁴⁵ MARINUS, *Vita Procli*, 15; ed. SAFFREY and SEGONDS 2002, pp. 17-18; tr. EDWARDS 2000, p. 78.

⁴⁴⁶ *VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, RECENSION 3, 1*; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 39. Furthermore, the same Maximus affirms later that *'being tasted is proper to the saints (ἡ δοκιμὴ τῶν ἀγίων ἐστίν), so that through the suffering in people's lives may be shown their dispositions (διαθέσεις), which concern what is naturally good, (and) may show them at the same time their virtues, which are unknown to everyone (...)*'; *VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, RECENSION 3, 26*; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 87.

⁴⁴⁷ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Beati Gregorii*; ed. HEIL 1990, p. 48; tr. LEONE 1988, p. 85.

⁴⁴⁸ *VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, Vita Prima, 12*; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, III (1910), 797A-F; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁹ *VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, Vita Prima, 23*; ed. DELEHAYE 1910, col. 801E; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, pp. 41-42.

Matrona had a 'venerable and angelic schema (θεασάμεναι δὲ τὸ σεμνὸν ἐκεῖνο σχῆμα καὶ ἄγγελικὸν)⁴⁵⁰, similar to that displayed by the holy women who appeared to her in visions⁴⁵¹. At the beginning of the fifth century, the anthology collected by Palladius under the name of Lausiaca History (419ca) still referred to the *Eccli* 19:26-27 (or *LXXSir* 19:29-30) to underline the strength of the aspect of the holy man as a model for the reader⁴⁵². Remarkably, those lives of Egyptian ascetic monks and nuns were written in Constantinople and were intended to entertain (as 'wondrous exotica') as well as to exhort even the aristocrats of Theodosius II's court⁴⁵³.

The exceptional and supernatural dimension of the holy *schemata*, however, remained ultimately outside the range of the common man. They were 'marvellous holy men whose examples we, that are poor and vile, strive to imitate (μιμεῖσθαι), but cannot attain to the high level of the life of these heavenly citizens. Nevertheless, so far as is possible for our weakness and feeble power, we take the stamp of their lives (τὸν βίον ... χαρακτηρίζομεν) and wear their habit (τὸ σχῆμα περιβλήμεθα) even though we fail to equal their works'⁴⁵⁴.

The *schema* continued to play a central role as essential and visible element of recognition and identification also as at a more general level. Byzantine society was built not so much on individuals as on types. In society as well as in visual arts, indeed, the identity and the status of a character was signified and 'subsumed' through significant details which were deciphered by the beholder who, in turn, unleashed from the form the 'whole chains of extra-textual meaning'⁴⁵⁵. Physical appearance was part of a collective imagination (φαντασία) made of conventions necessary for the definition of the *ethos*, the identification (a 'written system of physical descriptions that focused on the identification of individuals through physical features', the εἰκονισμός, was employed to identify criminals, thieves, or fugitive slaves), and the recognition of the members of the community⁴⁵⁶. Different 'gestural categories' existed and every member of the community had to behave and publicly present their 'Self'

⁴⁵⁰ *VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, Vita Prima*, 38; ed. DELEHAYE 1910, col. 807E; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 53.

⁴⁵¹ Matrona dreamt of a house where she met a 'woman clothed in imperial garments and arrayed with all manner of beauty'. She approached her knees and was then sent by her to another house, greater in size and splendour (such houses were 'the Lord mansions in which those who lived good lives are deemed worthy to dwell'). Here she met other women 'marvellous in their attire and appearance (καὶ τῷ σχήματι καὶ τῇ εἰδέᾳ τεθαυμασμέναις)'; *VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, Vita Prima*, 49; DELEHAYE 1910, col. 811; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 61.

⁴⁵² PALLADIUS, *Historia Lausiaca*, prologue.16; ed. HÜBNER 2016, p. 92; tr. MEYER 1965, p. 29.

⁴⁵³ BALDWIN 1991b; KRUEGER 1996, p. 61. See also KRUEGER 2000, pp. 179-180.

⁴⁵⁴ *BARLAAM AND IOASAPH*, XII, 108-109; ed. and tr. WOODWARD and MATTINGLY (1914) 1967, pp. 182-183.

⁴⁵⁵ BRUBAKER 1989a, pp. 79-81. In iconography, this included the beard and the garment of a monk, the uncovered head of 'deviant' women like Mary Magdalene, and the red shoes and purple of Christ; *ibidem*. The recognition of a saint was especially a very complex system which encompassed inscriptions, face shapes and garments; GROTOWSKI 2010.

⁴⁵⁶ GROTOWSKI 2010, p. 137; HATZKI 2009, p. 11. For the origin of the *eikonismós* system in Hellenistic times and its developments, see DAGRON 1991, esp. pp. 25-27.

according to what was expected from their role, whatever this was defined by gender, social status, faith, or moral qualities. Their clothes (ἔσθητες) had to be ‘in keeping (ἀρμόζουσαι) with the person’s age, with the individual himself (προσώπῳ), the place, his character (φύσει), and occupation (ἐπιτηδεύμασιν)’⁴⁵⁷. The idea is well attested in the sixth century. The dialogue *On Political Science* clearly declared that in the military context it was a civic duty to care for apparent ‘minor points’ and ‘small things’, like the haircut or the form of the dress (τὴν ἔσθητα σχήματος). Indeed, ‘it will not be permissible for any of the other citizens to change (ἀμείβειν) from time to time the schema appropriate to their status (τὸ πρὸς ἀξίαν ἐκάστου ... σχῆμα)’⁴⁵⁸. Choricus of Gaza even wrote a declamation about the law that ordered ‘that a war-hero (τὸν ἀριστεα) be memorialized in a painting (γραφῆναι) with his proper schema (μετὰ τοῦ σχήματος)’⁴⁵⁹. Outstanding and shocking were the moments in which the boundaries got mixed up: Agathias described the consequences of an earthquake in Constantinople in 557, when women of both low status and high lineage ‘roamed about and mingled freely with the men’. On this occasion, commented the author, ‘the ordered structure of society (τάξις ἅπασα) with its due observance of decorum (αἰδῶς) and respect for privilege (ἡ τῶν γερῶν μεγαλαυχία) and the proper distinctions of rank (ὑπερανέχον καὶ ἀποκεκριμένον) was thrown into wild confusion and trampled underfoot’⁴⁶⁰. Women and men, pagans and Christians, virgins and prostitutes, citizens and barbarians, members of the elite and common citizens who filled the pages of narrative texts reflected and influenced the characteristics of those types.

Unworthy men and women not only used improperly their bodies. Even worse, they also slyly disguised their *schema*. We have seen the philosophical reflections attached to the meaning of *schema* as first and basic element given by God to allow perception and recognition, as well as its connotation as illusory element involved in the process of the *mimesis*. The use of *schemata* as an instrument of disguise was a serious matter. It involved the old tension felt between reality and appearance. Already Plutarch blamed the flatterer who faked his friendship by assuming the character and the outward appearance (ῥυθμίζει and σχηματίζει) of his victim in order to deceive him⁴⁶¹. According to

⁴⁵⁷ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.56.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 180; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 244. The proper (οἰκεία) dress (στολή) for a self-restrained man had to be ‘plain yet becoming and clean’ like that of soldiers, sailors and rulers; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.53.5; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 179; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 242.

⁴⁵⁸ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 4.58; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 11; tr. BELL 2009, p. 137. Bell translated here *schema* as ‘the style of the dress’, while Mazzucchi chose the more general term ‘abito’. In the text, *schema* appears also in its traditional military connotation as τοῦ πολέμου σχήματα and παρατάξεων σχηματισμούς; *ibidem*, IV, 10; IV, 16. For the platonic tradition which pervades the dialogue, especially the fifth chapter, see BELL 2009, pp. 54-58.

⁴⁵⁹ CHORICIUS OF GAZA, *Declamationes*, 11 (XL); ed. FOERSTER and RICHTSTEIG 1929, p. 479; tr. PAPIILLON 2009, p. 222. Choricus was questioning the possibility for a general who had defeated his enemy by dressing like a woman to be memorialized in this guise after his death.

⁴⁶⁰ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque* V, 3.7; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 167; tr. FRENDO 1975, p. 138.

⁴⁶¹ MESTURINI 2001, pp. 155-159; ch. VIII.

Athenaeus, an author of the second century widely read in Byzantium, the flatterer studied indeed the *schema* of his victims and ‘*mould his own appearance (ἀποπλάττεται) to theirs*’, becoming a ‘*chest of gestures (σχηματοθήκη)*’ like Proteus (the mythical creature of transformation and disguise)⁴⁶². Clement of Alexandria gave to the issue a theological meaning. He urged women to reform their *schemata* (here translated as ‘postures’), look (τὰ βλέμματα), gait (τὰ βαδίσματα) and speech (τὰς φωνάς), but not like as they were actors on stage, imitating the actions (ὑπόκρισιν) of the comedy, ‘*copying the swaying motions (κινήσεις) of the dancers*’, and acting ‘*as if they were on the stage (σκηνοβατοῦσιν), with the same sort of dainty gestures (τοῖς κινήμασιν τοῖς ἀβροῖς), supple bearing (τοῖς ὑγροῖς βαδίσμασιν), and artificial inflections (φωναῖς ταῖς πεπλασμένας), looking about languidly, assumed as an inducement to pleasure*’⁴⁶³. Pretending, like a clown, an outward *schema* (σχηματισθῆναι) and appearing (φαίνεσθαι) in contrast with the real being, is indeed ridiculous⁴⁶⁴. To deceive a bad interiority with a good looking and by transforming the *schema* (χατασχηματίζονται) with an artificial beauty (ὁ καλλωπισμός)⁴⁶⁵, turning the face (πρόσωπα) into a mask (προσωπεῖα)⁴⁶⁶, meant to ‘*disfigure the pattern by which men have been created to the image and likeness of God (τοῦς ‘κατ’εἰκόνα καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ)*’⁴⁶⁷. This means to upset Christ, who notoriously hated every deceit (τὸ ψεῦσμα)⁴⁶⁸. Liars and deceivers and all those who feigned their *schema* and counterfeited their bodies, showing off an outward appearance not conformed to their inner being, are despised therefore because they betrayed their divine image and misused a gift of God for a distorted, undignified, and miserable aim⁴⁶⁹. Gregory of Nazianzus also took a strong stand against altering the natural image given by God, like when an artist used fictitious colours to alter the reality or when an actress painted her faces. The most precious ornaments for a woman were indeed her behaviour, her inner light, the blush of her modesty and the paleness of her self-control (*enkráteia*)⁴⁷⁰. Silly women, on the contrary, were like those who claimed to be philosophers and were

⁴⁶² ATHENAEUS, *Deipnosophistae*, VI, 258a; ed. and tr. OLSON 2006, vol. III, pp. 184-185. Olson translated here *schema* as posture. Compendia of Athenaeus’ work were still produced in the twelfth century.

⁴⁶³ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.68.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p.186; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 251.

⁴⁶⁴ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 5.45.2-4; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 96; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 134. Clement is thinking here also to the exaggerated use of jests during the conversation.

⁴⁶⁵ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III.1.1-4; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, pp. 147-148; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 200.

⁴⁶⁶ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.11.2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 154; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 208.

⁴⁶⁷ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.66.2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 185; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 250. Furthermore, Clement asked, ‘*If Moses forbade his people to fashion any image (eikona) to take the place of God (Exod 20.4; Deut 5.8), is it right for these women to study their reflected images for no other reason that to distort the natural features of their faces?*’; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.12.1; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 154; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 208.

⁴⁶⁸ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.12.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 155; tr. by WOOD 1954, pp. 208-209.

⁴⁶⁹ CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 3.20.4-5; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 160; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 216 (quoting *Rm*8.28-30). Same instances are expressed also in reference to the effeminate, who in a similar way debased his divine image with a *schema* not proper to his gender.

⁴⁷⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 8.10; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 286-287.

elegant only in appearance: they resorted to colour and made a spectacle of themselves with their primping, but these good *schemata* made them ultimately deformed (δι' εὐσχημοσύνην ἀσχήμονες)⁴⁷¹. Macrina, sister and heroin of Gregory of Nyssa, also refused bodily artifices. She properly used her *schemata* even on her death bed: the fever prevented her to speak and she compensated for the lack of words with 'the trembling of her lips and the motion of her hands', so clear that everybody understood that 'she was continuing to pray'. In this way, 'she fulfilled her desire and moved her lips in keeping with the impulse within her'⁴⁷². The deceiver instead changed his *ethos* according to those whom he wants to mislead and hid his treachery under the mask of friendship (ἐν τῷ προσχήματι τῆς φιλίας), like an octopus who adapts his colour to that of the rock on which it adheres⁴⁷³. Invidious people performed (ὑποκρίνομαι or κατασχηματίζω) a *schema* of gentleness and moderation and presented, through an outward show (τῇ ὑποκρίσει), an appearance (τὸ δὲ φαινόμενον) apt to a friendly attitude (κατασχηματίζεται πρὸς τὸ φίλον)⁴⁷⁴.

Some used gestures and body performance to please and delight the masses⁴⁷⁵. Others feigned *schemata* to trick an honest character: two similar stories of Gregory of Nyssa and Theodoret of Cyrillus recounted how a group of liars tried to trick, respectively, St Gregory Thaumaturgus and St James. In both stories, the liars staged a 'comedy'⁴⁷⁶ in which one of them feigned to be dead in order to receive by the saint money for the funeral. They used *schemata* for their *mise-en-scène*⁴⁷⁷, but in a short while the *schema* became reality (ἀλήθειαν τὸ σχῆμα γεγεννημένον), the mask became a face (εἰς πρόσωπον τὸ προσωπεῖον μεταβληθέν), and the one who was performing actually died⁴⁷⁸.

The hiatus between exterior appearance and the inner actual disposition was indeed always revealed in the end. 'Those who feigned themselves (σχηματίζουσιν) and practice their movements' declared

⁴⁷¹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 18.23; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 450-451.

⁴⁷² GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita S. Macrinae*, 985; ed. CALLAHAN 1952, pp. 398-399, tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 181. The *topos* of the holy person who ends his life making prayer's gestures can be found also in Gregory of Nazianzus' description of Gregory the Elder, who died with words and gestures of prayer (ἐν τοῖς τῆς εὐχῆς ῥήμασι τε καὶ σχήμασιν); GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 18.38; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 470-471.

⁴⁷³ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, VII, 3.8-9; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 220-223.

⁴⁷⁴ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Beatitudinibus*, VII, 9; ed. CALLAHAN 1992, p. 157; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, p. 633. Cain, invidious of his brother, also assumed a friendly schema (φίλον ... σχῆμα) before him; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Beatitudinibus*, VII, 9; ed. CALLAHAN 1992, p. 159; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, p. 657.

⁴⁷⁵ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 43.64, ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 1100-1101.

⁴⁷⁶ Both Theodoret and the Nyssen employed a theatrical terminology: Theodoret repeatedly called the situation a 'drama' (δρᾶμα, i.e. a simulation but also a comedy) and the authors of the comedy as οἱ τὸ δρᾶμα συντεθηκότες, while the Nyssen referred to the act of deceiving as ὑπεκρίνατο.

⁴⁷⁷ In Nyssen's version, the trick was organized by two Jews: one feigned to be death by taking the *schema* of a dead person and assuming a supine position (ἐκτεταμένος τῷ σχήματι), while his accomplice imitated (ὑπεκρίνατο) the voice and feigned a lament (τὸν ἐσχηματισμένον θρήνον); GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Beati Gregorii*; ed. HEIL 1990, p. 42; tr. LEONE 1988, pp. 77-80.

⁴⁷⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Beati Gregorii*; ed. HEIL 1990, pp. 37-42; tr. LEONE 1988, pp. 77-80; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa*, I, 8-9; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. I, pp. 174-177; tr. GALLICO 1995, pp. 79-80. A similar story is included by Sozomen in the life of St Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII, 27, 4-5; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, pp. 210-213; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 396.

also Adamantius at the beginning of the fourth century, could be *'easily detected'* since they *'strive to imitate the walk and speech and look of a man'* but *'quickly revert to their own nature'*, especially in the moment of fear and distress⁴⁷⁹. Those who wanted to assume (ὑπεκρίνετο) a *schema* of humility, reported Gregory of Nazianzus, reclined their neck, lowered the voice, bent the face (προσώπων νεῦσις) and changed their way of walking (βαδίσματος ἦθος). Those physical devices, if not accompanied by a proper interiority, were all temporary and therefore quickly discovered. For all that is artificial is also unstable (πᾶν γὰρ ὁ προσποιητὸν οὐδὲ μόνιμον)⁴⁸⁰. The hidden passion of the invidious, stated the Nyssen, became visible (ἐνδιαφάνεται) in specific occurrences of the *schema* (τοῖς περὶ τὸ σχῆμα συμπτώμασιν), which included clear facial signs (διὰ τῶν φανερῶν τεκμηρίων περὶ τὸ πρόσωπον), the beating of the palms (συγκροτεῖς τὰς παλάμας) and the intertwining of the fingers (τοὺς δακτύλους συμπλέκεις)⁴⁸¹. In a Nyssen's famous story, the monkey of Alexandria was trained by a certain showman (τινα τῶν θαυματοποιῶν) to perform dancing *schemata* (ὄρχηστικῶς σχηματίζεσθαι)⁴⁸² wearing a dancer's mask (πρόσωπον ὄρχηστικόν) and a costume and twisting to the music with contorted gesticulations (ταῖς περιστροφαῖς). In this fashion, the monkey *'concealed his nature (τὴν φύσιν) by what he was doing and what he appeared to be (οἷς ἐποίει τε καὶ ἐφαίνετο)*⁴⁸³. The monkey provided a long-standing image of a disguised interiority⁴⁸⁴: it was indeed a mimicking (μιμητικόν) animal who *'does not laugh with its heart but only with its schemata (σχῆμασιν)*⁴⁸⁵. Gregory of Nazianzus even equated the Emperor Julian's imitation of Christian faith and customs to the imitation (μιμήματα) made by a monkey of human movements

⁴⁷⁹ ADAMANTIUS, *Physiognomica*, B38; ed. and tr. REPATH 2007, pp. 536-537 (based on the lost 2nd century *Physiognomy* of Polemo of Laodicea).

⁴⁸⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 18.23; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 450-451. The Nazianzus contrasted those attitudes with the real humility of Gregory the Old, which consisted in the disposition of his soul and the nobility of his life and thought.

⁴⁸¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Beatitudinibus*, VII, 9; ed. CALLAHAN 1992, p. 158; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, pp. 656-657.

⁴⁸² Callahan generally translated this expression as 'dance'. More appropriate seems Salvatore Lilla's translation as 'dancing movements'; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Professione Christiana*; ed. PG 46, col. 240, tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 82; tr. LILLA 1979, pp. 66-67. This passage stated also the negative connotation entailed into the derivative term *schematizei*, in a similar way as was for the concept of *gesticulatio* in Latin (SCHMITT (1990) 1999, p. 22 and *passim*). *Schematizei to keire* expressed the improper movement of the hands, but also and mostly the 'changing of shape' and the act of pretending an outward form not corresponding to the one given by nature.

⁴⁸³ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Professione Christiana*; ed. PG 46, col. 240; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 82; tr. LILLA 1979, pp. 66-67. For the use of the theatrical metaphor in order to allude to the risks into which a man can incur when there is a hiatus between being and appearing, and the effect of ridiculous which derived from this hiatus, see CISTARO 2009.

⁴⁸⁴ Vain women seemed like *'apes painted up with powder'* since *'the beauty within will turn out to be nothing more than a beast'*; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 2.5.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 150; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 203. For the monkey as a symbol of deceit, flatteries and mime acting, see *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, II 1576-1578. The proverb *'ape in purple'* (πίθηκος ἐν πορφύρα) referred for example to *'worthless people'* who could be *'finely dressed, nevertheless appear as wicked as they are'*; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, II 1581.

⁴⁸⁵ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Dialectica*, XV; ed. PG 94, col. 578B; tr. CHASE 1970, p. 46. Chase translates here *schemata* as 'features'.

(ἄνθρωπων κινήματα). Monkeys, he explained, reproduces some of man's gestures but are captured because their imitation cannot escape cleverness⁴⁸⁶. Also in Nyssen's anecdote, the real nature of the monkey was finally revealed: when a clever man threw some almonds onto the orchestra the monkey forgot the performance, thrust aside the mask (which was only a σεσοφισμένην μορφήν) and made the spectators laugh with its real ugly and ridiculous face. The story was inspired by Lucian of Samosata, who used a similar account to criticize the philosophers who taught for money against their publicly professed precepts⁴⁸⁷. Yet, the Nyssen turned this story into a warning for those used to display a Christian *schema* not conformed to the inner faith. As the assumed *schema* (τὸ σεσοφισμένον σχῆμα) was not enough for the monkey 'to be considered a man', declared indeed the Nyssen, also 'those individuals not truly shaping (μορφώσαντες) their own natures by faith will easily be disclosed in the toils of the devil as being something other than what they are called'⁴⁸⁸. They were 'actually something contrary to what we appear to be' and 'through pretense and imitation (διὰ μιμήσεως ἐσχηματισμένης), play the role of the Christian (τὸν Χριστιανισμόν ὑποκρίνονται)' under a false name (τῷ προσχήματι τοῦ ὀνόματος). Their mask of virtue will thus break in the very moment in which the devil will throw in front of them his 'almonds'⁴⁸⁹. At the time, reported also Eunapius, there were indeed men who claimed to be Christians, sometimes even assuming the *schema* of a bishop, in order to receive gifts: 'what they revealed was fiction (προσποίησις) and sham (πλάσις) designed to fool the enemies'⁴⁹⁰.

The most skilful user of deceptive *schemata*, however, was the devil, the 'prince of the simulators and the deceivers'⁴⁹¹. Demons were the most adaptable beings. They were bodiless (ἄσώματος) for their nature (φύσις) like God and the angels but used to appear to men in different shapes (an action variously referred with the derivational terms *schematizetai*, *metaschematizetai*, and *schematismós* (σχηματισμός)) for their diabolic purposes⁴⁹². The act of imitating (μιμεῖσθαι), explained indeed Theodoret commenting on a Pauline passage, is a habitual practice of demons. They were like false

⁴⁸⁶ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.112, ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 170-171.

⁴⁸⁷ The shorter version of Lucian (*Piscator* 36 and *Apologia* 5) generally referred to a Pyrrhic dance. It do not record any specific gestures or body's movements performed by the monkey, but only the vest, the mask, and the final disordered dance.

⁴⁸⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Professione Christiana*; ed. PG 46, coll. 240-242; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 82-83; tr. LILLA 1979, p. 67. Callahan generally translated *schema* as 'form'.

⁴⁸⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Professione Christiana*; ed. PG 46, col. 242; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 83; LILLA 1979, p. 68.

⁴⁹⁰ EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 48 (*Exc. de Sent.* 53); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁹¹ The biblical image of the devil as 'liar and father of lies' (Gv8.44) is widespread in literature. For the Devil as 'master of illusion (φαντασία)' who deceived pagans and Christians and blocked their access to heaven, see MANGO 1992, p. 216.

⁴⁹² LAMPE 1961-1968, pp. 1360; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Isaïam*, 5, 182-185, ed. GUINOT 1980, vol. II, pp. 80-81.

prophets and imitated the *schema* (τὸ σχῆμα μιμεῖσθαι) of angels to deceive (ἐξαπατᾶν) humans⁴⁹³. The devil can imitate (μιμούμενος) the figure (εἶδος) of a saint⁴⁹⁴ or can assume the likeness of a stranger or an animal in front of the holy hermit living in the desert. In the Lausiac History, ‘*the demon who mocks and deceives everyone* (ἐμπαίζοντος καὶ ἀπατῶντος δαίμονος)’ tried to induce the hermit Nathaniel to renounce his vow of solitude by staging a *mise-en-scène* (τοῦ δράματος) and by playing tricks through different *schemata* (σχηματίζεται)⁴⁹⁵. The demon could also use his *schemata* to disturb a holy monk absorbed in his work: John Moschos told the story of a demon disguised under the *schema* of a ‘*Saracen youth*’ who ‘*began to dance* (ὀρχεῖσθαι)’ in front of an ascetic elder. ‘*Do I dance well?*’, asked constantly the demon, in the attempt to interrupt the handwork and the psalms of the holy man and to instil doubt into his heart. The monk managed to make the demon disappear through the powerful gesture of prostration: once again a struggle of *schemata* was played between the monk who properly used his hands and his voice for handworks, psalms, and prayer, and the demon, who disfigured his body with the dance and tried to profit from the attractive power of dances to confuse his enemy⁴⁹⁶. In the romance of Barlaam and Ioasaph, the devil still terrified Ioasaph by means of several *schemata* (a black man, a man with a drawn sword, and all manner of beasts). ‘*I know thee, deceiver* (ἀπατεῶν)’, cried Ioasaph. He accused the devil of devising mischief against mankind ‘from the beginning’, and then proclaimed that his *schema* is ‘*becoming* (προσῆκόν) *and right proper* (οἰκειότατον)’ since it displays his bestial nature and hurtful intentions⁴⁹⁷.

Theatrical performances and spectacles have long provided the perfect context in which the devil could hide his horrific nature and bring honest men to perdition. The act of attending spectacles was like to be physically possessed by the bestiality of the demons⁴⁹⁸, a madness which started when the Pretor let fall the *mappa* (also defined a *diaboli figura*)⁴⁹⁹. ‘*Renounce to the devil with all his pomp*’, urged the priest to the newly born Christian during the baptism, a statement which was understood as an urge to avoid public shows and theatrical spectacles full of obscene gestures⁵⁰⁰. Here indeed the devil

⁴⁹³ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio Epistolae ad Corinthios*, 2Cor11,13-15; PG 82, col. 441; tr. HILL 2001, vol. I, pp. 289-290.

⁴⁹⁴ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa*, XXI, 24; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. II, pp. 106-107; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 232.

⁴⁹⁵ PALLADIUS, *Historia Lausiaca*, ch. 16, 2; 16,4; ed. HÜBNER 2016, pp. 136-138; tr. MEYER 1965, pp. 52-53.

⁴⁹⁶ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, ch. 160; ed. PG 87.3, col. 3028; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 132.

⁴⁹⁷ BARLAAM AND IOASAPH, XXXVII, 341-342; tr. WOODWARD and MATTINGLY (1914) 1967, p. 568-571.

⁴⁹⁸ For example, a woman once returned back from the theatre possessed by the devil, and the latter explained how this happened with full justice because she went into his own domain; TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, XXVI, 1-2; ed. and tr. TURCAN pp. 292-295. For a comparison between the impact on the audience provided by the theatre and the demonic possession as a statement of the power of performers in late Antiquity, see WEBB 2008, *passim*, esp. p. 142. See also WEBB 2008, pp. 33-35; pp. 161-162.

⁴⁹⁹ TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, XVI, 2-3; ed. and tr. TURCAN 1986, pp. 232-235.

⁵⁰⁰ CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catecheses mystagogicae quinque*, I, 6; ed. PIÉDAGNEL 1988, p. 92; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, p. 327, 2112.

guided the souls of those present toward unhealthy passions and the loss of self-control⁵⁰¹. They were ‘assemblies filled with much disorder and sin (ἀταξίας καὶ παρανομίας)’ where ‘man and women meet promiscuously just to look at one another’ without inhibition⁵⁰² and where actors and mimes directed all their attention at their outward appearance, caring only about seeing and being seen⁵⁰³. The spectacles’ flattering and persuasive visual apparatus made them dangerous especially for the eyes and the ears, which were the keepers of the soul⁵⁰⁴. The pleasure (*per voluptatem*) they elicited, explained also Novatian in the third century, was a device used by the *diabolus artifex* to attract the eyes (*oculos movet*), to wheedle the ears, and to cover the ugliness of their otherwise repulsive demonic and pagan nature⁵⁰⁵. In the end, it was the audience’s sight which gave power to an otherwise nonsense display of gestures and bodies. And if the onlooker was removed ‘it will remain only the futility (*vanitatem*)’⁵⁰⁶.

The gestures performed in such a context perverted therefore both the souls of the performers (who represented on stage the lustful and disordered nature of the pagan gods⁵⁰⁷ and performed shameless physical movements which debased their body and made it an instrument of the devil instead of God who has created it⁵⁰⁸) and those of the onlookers as well, especially ignorant and young people⁵⁰⁹. There was no way for those who supported the charioteers and for those who contemplated the shameful but still attractive gestures of the pantomime to maintain their *decorum* and their self-control. In the ‘folly of the theatre (θεατρομανία)’, Christians watched ‘the obscene gestures of the actors (αἱ ἀσελγεῖς εἰσι τῶν μίμων ὄψεις) accompanied by mockery and all kinds of indecencies

⁵⁰¹ TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, esp. ch. IV; ch. XXIV; ed. and tr. TURCAN 1986, pp. 114-121; pp. 282-285.

⁵⁰² CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.76.4; 77.1-2; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 191; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 257-258. On the out of control rhythm of harps, choruses and dances, see CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 4.40; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, pp. 92-93; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 130.

⁵⁰³ TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, XXV, 1-3; ed. and tr. TURCAN 1986, pp. 284-287.

⁵⁰⁴ TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, I, 1 ; VII; XV; XVII, 5; ed. and tr. TURCAN 1986, pp. 74-75; pp. 144-155; pp. 224-231; pp. 238-249.

⁵⁰⁵ NOVATIAN, *De Spectaculis*, IV, 5; ed. and tr. SAGGIORO 2001, pp. 68-69. See also Clement, for whom ‘we would avoid pleasures that merely fascinate the eye or the ear’ and ‘everything immodest that strikes the senses (for this is an abuse of the senses)’; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, II, 4.41.3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, p. 93; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 130.

⁵⁰⁶ NOVATIAN, *De Spectaculis*, VIII, 2; ed. and tr. SAGGIORO 2001, pp. 76-77. This was a commonplace topic in literature; SAGGIORO 2001, p. 24.

⁵⁰⁷ TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, X, 3-9; ed. and tr. TURCAN 1986, 184-193.

⁵⁰⁸ ‘From dancing demon to the demon-dancer the step is short’, remarkably declared also Ruth Webb, commenting on the connection between the constant changes of role performed by both actors and demons; WEBB 2008, pp. 163-165. On the widespread contempt toward movements performed in the context of secular performances in Late Antiquity, especially in the work of John Chrysostom for whom ‘where there is dancing, the devil is also here. For God did not give us feet for this purpose, but for us to leap like camels’, see also MAXWELL 2006a, p. 159; PASQUATO 1976.

⁵⁰⁹ TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, XVII, 5; XXI, 2; ed. and tr. TURCAN 1986, pp. 238-245; pp. 264-265. In the sixth century Agathias still blamed the turbulence and the ‘profound disturbing effect’ that chariot races had on the mind of young people, who dissipated energies and wasted substance ‘on wild escapades (πρὸς κινήσεις ἀλόγους)’ and ‘are readily attracted to such follies unless they are distracted and kept busy at some worthwhile occupation’; AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque* V, 21.4; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 191; tr. FRENDO 1975, p. 157.

(ἀσχημοσύναις), the ‘raging dances of effeminate men’, and all the ‘spectacles (τὸ ἐμμανὲς θέαμα) that destroy the souls (ψυχὰς ἐκτραχηλίζον)’⁵¹⁰. They also actively manifested, in turn, their participation in races with an irrational fervour (ἀλόγῳ τινὶ προθυμίᾳ) in their gestures and voice (φωνῇ τε καὶ σχήματι)⁵¹¹. The act of listening to and miming (μιμουμένουσ) the corrupted melodies played by the cithara and flute players had the power to lead the soul to unworthy behaviour (ἀσχημονεῖν). Some maniacs of the horse races (τινες τῶν ἵππομανούντων) obsessed by this folly (φαντασίαις) went so far as to repeat in their dreams the gestures of the chariot racers⁵¹². And since the bodily postures and gestures of the dancers were strictly related with their emotions and mental dispositions (the διάθεσις), the onlookers who shared (συνδιατίθεσθαι) them also assumed the dancer’s state of mind, experiencing a ‘potentially disturbing and corrupting’ ‘sympathetic emulation’ of both gestures and feelings⁵¹³.

Also, dancers, actors and pantomimes shared with demons the same ability to perform and change *schemata*. In her work on non-verbal communication in Late Antiquity theatre, Ruth Webb clearly unveiled this link and quoted a passage from a commentary on Isaiah traditionally attributed to Basil of Caesarea. The author established a parallel between the dancer who constant changed role and played various characters and the demon who constantly changed movements and wore different masks to inspire sinful thoughts and feelings⁵¹⁴. Furthermore, the extraordinary technical and physical ability of pantomime dancers (who were still operating at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries)⁵¹⁵ went beyond the spectator’s normal experience and was placed ‘in the category of the marvellous and the unnatural’⁵¹⁶. The pantomime was seen as a ‘many-faced’ and deceiving being, who used his art and his body like a cuttlefish, an octopus, a Proteus. He relied on the power of *schemata* like a demon to move the audience and to rise questions of identity and ‘concerns about the

⁵¹⁰ CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catecheses mystagogicae quinque*, I, 6; ed. PIÉDAGNEL 1988, p. 92; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, p. 327, 2112.

⁵¹¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Moysis*, I, 1 (proemium); ed. MUSURILLO 1964, pp. 1-2; tr. SIMONETTI 1984, p. 7.

⁵¹² BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, IV, I.1-3; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 106-107; n. pp. 342-343. On the active participation required by the audience during the wrestling spectacles, see BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, VI, I.1; I.3; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 164-165; n. p. 362.

⁵¹³ WEBB 2008, pp. 85-87; pp. 93-94. In general, anyway, the actor ultimately maintained his own identity and changed his *schema* only for the sake of spectacle.

⁵¹⁴ WEBB 2008, pp. 163-164.

⁵¹⁵ Zosimus, for example, complained about the fact that παντόμιμος ὄρχησις, introduced at the times of Augustus, were still present in his days as ‘the cause of many evils’; ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, I, 6.1; ed. PASCHOUD 1971, vol. I, p. 13; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 3. See also WEBB 2008, p. 147.

⁵¹⁶ WEBB 2008, pp. 148-150. The physical demands of the profession were still recognized: actors, explained Artemidorus, must possess technical skills and strength, in a way not different than other professions like sailors, carpenters and fishermen; ARTEMIDORUS, *Oneirocriticon*, I, 42; I, 76; ed. PACK 1963, p. 48; pp. 81-83; tr. WHITE 1975, p. 37; pp. 55-56. The world of mime and pantomime was indeed a highly sophisticated ‘art of corporeal communication’; WEBB 2008, p. 85. Recent research in the Graeco-Roman field has also focused on the physicality of acting, shifting from the dominant ‘logocentric’ point of view to one that looked at both texts and bodies as criteria of quality for comedies and tragedies; VALAKAS 2002.

vulnerability and malleability of human nature'⁵¹⁷. Actors and mimes indeed not only used their bodies to silently express passions and feelings but also disguised their *schemata* to embody a variety of characters and social roles. They staged stories by carrying *schemata* and *prosopa* (ὑποδύοντες σχήματά τε καὶ πρόσωπα), explained the Nyssen, and adapted (σχηματίσαντες) the space to the representation of the facts⁵¹⁸.

In the theatrical context, the *schema* had been long considered alongside terms such as στάσις and σχέσις as the fixed and momentary iconic pose (usually linked with the familiar poses seen in visual art) assumed by the dancer between two dynamic movements. It was likely underlined by 'dramatic changes in the tempo of the accompanying music' and counterposed in 'aesthetic contrast' to the dynamic flow of movements (designated by the terms φορά and κίνησις). So, for example, Libanius linked the posture assumed by the pantomime with an image (*eikon*) and that of the dancer with a statue, while Plutarch declared that the dancers 'pause, composing their bodies in the pose of' gods 'as if in a picture'⁵¹⁹. Yet, the actor did not just perform slow and lingering movements or fixed postures only: he was just like a 'living statue' and his *schema* entailed also a dynamic dimension made of lively movements. Professional dancers were physically trained to use even the smallest movements of their hands and fingers: the dancing girl (ὄρχηστριδα) of Asia grieved by Automedon at the turn of the first century was able to execute (κινυμένην) '*lascivious postures* (κακοτέχνους σχήμασιν) *quivering from her tender fingertips* (ἐξ ἀπαλῶν ... ὀνύχων)', and to '*express all variations of passion* (πάντα παθαίνεται) by moving '*her pliant arms* (βάλλει τὰς ... χέρας) *so softly* (ἀπαλῶς) *this way and that*'⁵²⁰. The *schema* of the mourning (τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ θους) involved movements of the whole body: commenting on the biblical statement 'Zaion stretched out her hands' (*Lam* 1:17), Theodoret explained for example that grieving women '*normally extended and withdraw their hands* (καὶ ἐκτείνειν, καὶ συστέλλειν τὰς χειρᾶς)⁵²¹. Already Artemidorus stated that '*a dancer performs the same actions as a person who is beating his head in mourning* (τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ τῷ κοπτομένῳ καὶ ὁ ὀρχούμενος

⁵¹⁷ WEBB 2008, pp. 64-66. While the mime was often depicted with empathy, even with affection, the pantomime emerged as mysterious and dangerous being 'more readily identified with the demonic, partly because of the roles he played, but essentially because of his constant transmutation'; WEBB 2008, p. 143. See also *ibidem*, pp. 161-162.

⁵¹⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Epistula* IX.1; ed. PASQUALI 1959, p. 39; tr. CRISCUOLO 1981, p. 101. Criscuolo remarkably recognized here the different possibilities in translating the terms σχήματά (as 'dresses', but also as 'form', 'figure', 'attitude'), and πρόσωπα (as 'masks' or 'character'), so that the sentence could be translated both as 'dressing clothes and masks' as well as 'assuming manner and parts'. He decided anyway to render the vagueness of the author by translating 'acconciatisi in figura dei personaggi'; CRISCUOLO 1981, n. 3, p. 101.

⁵¹⁹ WEBB 2008, p. 70.

⁵²⁰ AUTOMEDON in *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA*, V, 129; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1953, vol. I, pp. 188-191. The dancer was praised by Automedon not so much for those abilities (οὐχ ὅτι), but rather (οὐδ' ὅτι) for her physical sexual performances. The *schemata* could indeed refer also to sexual positions, as well testified by a witty wordplay with the rhetorical *schemata* included in an epigram of Lucilius in the first century AD; LUCILIUS in *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA*, XI, 139; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1953, vol. IV, pp. 384-385.

⁵²¹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Lamentationes, Lam*1.17; ed. PG 81:785; tr. HILL 2006, vol. I, p. 184.

πάσχει τε καὶ δρᾶ')⁵²². And Athenaeus recounted that the philosopher Theophrastus was used to take a seat in school and 'deal with the day's topic (διατίθεσθαι τὸν λόγον), using every sort of gesture and expression (οὐδεμιᾶς ἀπεχόμενον κινήσεως οὐδὲ σχήματος). Once when he was imitating a glutton', for example, 'he stuck out his tongue and licked his lips'⁵²³. In fact, *schemata* could communicate the meaning of a spectacle like and even better than words: tragedies used figures of dance (σχήματα ὀρχηστικά) and dancers could illustrate 'what was said with hand-gestures (ταῖς χερσὶ τὰ λεγόμενα δεικνύς)⁵²⁴; the dancer Pylades, in the first century BC, could also put on (ἐνέδου) 'the divinity of the frenzied god' Bacchus with 'hands that can utter everything (ὁ παμφώνοις χερσὶ λοχεύομενος)⁵²⁵. Ruth Webb provided a rich range of descriptions of dancers and pantomimes who used physical movements to embody stories, emotions, and even abstract ideas 'with an immediacy that the orator could only envy'⁵²⁶.

The audience had also, in turn, to decode and understand movements and bodily allusions 'just as they did when viewing and interpreting works of visual art'. The pantomime could captivate and seduce even an outsider, but 'the full appreciation of the precise quality and timing of the movement, and the reading of the full range of mimetical action' came only from previous knowledge of the story and the 'gestural language'. Despicable were the people who came to theatres without knowledge of the art of declamation only to look at the gesticulating actors. Besides, the most cultivated spectators were able to recognize when an actor transgressed the laws of art⁵²⁷. Eunapius provides a good example of the difficulties faced by a tragic actor who was exiled during the reign of Nero and was forced to display his art in front of an untrained audience made out of 'men half barbarian': only after he openly explained the functioning of his theatrical devices could the audience appreciate the spectacle and the skilful modulation of the performer's voice, to the point that they even reproduced and debased the songs through the streets⁵²⁸.

Through masks and costumes but also through a vast range of movements, mimes, actors and pantomimes achieved the sudden transformations in the characters, gender and social roles required by the story⁵²⁹. Ruth Webb explained well how he did not imitate everyday life but rather 'an idea of

⁵²² ARTEMIDORUS, *Oneirocriticon*, I, 76; ed. PACK 1963, p. 82; tr. WHITE 1975, p. 55.

⁵²³ ATHENAEUS, *Deipnosophistae*, I, 21a-b; ed. and tr. OLSON 2006, vol. I, pp. 114-115. Athenaeus stated that this statement came from Hermippus.

⁵²⁴ ATHENAEUS, *Deipnosophistae*, I, 21e-f; ed. and tr. OLSON 2006, vol. I, pp. 118-121. Olson translated σχήματα ὀρχηστικά as 'dance-steps'.

⁵²⁵ ANTIPATER OF THESSALONICA in *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA (Planudean Appendix)*, XVI, 290; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1953, vol. V, pp. 332-335.

⁵²⁶ WEBB 2008, p. 85. See, for example, the description wrote in the second century by Fronto of actors who embodied different characters through gestures, postures and dresses. Or the later description of Nonnus, in the fourth-fifth century, for whom the dancers 'draw' the characters with their hands; WEBB 2008, p. 81.

⁵²⁷ WEBB 2008, p. 28; pp. 83-87.

⁵²⁸ EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 48 (*Exc. de Sent.* 52); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 72-75.

⁵²⁹ WEBB 2008, pp. 64-71.

that life, making use of a set of cultural images of human types and patterns of situations'⁵³⁰. The pantomime Chrysomallus, lamented for example in a sepulchral epigram Paul the Silentary, was able to 'figure' (εἰκόνας) through 'mute gestures' (νεύμασιν ἀφθόγγοισι) 'men of old time in dumb shows'. Now his body was 'bound in brazen silence (σιγῆς τὸ χάλκεον)' and he was no longer able to delight his audience⁵³¹. Dancers, explained also Cassidorus, used 'speaking hands (loquacissimae manus)', 'fingers that are tongues (linguosi digiti)', 'clamorous silence (silentium clamosum)' and 'silent exposition (expositio tacita)' to represent human doings. The pantomime actor, who 'derives his name from manifold imitations', especially used 'the hand of meaning (sensuum manus)' and 'a code of gestures (per signa composita)' to expound a song, to instruct the spectators, or to portray different roles (a god, a woman, a king, a soldier, an old or a young man), so well that the audience could imagine 'that in one man there were many, differentiated by such a variety of impersonation (imitatione)'⁵³². More in detail Choricus of Gaza explained that mime actors imitated (μιμοῦνται) numberless *schemata* to play different roles or human types, like the master, the servant, the cook, the babbling child, the young lover, and the infuriated man⁵³³. In this way, he charmed the stage (θέλγοντα τὴν σκηνήν) and persuaded the audience 'not that he is representing something (μιμεῖται), but that he actually is (πέφυκε) what he is representing (τοῦτο ὃ δὴ μιμεῖται)'⁵³⁴.

A peculiar nature had the act of performing the role of a Christian, which was felt as having supernatural and powerful consequences going 'beyond the immediate time and space of the show': the pagan actors Genesios and Porphyry, for example, performed a mockery of the Christian baptism but were ultimately converted, so that they obliterated the mime's body and 'the autonomy of his act'⁵³⁵. Body's limbs were the actors' main professional instruments: so, to dream of not having hands 'is inauspicious for sailors, dancers, and jugglers since they are unable to perform (ἐργάζεσθαι) without them'⁵³⁶. In the sixth-seventh centuries, John Moschos reported the story of a mime who 'performed at the theatre an act (ἐθεάτριζεν) in which he blasphemed against the holy Mother of God'. He was put out of order by the Virgin who appeared to him in his sleep and, without saying nothing (μηδὲν λέγουσα), severed (διεχάραξεν) his hands and feet together with her fingers. When

⁵³⁰ WEBB 2008, p. 104.

⁵³¹ PAUL THE SILENTARY in *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA*, VII, 563; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1953, vol. II, pp. 302-303.

⁵³² CASSIODORUS, *Variae*, IV, 51.8-9; ed. MOMMSEN 1894, pp. 138-139; tr. BARNISH 1992, pp. 80-81. The Muse Polymnia had discovered indeed that 'humans could declare their meaning (suum velle) even without speech'; *ibidem*. Cassidorus also lamented that in 'the succeeding age' the ancient art of the mime spectacle had been corrupted by obscenities; CASSIODORUS, *Variae*, IV, 51.9; ed. MOMMSEN 1894, p. 139; tr. BARNISH 1992, p. 81. See also WEBB 2008, pp. 64-65.

⁵³³ CHORICIUS OF GAZA, *Apologia Mimorum* 110-111; ed. FOERSTER and RICHTSTEIG 1929, p. 369; tr. BERNABÒ 2004-2005. For the employment of the verb *schematizei* to refer to the act of playing roles in the theatres, see also CHORICIUS OF GAZA, *Declamationes*, 11 (XL), 29; ed. FOERSTER and RICHTSTEIG 1929, p. 485; tr. PAPILLON in PENELLA 2009, p. 227.

⁵³⁴ CHORICIUS OF GAZA, *Dialexeis*, 12 (XXI), 1; ed. FOERSTER and RICHTSTEIG 1929, 248; tr. PENELLA 2009, p. 45.

⁵³⁵ WEBB 2008, p. 122.

⁵³⁶ ARTEMIDORUS, *Oneirocriticon*, I, 42; ed. PACK 1963, p. 48; tr. WHITE 1975, p. 37.

the man woke up and found himself unable to walk, he ‘*confessed to everybody (making himself a public example) that he had received the reward for his blasphemy*’⁵³⁷.

The problems around the act of assuming a disguised *schema* and manipulating the body could be overcome without issues only by a specific ‘gestural category’, that is that of the holy men and women. Their hard physical training allowed them to dominate and perfectly rule their souls and their bodies. Therefore, they could manipulate also their outward appearance and the public *schemata* expected from their social condition. The phenomenon of the hidden saint was a peculiar form of Christian asceticism widespread since the fourth century that engaged men and women in disguising their *schemata* and hiding their holiness and superior nature under a different moral or social status. So the coalman Alexander presented himself dirty and with the face covered with coal and almost managed to hide his dignity under this dismissed *schema*⁵³⁸. A soldier in Alexandria, recounted John Moschos, was used to wear a rough cloak and spend his time in a monastery, only to return back to the military *schema* (στρατιωτικὸν σχῆμα) and his duty every day at the ninth hour⁵³⁹. A saint could pretend to be a slave and sell himself to a group of actor, like the monk Serapion in the Lausiac History⁵⁴⁰, or he could even assume the identity of an actor himself: Theophilus and Maria in the story of John of Ephesus assumed the *schema* of, respectively, a mime (σχῆμα μῖμος) and a courtesan (σχῆμα πόρνη) to deceive the citizens of Amida⁵⁴¹. Holy fools spent their life behaving and performing insane and ‘out-of-norm’ gestures to follow the Pauline commands to be foolish for Christ’s sake and to avoid any kind of praise or self-esteem. Leontius of Neapolis wrote in the prosperous and culturally diversified Cyprus of the middle of the seventh century an account of the life of the sixth-century saint Symeon of Emesa: as well as his other work, the Life of the patriarch John the Almsgiver, this story is characterized by a peculiar taste for the active performance of bodies, described in detail. The popular Life of Andrew the Fool is also a ‘historical fiction’ written by the priest Nikephoros of St Sophia in the tenth century under the pretence of writing in the middle of the sixth century, about a story happened in the fifth century (before the Council *in Trullo*). This text testified further developments in the way in

⁵³⁷ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, ch. 47; ed. PG 87.3:2901; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 38.

⁵³⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Beati Gregorii*; ed. HEIL 1990, p. 37-39; tr. LEONE 1988, pp. 74-77.

⁵³⁹ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, ch.73; ed. PG 87.3:2925; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 56. In this case, the *schema* has to be understood as the ‘uniform’, since the author himself specified that he meant the clothes (τὰ ἱμάτια).

⁵⁴⁰ PALLADIUS, *Historia Lausiaca*, ch. 37.2-4; ed. HÜBNER 2016, p. 234; tr. MAYER 1965, pp. 105-106. Leontius of Neapolis recorded that the story was read by John the Almsgiver for inspiration in his deeds; LEONTIUS OF NEAPOLIS, *Vita S. Ioannis Eleemosynarii*, 22; ed. and tr. FESTUGIÈRE 1974, p. 372 (p. 476); tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, p. 232.

⁵⁴¹ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Vitae Sanctorum Orientalium*, 52, ed. and tr. BROOKS 1925, pp. 164-179. See also KRUEGER 1996, p. 69; IVANOV 2006, pp. 95-98. In the night, they returned back to their holy *schema* and spent the night praying and continuously repeating the movements of standing toward east, stretching out their arms in the form of a cross, and falling upon the faces.

which the holy fool played with his body and *schemata* and in the undertones connected with body's movements⁵⁴².

The 'harlots of the Desert' were sinner women or actress who followed the model of Mary Magdalene and acted their repentance by renouncing their beauty and their womanliness and by spending their life in the desert. Transvestite women assumed the appearance of monks, going against the attributes and the behaviour expected from their gender⁵⁴³. In the oldest version of Life of Mary (the *Vita Antiqua*, close to the original one written likely around the early sixth-mid seventh century in Syria), the saint declared her decision to assume the *schema* of a man (ἀνδρεῖον σχῆμα ἐνδουσαμένη / ἐνδύσας αὐτὴν ἀνδρεῖον σχῆμα)⁵⁴⁴: not only she wore the monastic clothes (ἱμάτια), cut her hair and changed her name to Marinos⁵⁴⁵. Since 'the apparel, far more than physique, identified a person', she also underwent through 'a rite of passage which elaborated personal transformation, from one status to another' and changed her conduct⁵⁴⁶. In the early fifth century St Matrona of Perge, the abbess of a convent in Constantinople who opposed emperor Anastasius' Monophysite policy⁵⁴⁷, disguised herself for three years in the male monastery of Bassianos. She took the *schema* of a eunuch (εἰς εὐνοῦχον μετασχηματισθεῖσα)⁵⁴⁸ and displayed (ἐπιδειξαμένης) 'the traits of holy men'⁵⁴⁹.

⁵⁴² RYDÉN 1981; RYDÉN 1990; KRUEGER 1996; KRUEGER 2000; IVANOV 2006. The most notable examples of Holy Fools included: EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 21; ed. BIDEZ 1898, pp. 31-32; tr. WHITBY 2000, pp. 51-52; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* III, 16.11; ed. BIDEZ 1996, p. 154; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 296; LEONTIUS OF NEAPOLIS, *Vita Symeoni Sali*; ed. and tr. FESTUGIÈRE 1974; NIKEPHOROS THE PRIEST, *Vita Andreae Sali*; ed. and tr. RYDÉN 1995. See also the *CANONS OF THE QUINISEXT COUNCIL IN TRULLO*, 60; ed. OHME 2013, p. 6 (title); p. 47; tr. NEDUNGATT and FEATHERSTONE 1995, p. 140. The chronology of the Life of Andrew had been long debated, until Lennart Rydén managed to discard the hypothesis of the late seventh century proposed by Mango and the one of the seventh-eighth century proposed by Ševčenko, setting the date of composition around 980 AD; RYDÉN 1995, vol. II, p. 25; pp. 41-56. This date is also accepted by Ivanov; IVANOV 2006, p. 157. On the fictional elements employed by the author and the anachronism in which he occasionally slipped, see RYDÉN 1995, vol. I, pp. 23 ff.; p. 39.

⁵⁴³ According to Anson, those episodes testified 'a deep-seated hatred of the flesh and a longing for purity', and the disguise was a way through which the saint identified herself 'with an androgynous Christ'; ANSON 1974. For the hagiographical literature concerned with female martyrs, penitent cross-dresser, nun, abbess and pious wife, see CONSTANTINOU 2005. For the employment of archetypal models of female behaviour in the narrative of John Skylitzes, this time specifically associated with the descriptions of empresses, see STRUGNELL 2006.

⁵⁴⁴ *VITA SANCTAE MARIAE/SANCTI MARINI*, 3; ed. RICHARD 1975, 88.24; tr. CONSTAS 1996, p. 7. Constas did not give credit to the proper meaning of *schema* and translated it merely as 'clothing'. Richard's French translation more properly render the term as 'costume d'homme'; RICHARD 1975, p. 95.

⁵⁴⁵ *VITA SANCTAE MARIAE/SANCTI MARINI*, 4, ed. RICHARD 1975, 88.27-28; tr. CONSTAS 1996, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁶ HERRIN 1983, p. 179, quoted also in N. CONSTAS, introduction to *The Life and Conduct of the Blessed Mary*, in TALBOT 1996, p. 5. 'Take heed how you conduct yourself (πῶς διατηρήσεις ἐαυτήν)' warned her the father; *VITA SANCTAE MARIAE/SANCTI MARINI*, 4, ed. RICHARD 1975, 88.29-30; tr. CONSTAS 1996, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁷ The *Vita Prima* had been likely written shortly after the events, in the middle of the sixth century, following an earlier source. It had been preserved in an eleventh-century manuscript; C. MANGO, Introduction to *Life of St. Matrona of Perge*, in TALBOT 1996, pp. 13-16. This version had been followed then by the *Vita Altera* of Symeon Metaphraste.

⁵⁴⁸ *VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, Vita Prima*, 4; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, III (1910), 792B; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 22.

⁵⁴⁹ *VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, Vita Prima*, 1; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, III (1910), 790B; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 18.

Here, too, the changing of the *schema* involved a deep personal transformation of both the body and the soul: '(...) *I dressed as and transformed into a man* (μεταμφιασαμένην καὶ σχηματισθεῖσαν εἰς ἄνδρα) (...)', explained Matrona herself when she was discovered, by putting off her female attire (στολήν), by cutting her hair, and '*becoming a man both in garb and purpose* (καὶ τῷ σχήματι καὶ τῇ προαιρέσει)', '*a eunuch in appearance* (εὐνοῦχος ὀρώμενος) *and Babylas by name*'⁵⁵⁰. Matrona was trying to escape from an abusive husband, who in turn is characterized by a deceitful *schema* (μετασχηματίζω) charged with a highly negative connotation: he tried to gain access to her by '*making a pretence* (πλαττόμενος) *of supplication and cloaking* (προσχήματι) *his plot in the guise of reverence*'. As usual, his identity was revealed in the end: Matrona was able to recognize him from a description of '*his appearance* (τό σχῆμα) *and stature* (τήν θέσιν αὐτοῦ πᾶσαν) *and his manner* (ἐκ τῶν σχημάτων)'⁵⁵¹. The devil also approached the saint and assumed two different *schemata* according to the kind of speeches he wanted to perform: a first time '*transforming* (μετασχηματίσας) *himself* into a beautiful and noble woman, he uttered a tempting speech full of flattery (θωπείας). After a few days he appeared '*in the same guise*' (ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ σχήματι)⁵⁵², and finally assumed (ἀναλαβών) '*the form* (σχῆμα)' of a threatening old and ugly woman with fiery eyes⁵⁵³.

Until this point, we have seen the theological and moral values attached to the physical appearance and bodily movements and their impact on the descriptions of good and bad characters in narrative. They were effective literary devices to underline the characteristics of specific categories of people, who in turn were likely influenced by those recounts to proper act and behave in society. We have seen how *schema* and *schemata* generally functioned as a tool for the identification of the different 'types' upon which society was built, and how serious was felt the misuse and the disguise of the physical appearance. We have also seen the peculiar use of gestures and bodies as instruments of the theatrical performance and as instruments used by saints on the path to holiness. Let us turn now to the use of gestures and postures in the performative practices of society.

⁵⁵⁰ VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, *Vita Prima*, 8; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, III (1910), 794E-F; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 27.

⁵⁵¹ VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, *Vita Prima*, 12; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, III (1910), 797A-B; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 32.

⁵⁵² VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, *Vita Prima*, 17; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, III (1910), 798F-799B; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 36.

⁵⁵³ VITA SANCTAE MATRONAE, *Vita Prima*, 18; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, III (1910), 799B; tr. FEATHERSTONE 1996, p. 37.

4. ROLE AND RATIONALE OF BODIES AND SCHEMATA IN RHETORICAL AND LITURGICAL SYSTEMS

A gesture was the best way to strengthen, underline or even substitute a word. Physical movements were employed by those unable or unwilling to use the voice: a mute or a child, explained, for example, Artemidorus, *'rely upon gestures (διανεύση) to convey his meaning (σημαίνειν)'*⁵⁵⁴. And when the philosopher-sage Apollonius of Tyana imposed on himself a five years ritual silence (ἡ σιωπή)⁵⁵⁵, he did not become *'socially unattractive (ἄχαρις)*'. He continued to charm his interlocutor in a conversation by indicating (ἐπεσήμαινον) *'with his eyes, his hands, or by motions (νεῦμα) of his head; and he did not seem unsmiling or gloomy, but retained his love of society and his kindness'*⁵⁵⁶. He was even able to subdue a civil conflict (meaningful engaged between factions who disagreed over some low kind of spectacles) by showing himself (the parts *'returned to their senses at the sight of a true man'*) and by giving *'some hint (ἐνδειξάμενος) of his intended rebuke by his hand and his expression (τῆ χειρὶ καὶ τῷ προσώπῳ)*'. In front of a riot in Pamphylia, he caught the attention of the governor *'by means of a gesture (τῆ χειρὶ)*' and nods (ἀνένευσεν), and then prevented the audience to vent their rage against the guilty part by shaking his head (ἀνένευσεν) *'to show that they should not do this'*⁵⁵⁷. The silence as ascetic practice will be followed by Christians: Abba Theodosius also kept himself completely silent (σιωπήσας τὸ σύνολον) for thirty-five years, and *'if he said anything at all, he did it by signs (διὰ ψήφου ἐδήλου, lit. he made his words visible with pebbles)'*⁵⁵⁸.

In a world with few possibilities to amplify the voice, bodies and gestures were used by orators and preachers as devices for their public speeches. They relied on their hands and their postures to make their message not only comprehensible, like actors, but also to make it effective and persuasive in front of an audience eager to grasp it with its ears as well as with its eyes⁵⁵⁹. The importance of following specific rules for the delivery (the *actio* or ὑπόκρισις) and the effective power of a visible and well-performed body movement to convey meanings and feelings had been since time recognized

⁵⁵⁴ ARTEMIDORUS, *Oneirocriticon*, I, 76; ed. PACK 1963, p. 82; tr. WHITE 1975, p. 56.

⁵⁵⁵ He followed the example of Pythagoreans who *'practiced silence (ἡ σιωπή)*' since *'they had learned first that even silence is a form of discourse (τὸ σιωπᾶν λόγος)'*; PHILOSTRATUS, *Vita Apollonii*, I, 1; ed. and tr. JONES 2005, vol. I, pp. 32-35.

⁵⁵⁶ PHILOSTRATUS, *Vita Apollonii*, I, 14; ed. and tr. JONES 2005, vol. I, pp. 62-63.

⁵⁵⁷ PHILOSTRATUS, *Vita Apollonii*, I, 15; ed. and tr. JONES 2005, vol. I, pp. 62-67. Only at the very end, he relied on a chalkboard to communicate.

⁵⁵⁸ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale*, 67; ed. PG 87.3, col. 2917; tr. WORTLEY 1992, p. 50.

⁵⁵⁹ For some remarks on the importance of the topic, see MASTRELLI 2005. The relationship between rhetoric and theatre (already stated in QUINTILIAN, *Institutio oratoria*, I, 11, 1-19; ed. and tr. RUSSELL 2001, vol. I, pp. 236-245) was complex and not always clear in the Late Antiquity. Both the arts belonged indeed to the *'art of impersonation and declamation'*; WEBB 2008, pp. 27-28; bibliographical references in n. 19, p. 231.

by Romans⁵⁶⁰. In Late Antiquity, a collection of biographies written at the beginning of the third century by Philostratus described the character, appearance, manner, and dress of the sophists who put their knowledge at the service of earthly interests and gained major popularity and prestige at the imperial court⁵⁶¹. This work described the technical training required to achieve the mastery in the ‘art of persuasion’ and the role of gestures, voices, glances, smiles, and clothes in impressing and efficaciously communicating with the audience during public declamations. The good sophist was praised for his good appearance (Marcus of Byzantium, for example, was proclaimed as such by ‘*the expression* (ἤθος) *of his brows*’, ‘*the gravity of his countenance* (ἡ τοῦ προσώπου σύννοια)’ and ‘*the steady gaze* (στάσει) *of his eyes*’)⁵⁶² and for his well-shaped hands (Alexander had ‘*fingers long and slender, and well fitted to hold the reins of eloquence* (τῆ τοῦ λόγου ἡνία ἐπιπρέποντες))⁵⁶³. His body could be universally appreciated: Dio Chrysostom’s ‘*persuasive charm* (ἡ πειθὼ)’ captivated ‘*even men who were not versed in Greek letters*’⁵⁶⁴; and Favorinus’ speeches in Rome were famous since ‘*even those in his audience who did not understand the Greek language shared in the pleasure that he gave (...) by the tones of his voice* (τῆ ἡχῆ τοῦ φθέγματος), *by his expressive glance* (τῷ σημαίνοντι τοῦ βλέμματος) *and the rhythm of his speech* (τῷ ῥυθμῷ τῆς γλώττης)’⁵⁶⁵. Bodily movements were among the scenic effects (τὴν σκηνῆν) used to display feelings in certain moments of the speech⁵⁶⁶, to give a ‘dramatic taste’ to a particular scene or character, the barbarian *in primis*⁵⁶⁷, and to captivate the audience’s souls⁵⁶⁸. Gestures allowed the audience to visualize the speech, and the sophist has to avoid any mistake to remain comprehensible and, therefore, persuasive. For this reason, the sophist Polemo got angry in front of an actor who during the Olympic games did not follow the content with

⁵⁶⁰ RHETORICA AD HERENNIUM, III, 15.26; ed. and tr. CAPLAN 1954, pp. 200-203; QUINTILIAN, *Institutio oratoria*, esp. XI, 3, 1-14; 65-136; 158-165; ed. and tr. RUSSELL 2001, vol. V, pp. 84-91; pp. 119-157; pp. 166-173. On the role and function of gestures in the Roman period, see GRAF 1991; ALDRETE 1999, pp. 3-84.

⁵⁶¹ W. C. WRIGHT, ‘Introduction’, in WRIGHT 1961, pp. X-XI; GLEASON 1995, *passim*.

⁵⁶² PHILOSTRATUS, *Vitae Sophistarum*, I, 24; ed. and tr. WRIGHT 1961, pp. 100-107.

⁵⁶³ PHILOSTRATUS, *Vitae Sophistarum*, II, 5; ed. and tr. WRIGHT 1961, pp. 190-191.

⁵⁶⁴ PHILOSTRATUS, *Vitae Sophistarum*, I, 7; ed. and tr. WRIGHT 1961, pp. 20-21; n. 5, pp. 20-21. Even the emperor Trajan was said to have praised him during a triumphal procession with the words: ‘*I do not understand what you are saying, but I love you as I love myself*’; *ibidem*.

⁵⁶⁵ PHILOSTRATUS, *Vitae Sophistarum*, I, 8; ed. and tr. WRIGHT 1961, pp. 28-29.

⁵⁶⁶ Polemo showed his excitement by jumping from the chair at the end of an argument, smiled during the final clause of a period ‘*to show clearly that he could deliver it without effort*’, and stamped the ground at certain points of the discourse; PHILOSTRATUS, *Vitae Sophistarum*, I, 25; ed. and tr. WRIGHT 1961, pp. 106-135. ‘*Give me a body and I will declaim!*’ he declared on his deathbed, conferring to the body a role equal or even superior to the voice; *ibidem*.

⁵⁶⁷ Scopelian was ‘*used to represent dramatically* (ὕπεκρίνετο) *the arrogance and levity that are characteristic of the barbarians*’ and ‘*would sway to and fro* (σεΐεσθαι) *more than usual, as though in a Bacchic frenzy* (ὄσπερ βακχεύων)’; PHILOSTRATUS, *Vitae Sophistarum*, I, 21; ed. and tr. WRIGHT 1961, pp. 84-85.

⁵⁶⁸ Scopelian ‘*became more impressive and gained in honour*’ when he stood up to deliver his oration, and ‘*often smite his thigh* (τόν μηρὸν θαμὰ ἔπληττεν) *in order to arouse both himself and his hearers*’; PHILOSTRATUS, *Vitae Sophistarum*, I, 21; ed. and tr. WRIGHT 1961, pp. 82-85.

the appropriate gestural form and committed a ‘grammar mistake’ with the hand (τῆ χειρὶ σολοικισμός)⁵⁶⁹.

Christians became early aware of the positive potentialities inherent in a skilful body performance and a good self-presentation. The external or experimental knowledge through physical senses (‘what the eyes has not seen and what the ear has not heard’) were already put together with the inner state of man (‘what does not go up to the heart of man’) by Paul of Tarsus, when he wanted to emphasise the total ignorance of men before God⁵⁷⁰. Despite the dangerous character which, as we have seen, was conferred to the act of looking at public performances⁵⁷¹, and despite the earlier statements opposing the pagan way of persuading the crowd through an out of ordinary pomp (τὸ σεμνὸν) against the Christian way of educating by appealing to the inner life⁵⁷², the rhetoric field was a context ‘adaptable’ to the Christian thought. The power of the word is an incentive to wickedness for the wicked but could also be a weapon of virtue for the good⁵⁷³. And physical devices of persuasion could be used to raise emotional responses in order to spread ‘good’ values and the message of the Scripture. Well-educated bishops and Church authorities were at ease with the traditional rhetorical techniques of delivery and aware of the importance of speaking with the needs of their audience in mind, making their message appealing for the urban congregation⁵⁷⁴. Paul of Tarsus employed the rhetorical motion of the hand (ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα) to introduce his exhortative speech and gain the attention of the audience⁵⁷⁵. Saint Macrina made the ancient gesture of shaking the hand (κατασείσασα τῆ χειρὶ) to silence those present and reveal her superior moral status⁵⁷⁶. In the romance of Barlaam and Ioasaph, Nachor and Barlaam began their speeches by beckoning with their hand (κατασείσας τῆ χειρὶ) to keep the multitude silent during a trial⁵⁷⁷. The martyrs, who were able to overturn pagan spectacles to enact

⁵⁶⁹ Specifically he ‘pointed (δείξαντος) to the ground as he uttered the words, ‘O Zeus!’ then raised his hands (ἀνασχόντος) to heaven at the words, ‘and Earth!’; PHILOSTRATUS, *Vitae Sophistarum*, I, 25; ed. and tr. WRIGHT 1961, pp. 130-131.

⁵⁷⁰ PAUL OF TARSUS, *1Cor* 2:9; BARBAGLIO 1995, pp. 173-174.

⁵⁷¹ Pagan spectacles were despised more for their content than their function; SAGGIORO 2001, p. 16.

⁵⁷² Pagan teaching does not draw strength from divine inspiration and is like a theatre where lineage, glory, knowledge of things here below, and all that is above the common people, count. For Christians, on the contrary, greatness does not lie in appearances (ἐν τοῖς σχήμασιν) but in the way one behaves (ἐν τῷ τρόπῳ), while the inner being and the act of elevating the spectator to the deeper meaning is more important than appearance and words; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.114; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 172-173.

⁵⁷³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.30; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁷⁴ For the influence of the Second Sophistic on how Christian preachers and their listeners interacted and communicate in the first centuries, see MAXWELL 2006a, pp. 11 ff., pp. 88-89. For the rhetorical education of Christian bishops and the public’s familiarity with pagan speeches, see *ibidem*, pp. 31-327; CLARK 2004, pp. 86-87, with bibliography.

⁵⁷⁵ *Act* 26:1. See also *Act* 13:15-16.

⁵⁷⁶ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Anima et Resurrectione* 3 (17); ed. and tr. RAMELLI 2007, p. 351. The same expression appears, in the absolute form but with the same meaning, in Xenophon’ *Cyropedia*; ROTH 1993, p. 29. On the use of ancient rhetorical gestures and bodily visual devices in Christian preachers’ sermons, see MAXWELL 2006a, esp. p. 30; pp. 44-50.

⁵⁷⁷ *BARLAAM AND IOASAPH*, XXVI, 239; XXXVI, 329; tr. WOODWARD and MATTINGLY (1914) 1967, pp. 396-397; 546-547.

their victory and to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the political order⁵⁷⁸, could even use familiar gestures easily understandable at distance to humiliate their enemies in the arena: Revocatus, Saturninus, and Saturus managed to trigger the spectators' anger by threatening the judge 'through gestures and nods (gestu et nutu / κινήμασιν καὶ νεύμασιν) while declaring 'You (judge) us but God will (judge) you'⁵⁷⁹. Those gestures, which were likely part of the mime's repertoire and visually expressed the words uttered, failed to show the proper deference to the judge and caused the rage of the audience⁵⁸⁰.

The members of the audience were in turn also physically involved in the performances. They can express their agreement or their refusal by clapping or not the hands. Or they can call the attention of the speaker with glances and nods (διὰ τοῦ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὀρᾶν καὶ ἐννεύειν), as happened during a speech of Basil of Caesarea⁵⁸¹.

Gestures played an important role also in the doctrinal disputes, especially in the context of the mid-fourth century Arian controversy. As usual, heretics were described as skilful and deceitful users of their physical acts: Arius acted 'fraudulently (σοφισάμενος and σοφιζόμενος)' when the emperor summoned him to examine his faith. He managed to conceal his heresy by swearing on the Nicene Creed while holding under his armpit a sheet of paper over which it was written his real opinion, so that he swore with truth that he thought as it was written⁵⁸². Arians and the like exploited their visual appearance to impress people: Eleusius, Eustathius, and other Macedonian bishops adopted for example an impressive mode of life, that is 'they assumed great gravity of demeanor (πρόοδος ... σεμνή), and their discipline was like that of the monks; their conversation was plain (λόγος οὐκ ἄκομψος) and of a style fitted to persuade (ἥθος πείθειν ἱκανόν)⁵⁸³. This kind of depiction of a rhetor who relied more on the form of his speech rather than on the content will remain longstanding in the Byzantine critique against specific members of the society. Most notably, in the late sixth

⁵⁷⁸ BUC 2001, p. 149-155; n. 79 p. 143. As usual, Buc read those references as literary strategies employed by clerical authors to hijack the dominant culture and its civic rituals, re-interpreting and giving to them a 'Christian signification'.

⁵⁷⁹ *PASSIO SANCTARUM PERPETUAE ET FELICITATIS*, XVIII; ed. and tr. HEFFERNAN 2012, p. 120 (Latin text), p. 453 (Greek text), p. 133 (translation). The text was authored in the early third century and edited by a close contemporary of the events (occurred in 203). It is extant in nine Latin manuscripts and one Greek manuscript which is derivative and likely a translation of a non-extant Latin version; T. J. HEFFERNAN, 'Introduction' to *PASSIO SANCTARUM PERPETUAE ET FELICITATIS*; ed. and tr. HEFFERNAN 2012, p. 60.

⁵⁸⁰ HEFFERNAN 2012, pp. 332-333. Revocatus, Saturninus and Saturus were two slaves and a freeman. The member of the elite Perpetua on the other side employed her outward appearance according to her social status, covering her thigh 'more mindful of her modesty (pudor / αἰδοῦς) than her suffering' and adjusting her hair; *PASSIO SANCTARUM PERPETUAE ET FELICITATIS*, XX; ed. and tr. HEFFERNAN 2012, pp. 121-122 (Latin text), p. 454 (Greek text), p. 134 (translation).

⁵⁸¹ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, VIII, 2.5; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 242-243.

⁵⁸² SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 38.1-4; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL 1995 (2004), pp. 254-257; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 34.

⁵⁸³ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 27.3; ed. BIDEZ 1996, p. 342; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 322. Festugière understood the term 'ethos' in its traditional meaning as 'caractère', but also 'style' works fine here to express the attitude actively assumed by those kinds of men.

century, Agathias will present Uranius the Syrian as a negative model of rhetor who knew just enough to deceive and mislead the ignorant and then revealed his low *'cultural standards'* in his speeches in Constantinople by behaving and speaking like *'a buffoon or hired entertainer'* (οἱ γελωτοποιοὶ καὶ μιμολόγοι). He was a *'crazy buffoon'*, an *'impostor with chameleon like powers of adaption'*, a man who *'had little difficulty in assuming an air of decorum'* (περιποιεῖν εὐκοσμίαν); and he used those skills when he accompanied the ambassador Areobindus in Persia: donning the *'impressive robe'* of a philosopher *'with a correspondingly grave and sober look on his face'*, he managed to capture Chosroes' imagination and to appear worthy of respect⁵⁸⁴.

'Orthodox' bishops on the other side employed gestures to clarify and give strength to honest and meaningful words. In front of the divisions which marked the city of Antioch – a city where the Arian creed was particularly widespread, despite the efforts of Athanasius – the orthodox bishop Leontius temporarily accepted the compromise of different hymns sung according to the factions' religious stance (some praised *'the Father and the Son'*, others *'The Father by the Son'*), but also signified (ὑποδηλών) the future problems by pointing his white hair with the hand raised to his head (τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐφαψάμενος) and declaring *'When this snow is dissolved, there will be plenty of mud'*⁵⁸⁵.

Specific gestures could even visually display abstract ideas. Already Agrippa/Memphis, the dancer-philosopher slave of Lucius Verus, was able to demonstrate (ἐπιδείκνυσιν) and make clear (ἐμφανίζων) without words the Pythagorean philosophy better than any professional oratory teacher⁵⁸⁶. Members of the Christian clergy occasionally used their hands to make complex theological concepts clear. A master in this sense was the bishop Meletius, who was able to illustrate with his fingers the Nicene Creed regarding the nature of Christ and his own distance from the Arian heresy in front of the people of Antiochia⁵⁸⁷. Called by the emperor Constantius II to illustrate a biblical statement (*Prv 8:22*), Meletius suddenly revealed his orthodox position with a concise instruction (σύντομον ... διδασκαλίας) in which he displayed (ὑπέδειξε) the right theological norm by showing three fingers (τρεῖς ὑποδείξας δακτύλος), then closing two of them leaving stretched only one, and declaring: *'You think to three, but you have to talk as it is one'*⁵⁸⁸. Sozomen, for whom Meletius was a

⁵⁸⁴ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, II, 29.6-30.2; ed. KEYDELL 1967, pp. 79-80; tr. FRENO 1975, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁸⁵ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 20.9; ed. BIDEZ 1996, p. 174; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 299.

⁵⁸⁶ ATHENAEUS, *Deipnosophistae*, I, 20d; ed. and tr. OLSON 2006, pp. 112-113.

⁵⁸⁷ Socrates of Constantinople remained vague about the episode. He claimed that Meletius initially subscribed to Acacius' creed at the council of Seleucia in 359 (but the information is far from being certain) but then, once ordered as bishop of Antiochia, he earned exile for expounding the Nicene faith and teaching the *homoousion*; SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica* II, 44.1-4; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL 1995 (2005), pp. 230-231; n. 1, pp. 230-231; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 73.

⁵⁸⁸ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 31, 6-8; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, p. 172; tr. GALLICO 2000, pp. 217-218. According to Theodoret (who wrote around 440-450) Acacius of Caesarea spoke before Meletius and declared a middle position (μέση τινὰ διδασκαλίαν), which was not purely orthodox but far from the Arian blasphemy maintained by George of Laodicea.

man ‘*possessed of great and persuasive eloquence*’, described in more detail how he took the Arians by surprise by declaring ‘*that the Son is of the same substance as the Father*’. Then, only when the opponents tried to close his mouth, he visually displayed (εἰκονίζων) his words with the *schemata* of the hand (τῷ σχήματι τῆς χειρὸς). He ‘*continued to explain his sentiments (τὴν γνώμην κατεσήμαινε) more clearly by means of fingers than he could by language (τῆ χειρὶ σαφέστερον ἢ τῆ φωνῆ)*’. The archdeacon, full of embarrassment (ἀμηχανήσας), seized his hand, but Meletius ‘*persisted in the enunciation of the same sentiments, either by word of mouth or by means of signs (τῆ χειρὶ δεικνὺς ἀμοιβαδόν)*’⁵⁸⁹.

John Chrysostom, the ‘Golden Mouth’, also relied heavily on gestures. Despite his declared stance against the use in Church of theatrical expedients like the shaking of the hands, the beating of the feet on the ground, the applauses⁵⁹⁰, and despite his frequent complaints against those who judged liturgies on the ground of the quality and the level of entertainment of the preaching, yet he largely employed gestures and oratorical skills to capture the attention of his listeners⁵⁹¹. He did not employ the rhetorical devices to merely impress the crowd. His gestures reflected the depth of his inner life, like when he was lost in his thought and pressed the right hand’s index on his left palm⁵⁹². His clear diction and the brilliance of his speech was accompanied by a superior content and a flawless way of life: his words were therefore worthy of belief, unlike those words uttered by impostor speakers that were not ornamented by good deeds⁵⁹³. John’s antagonist Sisinnius was a Novatian bishop also praised as a man well educated and versed in philosophical doctrines and theology⁵⁹⁴. Anyway, reported Socrates, he was loved by bishops and senators more for his reading than for his words, not so much for the content of his speeches but rather on account of the grace (χάρις) in his face and voice (τῷ τε προσώπῳ καὶ τῆ φωνῆ), of his attitude and look (τῷ σχήματι καὶ τῷ βλέμματι, that is, for his *schema* and his glance), and of every movements of his body (τῆ ὅλη κινήσει τοῦ σώματος, lit. the whole movement)⁵⁹⁵. He ‘*possessed powers of intellect and expression (ἰκανὸν νοῆσαί τε καὶ φράσαι)*’, added Sozomen, was gracious and suave (χαρίεις καὶ ἡδύς) and good at verbal jokes, but ‘*his discourses obtained greater applause than his writings, since he was best at declamation*

⁵⁸⁹ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 28.6-8; ed. BIDEZ 1996, pp. 346-348; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 323. Festugière translated *schemata* as ‘signs’ and explained the scene as a possible ‘amplification d’origine populaire’; FESTUGIÈRE 1983, n. 1, p. 348.

⁵⁹⁰ PASQUATO 1976, pp. 254-265.

⁵⁹¹ MAXWELL 2006a, p. 62.

⁵⁹² PALLADIUS, *Dialogus de Vita S. Iohannes Chrysostomi*, VIII, 128-130; ed. MALINGREY and LECLERCQ 1988, vol. I, p. 168; tr. DATRINO 1995, p. 154. According to Malingrey, this was a precious notation of a ‘geste familier’; n. 1, p. 168.

⁵⁹³ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VIII, 2.3-4; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, pp. 234-236; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 399.

⁵⁹⁴ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 22.2; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 348-349; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 152.

⁵⁹⁵ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 22.20-22; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, p. 350-353; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 153.

(ὕποκρινόμενος), *and was capable of attracting (ἐλεῖν) the hearer by his voice and look and pleasing countenance (φωνῆ τε καὶ βλέμματι καὶ χαριεστάτῳ προσώπῳ)*⁵⁹⁶.

Generally speaking, clergymen were expected to be the perfect embodiment of virtue, honesty, and firmness. Paul had already established canons and limits for bishops and priests, explained Gregory of Nazianzus. They had to be sober, chaste, blameless and decorous, with an inner as well as an outward beauty⁵⁹⁷. The name and the *schema* (ἱερέως σχῆμα καὶ ὄνομα) of the worthy priest included indeed hands, eyes, ears, and mouth well trained for the task⁵⁹⁸. For this reason, clergymen were also under a constant public scrutiny: Gregory of Nyssa bitterly complained to the bishop of Melitene about the hostile atmosphere of slander, jealousy, and calumny experienced in his job⁵⁹⁹. His life was submitted to such a level of censorship that his voice (φωνήν), his gaze (βλέμμα), the shape of his dress (ἱματίου περιβολήν)⁶⁰⁰, the movement of his hand (χειρός κίνησιν), the posture of his feet (ποδῶν ποιῶν στάσιν), were all checked with attention. If those trivia were not made with the proper attention (μὴ γινόμενα), declared indeed the Nyssen, they could become a pretext (ὑπόθεσις) against him in the hands of his enemies⁶⁰¹. An inappropriate *schema* could cause the loss of the sacerdotal office, as when the bishop Eustathius was dismissed because his philosophical *schema* (in this case, the garment) was not suitable (ἀνάρμοστον) for the priesthood⁶⁰². Ammonius tried to escape the ordination by the mutilation of his body (ἄν τῷ ασχήμῳ τοῦ σώματος), i.e. by cutting his ears off⁶⁰³. The act however did not prevent his supporters to call him once again to the see: even if *'the ecclesiastical law requires that the person of a priest should be perfect'*, indeed, *'the Church does not observe the Jewish law in requiring a priest to be perfect in all his members (σώματος μηδὲν μέλειν), but merely requires him to be irreprehensible in point of morals (ἄρτιος ἢ τοῖς τρόποις)*⁶⁰⁴. Finally, even John Chrysostom had risked unpopularity because of his irascibility, his moral severity, and especially because he was

⁵⁹⁶ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 12.4; VIII, 1.10; VIII, 1.15; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 116; pp. 230-234; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 383; pp. 388-389.

⁵⁹⁷ They did not have to be like bowls that are only clean on the visible part; GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 2.70; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 54-55.

⁵⁹⁸ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 2.95; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 68-69.

⁵⁹⁹ On the hypothesis about the occasion in which the letter had been written, see CRISCUOLO 1981, pp. 43-46.

⁶⁰⁰ For example, the way in which the tunic was fastened with the belt and the way in which the *pallium* fell to one side and was tightened on the shoulder; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Epistula* XVIII.9; ed. PASQUALI 1959, p. 61; tr. CRISCUOLO 1981, p. 131.

⁶⁰¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Epistula* XVIII.9; ed. PASQUALI 1959, p. 61; tr. CRISCUOLO 1981, p. 131.

⁶⁰² SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPEL, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 43.1; 43.4; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, pp. 226-227; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 72.

⁶⁰³ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPEL, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 23.74; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 96-99; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 109.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. *Lev* 21:17-23. The supporters eventually renounced when Ammonius menaced them to cut away also his tongue; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 30.4-5; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, pp. 408-410; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 368.

used to eat alone avoiding communal meals. In this way he failed to perform an important social behaviour, and the habit provided his opponents with a pretext which was not without importance⁶⁰⁵. Without morality, a carefully cultivated manner could become a theatrical expedient and a mirror of the depravity and arrogance of the bearer. This was the case of the heterodox bishop of Antioch Paul of Samosata. Eusebius described him as a *'haughty and excessive'* man who strutted around the agora and went (βαδίζων) in public protected and surrounded by many bodyguards, so much that his pride and arrogance caused the faith to be resented and hated. He even put on a *'deceitful show (τετρατείαν)'* in the churches, *'to impress, indulge, and astound the souls of the naïve'*: he inappropriately sat up for himself *'a tribunal or a high throne'* and *'a private audience chamber (a secretum) just like the rulers of the world'*. He struck his thigh with his hand (παίων τε τῆ χειρὶ τὸν μηρὸν), stomped his feet on the bema, and censured and insulted those who kept their manners and did not *'praise him, wave their kerchiefs (κατασείουσιν ταῖς ὀθόνας) as they do in the theaters, or cheer and jump up as his partisans do'*. Finally, he boasted of himself as if he was *'not a bishop but a sophist and sorcerer'* (σοφιστῆς καὶ γόης)⁶⁰⁶. These kinds of behaviour were spiteful and dangerous, since bishops and priests *'must be exemplars (παράδειγμα) of every good work to the people'* and everyone has always to be vigilant *'so that he won't cause anyone to stumble and lead others to imitate him'*⁶⁰⁷.

Later the Council *in Trullo* (which complemented the fifth and the sixth ecumenical councils in disciplinary matters) stated that the conduct of the clergyman could even influence the efficacy of liturgical acts⁶⁰⁸. The Council embarked on an effort to officially establish how the clergy should look like and behave in a blameless and worthy (ἀξιούς) manner⁶⁰⁹. This was not only a matter of wearing the right clothes⁶¹⁰: Zonaras commented that the prescription should include a good bearing (εὐσχημον) and a good exterior appearance (ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς ἕξω φαινομένης αὐτῶν καταστάσεως), since from the exteriority (ἐκ τῶν ἐκτὸς) it is possible for men to reach the interiority

⁶⁰⁵ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VI, 4.5-9; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 270-273; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, pp. 139-140. Remarkably, common people continued to admire and applaud his persuasive speeches; *ibidem*.

⁶⁰⁶ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 30.8-9; ed. SCHWARTZ 1908, vol. II, pp. 708-710; tr. SCHOTT 2019, pp. 376-377. Eusebius is reporting here a letter composed during the synod against Paul (270 ca.) addressed to Dionysius bishop of Rome and to Maximus bishop of Alexandria, and sent to every province.

⁶⁰⁷ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 30.13; ed. SCHWARTZ 1908, vol. II, pp. 710-712; tr. SCHOTT 2019, pp. 377-378.

⁶⁰⁸ *'It is incongruous (ἀνακόλουθον) that one who must tend his own wounds should give his blessing (εὐλογεῖν) to another'*, and since *'blessing (εὐλογία) is the imparting of sanctification (ἀγιασμοῦ μετάδοσις)'*, the one who did not have it cannot impart it to another; *CANONS OF THE QUINISEXT COUNCIL IN TRULLO*, 26; ed. OHME 2013, p. 35; tr. NEDUNGATT and FEATHERSTONE 1995, pp. 100-101.

⁶⁰⁹ *CANONS OF THE QUINISEXT COUNCIL IN TRULLO*, 3; ed. OHME 2013, p. 25; tr. NEDUNGATT and FEATHERSTONE 1995, pp. 69-70.

⁶¹⁰ *CANONS OF THE QUINISEXT COUNCIL IN TRULLO*, 27; ed. OHME 2013, p. 35; tr. NEDUNGATT and FEATHERSTONE 1995, p. 102.

and the unseen (τὰ ἔνδον καὶ ἀφανῆ)⁶¹¹. A good example of the impact that the sight of the celebrant had on the audience is provided by the *Life of St Stephen*. Here the citizens are said to have been attracted by and wanted to see with their own eyes (ὀφθαλμοῖς θεωρηθῆναι) the ‘good patriarch’ Germanus⁶¹². On the day of his election (715) people of all ages crowded in front of the Church, moved by the desire to see him⁶¹³. Only after many difficulties the father and the mother of St Stephen managed to reach a lifted bench where they could see the entry of the patriarch⁶¹⁴. When he passed in front of them, the mother not only attended the spectacle but, drove by the Holy Spirit, also intervened by asking for a benediction over her womb and her unborn child. This time it was the patriarch the one who looked at the woman⁶¹⁵, before fulfilling her request⁶¹⁶.

Christians also and mostly used their bodies to perform liturgical rites and communicate with God. Also in this context, like what happened in the field of moral values and behaviour, a process took place from the pagan tradition to a specific Christian mindset. On one side, a ‘mechanism of acculturation, communication and cultural reproduction’ and a ‘competitive market for religious wares’ continued to characterize the late antique Mediterranean world during the ‘process of distinction’ through which Christians defined their boundaries and their group identity⁶¹⁷. This situation left its mark on Christian liturgical practices: pagan gestures, rites, and courtly ceremonies that were clearly understood by the community continued to be exploited by the new religion. So, for example, the *dextrarum iunctio*, the gesture of joining the right hands, which was the defining moment in the antique wedding rite, was understood by pagan as well as Christian guests as the symbol of the *fides* and harmony bestowed

⁶¹¹ JOHN ZONARAS, *Commentaria in canones conciliorum, Synodi in Trullo*, 27; ed. PG 137, col. 603.

⁶¹² STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris*, 5; tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 184-185. Even more clearly, Metaphrastes wrote that many people gained benefit from merely looking at him (ἐκ τῆς θεᾶς μόνης) even before his words; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 614-615; tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 209.

⁶¹³ Metaphrastes reported a general desire to see (πόθον τῆς θεᾶς) the exceptional event (θαυμασία), and remarkably defined Germanus as ‘notable’ (περιφανῆ, lit. ‘seen all around’) for his virtue; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 96-113; tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 190-191.

⁶¹⁴ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris*, 5; tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 184-185. Metaphrastes wrote that they occupied a bench to see from above whom they desired to see (τὸν ποθούμενον ἔχουσι καθορᾶν); *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 96-113; tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 190-191.

⁶¹⁵ Metaphrastes wrote that the patriarch looked carefully with his spiritual eyes (ὄς τῷ διορατικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς ὀφθαλμῷ) what was inside the woman’s womb; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 96-113; tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 190-191.

⁶¹⁶ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris*, 5; tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 184-185; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 96-113; tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 190-191. The mother of Stephen asked then to renovate the benediction for the baptism of her son. Germanus accepted to add another benediction to the unction with the oil (τῆς τοῦ μύρου χρίσεως), hold the head of the father with one hand (τὴν κάραν τοῦ γεννήτορος τῆ μιᾷ χειρὶ κατασχὼν), and pointed with the other hand at the infant (τῆ ἑτέρᾳ ἐπὶ τὸ βρέφος δακτυλοδεικτῶν), while uttering the words of the *eulogion*; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris*, 7; tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 187.

⁶¹⁷ BUC 2001, p. 124-125; p. 140. On the many local variations and tensions in ritual practices and liturgical traditions endured for a long time despite the aspirations of bishops at councils, see CUNNINGHAM 2002, pp. 156-158.

upon the couple by the divinity. In the iconographical representation of the scene on nuptial belts the role of the *pronuba* who laid the hands over the couple's joined hands was easily replaced therefore by the figure of Christ in the act of validating the rite and blessing the couple by slightly raising the hands over the handshake⁶¹⁸.

On the other side, the risk of losing the Christian identity into the pagan society led Christian authorities to urge their audience not only to leave aside pagan superstitions and customs (as the amulets and the taste for the spectacles)⁶¹⁹ but also to develop a 'new specific original way of physically display the worship'⁶²⁰. So Chrysostom reoriented the *habitus*, the thoughts, and the actions of the Antiocheans, which was still weighted with the tenacious 'traditions of Hellenistic cities, the Roman Empire, and the old religion', toward a Christian disposition⁶²¹. Participation in the public liturgical life and sacraments permeated the life of the individual⁶²². Councils and synods put therefore much effort to define the parameters of acceptable (orthodox) practices and to reach conformity among the dioceses in doctrinal and disciplinary issues⁶²³. While the Church was becoming a 'para-state' institution, the liturgy became also an official, codified, and more elaborated occasion. It was especially in the liturgical system that we find the stronger developments in the meaning of specific gestures originated in the pagan context. The necessity of intelligibility and the need to communicate with the majority led the Church to employ the rich visual patterns of the pagan imaginary and its repertoires of emblem gestures; but Christians made those repertoires subject to a deep appropriation and transformation. And this not so much in their performance but rather in their inner meaning and interpretation, giving to them a marked Christian connotation.

So, even if early theologians urged Christians to distinguish themselves from the pagans who came in contact with the sacred by kissing the stones (gods' images, temples' entrances or altars), the gesture of kissing or touching a person or a sacred object was absorbed into the Christian communities⁶²⁴. The ritual touch of the Gospel was included in the protocol for the oath on the Christian faith⁶²⁵. And a

⁶¹⁸ MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, pp. 136-137; FRUGONI 1977.

⁶¹⁹ MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, p. 129; pp. 122-131. See also CLARK 2004, p. 30; HUMPHREIS 2006. For the boundaries between 'religio' and 'superstitio' (which could refer both to the beliefs widespread among the lower class as well as to the paganism), see VALANTASIS 2002, pp. 3-4; SARADI-MENDELOVICI 1990, p. 48.

⁶²⁰ MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, p. 174.

⁶²¹ MAXWELL 2006a, p. 144-148.

⁶²² On the structure and the meaning of church services and festivals commemorating events in the life of Christ and the saint, see CUNNINGHAM 2002, p. 120; p. 107. On the development and role of sacraments as elements of distinction of the Christian community, see MAXWELL 2006a, p. 167; CUNNINGHAM 2002, pp. 116; LÖSSL 2010, pp. 147-153.

⁶²³ Already at the Council of Nicaea Christians were urged to pray standing up during the Liturgies of Easter and Pentecost; *CANONS OF THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325)*, XX; ed. ALBERIGO 2006, p. 30.

⁶²⁴ MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, pp. 102-103. For the importance of the touch, 'the most fundamental of the five senses and conterminous with life itself', see MATHEWS 1963, p. 129.

⁶²⁵ In this sense, it was employed by Marinos of Caesarea in EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 15.4; ed. SCHWARTZ 1908, vol. II, p. 668; tr. SCHOTT 2019, p. 358. For the origin of this gesture and the

sacred kiss (φίλημα ἅγιον) accompanied the handshaking of the right hands to express the sense of community and seal the prayer⁶²⁶. As usual, the soul played the central role and holy kisses had to be exchanged with 'a good will'⁶²⁷, with sincerity⁶²⁸, and showing 'a union of souls' with no trace of inner resentment⁶²⁹.

In the liturgical and ritual context, gestures and postures functioned as channels of communication between earthly and divine worlds and as instruments to express faith and devotion to God and to reach the Salvation. Proper worship, Paul of Tarsus also declared, involved the offering of the body as a sacrifice to God⁶³⁰. What mattered most was once again the connection between body and soul, and between body and mind. The worship had to be physically performed without improper passions⁶³¹, which were signalled (σύμβολον) by 'some movement made by the body (κίνησις τοῦ σώματος)'⁶³². Gestures and postures in this context had to be minded and rational: unlike pagans (who followed irrational and superstitious practices by sitting and laying aside the cloak while praying)⁶³³, and unlike Jews (accused of performing gestures of purification with an impure soul⁶³⁴ and to be more concerned with the bodily (τοῖς σώματι) rather than the spiritual (ταῖς ψυχαῖς))⁶³⁵, Christians considered void those gestures performed without awareness, only with the hands and without an inner disposition

developments occurred under Justinian – who used it in his effort of building up a theocratic conception of the law, produced by God directly through the emperor's intercession as a sole interpreter, see CALORE 1995.

⁶²⁶ TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione* XVIII, 1-5; ed. and tr. INTAGLIATA 1992, pp. 38-39. For the brotherly kiss which expressed the communion among Christians, see also JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apologia Prima*, 65, 1-2; ed. and tr. MINNS and PARVIS 2009, pp. 252-253. See also by LÖSSL 2010, p. 136. For the handshaking of the right hands as a sign of communion, see PAUL OF TARSUS, *Gal* 2:9.

⁶²⁷ 'Love (ἀγάπη) is judged not by a kiss (ἐν φιλήματι), but by good will (ἐν εὐνοίᾳ)' declared Clement, who criticized 'the unrestrained use of the kiss' and those 'who make the assembly resound with nothing but their kisses while there is no love in their hearts'. A kiss was holy (ἅγιον) only when performed 'with a mouth that is chaste and self-controlled' and with 'good will in heart'; CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, III, 11.81.2-3; ed. MARCOVICH 2002, pp. 193-194; tr. WOOD 1954, p. 261. For the sacred kiss, see PAUL OF TARSUS, *Rom* 16:16; *1Cor* 16:20.

⁶²⁸ In the fourth century, the faithful kissed each other before the Eucharistic liturgy and declared 'Let no one have a quarrel with another. Let no one be a hypocrite' or be 'deceitfully as Judas did when he betrayed the Lord with a kiss'; APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION, II.LVII.14; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, p. 222, 1614.

⁶²⁹ CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catecheses mystagogicae quinque*, V, 3; ed. PIÉDAGNEL 1988, pp. 148-150; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, p. 335; JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Ad Illuminandos Catechesis III*, 10; ed. PIÉDAGNEL 1990, pp. 240-242; tr. in ZAPPELLA 1998, pp. 209-210. See also MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, pp. 103; pp. 174-175

⁶³⁰ PAUL OF TARSUS, *Rom* 12:1.

⁶³¹ The intention of the prayer (*orationis intentio*) has to be freed from any disorder of the soul (*confusione animi*); TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione*, XI-XII; ed. and tr. INTAGLIATA 1992, pp. 26-29.

⁶³² EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, *Capita practica ad Anatolium (Praktikos)*, 47; ed. GUILLAUMONT 1971, p. 606; tr. BAMBERGER 1970, p. 29. Evagrius followed an ecclesiastical career in Constantinople and then a monastic life in Egypt, where he wrote down a guide for the ascetic life.

⁶³³ TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione*, XV: XVI, 6; ed. and tr. INTAGLIATA 1992, pp. 32-35.

⁶³⁴ TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione*, XIII, 1; ed. and tr. INTAGLIATA 1992, pp. 28-31.

⁶³⁵ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 22.78; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 238-239; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 134. They are under curse, continued Socrates, since they received the law of Moses in figure (ἐν τύποι), not in truth; *ibidem*.

(διανοΐας)⁶³⁶. All Christian gestures, on the contrary, stood out as being spiritual⁶³⁷. Already in the first half of the third century, Origen linked the disposition (κατάστασις), located in the soul, with the posture (σχῆμα), located in the body: those who wanted to pray had therefore to ‘lift up the soul before lifting up the hands, raising up toward God the spirit before the eyes; and lifting up the mind from earthly things and directing it to the Lord of all before standing (...)’⁶³⁸. ‘Do not pray by outward gestures only (ἐν μόνοις τοῖς ἐκτὸς σχήμασι)’, advised Evagrius Ponticus too, ‘but bend your mind as well’⁶³⁹. ‘For it is not the falling on one’s knee nor the placing of ourselves in an attitude of prayer (ἐν τῷ σχήματι τῶν δι’εὐχῆν), which is important and pleasing in the Scripture, while our thoughts wander far from God’, reiterated, indeed, also the Nyssen, ‘but rather the giving of the soul to prayer after rejecting all idleness of thought and every undue preoccupation with the body’⁶⁴⁰. Even if sometimes ‘we can pray without outwardly appearing to do so’, the physical position assumed during the prayer was nevertheless not a trivial matter. Christians, explained the later converted bishop of Carthago Cyprian (a man who in the first half of the third century had to face the difficulties resulted from the persecution of his times), are always under God’s sight (*‘sub conspectu Dei’*): they have therefore to perform their prayer with restraint and rigour (*‘cum disciplina quietem continens et pudorem’*) and have to please God with their bodily attitude and intonation of the voice (*‘habitu corporis et modo vocis’*)⁶⁴¹. Christian prayer, wrote also Tertullian, could both be seen and heard (*conspectum et auditum*) by God⁶⁴². The sight established indeed a communication with invisible realities⁶⁴³, so that gestures and postures had to be a proper visual and physical underpin for the soul: to stand, lift the hands and raise the eyes meant to bear in the body (ἐπὶ τοῦ σώματος) ‘the image (τὴν εἰκόνα) of the qualities (ἰδιωμάτων) that in the prayer are becoming the soul’⁶⁴⁴; and the prayer is the *schema* assumed by the thought (εὐκτικῶς μὲν σχηματίζει τὸν λόγον)⁶⁴⁵.

⁶³⁶ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 17.6-12; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, pp. 180-184; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 339; pp. 341-342. Sozomen is discussing here the tricks and the ceremonial manipulation imposed by Jews on unaware Christians. Those latter, in turn, feigned to use lamps to light, while in reality, they made it for a religious spirit; *ibidem*.

⁶³⁷ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 11.6; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 318-319.

⁶³⁸ ORIGEN, *De Oratione*, XXXI.2, ed. PG XI, col. 531-532; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. I, p. 255, 824. Despite his later condemnation, Origen provided notions which will remain at the ground of Christian theology.

⁶³⁹ EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, *De Oratione*, 28; ed. PG 79, col. 1173; tr. BAMBERGER 1970, p. 59.

⁶⁴⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De Instituto Christiano*; ed. JAEGER 1952, p. 82; tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 154. Salvatore Lilla understood the last sentence as an appeal to pray with all the soul and all the body; LILLA 1996, p. 58. For the questions related to the attribution to the Nyssen of this later treatise, see MATEO-SECO 2010b.

⁶⁴¹ CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE, *De dominica oratione*, 4; ed. MORESCHINI 1997, p. 91; tr. in CERRETINI et al. 2009, pp. 70-71. On the idea of Cyprian that the prayer could be a private matter but remained mostly a public act (shared by the community as a ‘self-expression of the church as a whole’), see LÖSSL 2010, p. 134.

⁶⁴² TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione*, I, 4; ed. and tr. INTAGLIATA 1992, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁴³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 28.22; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 680-681.

⁶⁴⁴ ORIGEN, *De Oratione*, XXXI.2; ed. PG XI, col. 531-532; tr. JOHNSON 2009, vol. I, p. 255, 824.

⁶⁴⁵ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Ieremiam*, Jer18.17; ed. PG 81, col. 612; tr. HILL 2006, vol. I, pp. 86-87. For the concept of the gesture as a visible sign of an invisible reality in the West, see also KOZIOL 1992, p. 60; n. 13, p. 362.

If properly performed, the prayer could be an instrument to achieve ‘*a continual intercourse (ὁμιλία) of the spirit with God*’⁶⁴⁶, and bodily performances could help the Christian in the path to salvation. Especially after the fifth century, when dualist movements of Gnostics and Manicheans called into question the value of the physical body, seen as origin of all evil, authors such as Theodoret defended and celebrated the role of a body controlled by reason in the liturgy. Theodoret quoted Paul’s statement against ‘*the heretics accusing the flesh (σάρκως)*’ (Rm 13:14) to stress the importance of taking care of the body (τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἐπιμέλειαν)’ and distinguishing between the flesh and its desires (ἐπιθυμία)⁶⁴⁷. God indeed ‘*behooves us to praise him both through the body and through the soul*’⁶⁴⁸. The body sealed the relationship between faithful and God: in another passage Theodoret let the body speak and defend himself against the accusations of being the prisoner of the soul and the origin of all sins. On the contrary, the body credited to itself the merits of all the soul’s virtues. It was the one that fasted, vigiled, endured mortifications, and the one that provided the material devices (tears, heart, tongue, and lips) through which the soul could pray, grieve, chant praises, and address its petitions to God. The soul ‘*reaped the fruits of Your loving mercy by raising my hands to heaven*’ cried out the body. It used its feet to walk in the temple, its ears to receive divine oracles, and its eyes to look at the creation and to reach the concept of God, as well as to grasp the hidden message of the Scripture. The body also provided the fingers through which the soul wrote the divine teaching and the hands through which it erected churches and fulfilled the precepts of charity. ‘*Do not, then, separate me, Master, from my mate who was joined to me from above*, concluded, therefore, the body. ‘*Do not break the union which did not simply come about by chance but was decreed from the beginning by Your heavenly design. Render, instead, the one crown to those who have run the same race*’⁶⁴⁹. Also, it was only through the body that the sinner husband could save his soul in a story of Anastasius of Sinai: after a terrifying descent to the underworld, the man saw his body ‘*as a mud and foul-smelling and dark-filth*’. Initially, he was ‘*displeased and did not want to enter it*’, but the angels explained that the only way for him to accomplish salvation was with the body through which he had sinned. The man woke up and followed the order, and earned his salvation avoiding food for three days and throwing himself on his face for three days before dying⁶⁵⁰.

Among the physical movements and postures expressing Christian faith, the *proskynesis* (προσκύνησις, performed by bending the knee and the body) was the most peculiar one, widespread

⁶⁴⁶ EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, *De Oratione* 3; ed. PG 79, col. 1168; tr. BAMBERGER 1970, p. 56.

⁶⁴⁷ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio Epistolae ad Romanos*, Rm 13.14; ed. PG 82, col. 197; tr. HILL 2001, vol. I, p. 124.

⁶⁴⁸ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio Epistolae ad Corinthios*, 1Cor 6.20; ed. PG 82, col. 269; tr. HILL 2001, vol. I, p. 181.

⁶⁴⁹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *De providentia orationes* X, IX, 28-30; ed. PG 83, col. 732A-B; tr. HALTON 1988, p. 128-129.

⁶⁵⁰ ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Diēgēmata stēriktika*, 40; ed. ‘Le text grec des récits du moine Anastase sur le saints père du Sinai’ édités par F. NAU in *Orient Christianus* 2 (1902), pp. 83-84; tr. KAEGI 2003, pp. 103-104.

in art and literature. The original meaning of the *proskynesis* as a visual expression of submission and request for piety or support from the authority soon developed a wider stratification, which included penitence and the act of *adoratio* offered to a divine or a sacred authority⁶⁵¹. The sinner knelt in front of God to confess and request forgiveness, since ‘*this is the attitude (σύμβολον) proper to those who humble themselves and who submit themselves*’⁶⁵². Those who were to become Christians with the baptism knelt their knee (κλῖναι or κάμψαι γόνυ) to acknowledge through the posture (διὰ τοῦ σχήματος) their subjugation to the sovereignty of the Lord and their renunciation of Satan⁶⁵³. Authors in the fourth century also interpreted accordingly the examples found in the Scriptures: Jacob and Joseph’s brothers displayed through the *schemata* of their prostrated bodies their deference toward the power⁶⁵⁴. Daniel publicly prayed on his knees and showed with this posture (τό σχῆμα) his contrite heart (διανοΐας) and used the *proskynesis’ schema* (προσκυνοῦσι τῷ σχήματι) to plead God for his people⁶⁵⁵. Even Christ fell with the face on the ground (πίπτειν ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον) and made a prayer in this position (τῷ σχήματι) as was becoming for a worshipper with a humble attitude and without impudence. In this way, he conformed (μεθαρμόζεσθαι) his body so as to bend (ὑποκύπτειν) in front of the authority and give respect (θεραπεύειν) to the powerful⁶⁵⁶. Christians, the Nyssen explained, do indeed maintained outwardly the words and gestures (λόγῳ ... καὶ σχήματι) through which men of different rank expressed their respect or submission in everyday life, but they also used them to bestow honour (τιμῆ) to the Holy Spirit⁶⁵⁷. For human nature had no other way to honour God than with reverence (θεραπεία) and with the words and *schemata* (τὸ εἰπεῖν τῷ ῥήματι, ἢ τὸ ἐνεργῆσαι τῷ σχήματι) customary in human relationships. Those included the act of becoming humble in speaking (τῷ λόγῳ) and assuming the *schema* of *proskynesis* (προσκυνοῦσι τῷ σχήματι)⁶⁵⁸. The

⁶⁵¹ BRUBAKER 1989b, pp. 152-153; BERTELLI and CENTANNI 1995, pp. 12-13. For the biblical occurrences of gestures of submission and subordination, the physical expression of homage, the *proskynesis* and the bowing of the head, see VERBRUGGE 2000, pp. 1336-1337. See also Paul’ letters (for ex. in *Eph* 3:14-15; *Phil* 2:10). In art, the gesture is widely performed by figures demonstrating respect, for example by devotees in front of martyrs or saints, and by the Magi as they approached the Virgin and the ‘King of the Kings’.

⁶⁵² ORIGEN, *De Oratione*, XXXI.3; ed. PG XI, col. 531-532; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. I, p. 255-256, 825. See also *THE ‘SHEPHERD’ OF HERMAS*, Vis. I.1; III, 2; tr. JOHNSON 2009, vol. I, p. 53, 226; p. 55, 228.

⁶⁵³ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Ad Illuminandos Catechesis III*, 4; ed. PIEDAGNEL 1990, p. 230; tr. ZAPPELLA 1998, p. 202.

⁶⁵⁴ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Macedonianos de Spiritu Sancto* 24; ed. MÜLLER 1958, p. 111; tr. MEREDITH 1999, p. 44. Slightly different Abraham, who bowed low (προσκυνεῖ) toward the Hittites to proclaim by this action (δι’ ὧν ἐποίει) their power over neighbours; *ibidem*. Cf. *Gen* 23:7; 33:3; 42:6.

⁶⁵⁵ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Daniele*, Dn 6.10; ed. and tr. HILL 2006b, pp. 162-165.

⁶⁵⁶ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Macedonianos de Spiritu Sancto* 25; ed. MÜLLER 1958, pp. 111-112; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, pp. 569-571.

⁶⁵⁷ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Macedonianos de Spiritu Sancto* 9; ed. MÜLLER 1958, p. 96; tr. MORESCHINI 1992, pp. 549-550. The Nyssen was defending here the divinity and the rank of the Holy Spirit against those who lowered its position with regard to the Father and the Son.

⁶⁵⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus Macedonianos de Spiritu Sancto* 25; ed. MÜLLER 1958, pp. 111-112; tr. MEREDITH 1999, p. 44. In the seventh-eighth centuries, Anastasius of Sinai and John of Damascus still distinguished seven kinds of *proskynesis* according to criteria functioning in social relationships. If the gesture was driven by fear, the faithful came as ‘a condemned person’, ‘a debtor’ or ‘a slave approach to master’. Those who are saved assumed, instead, the attitude of paid servants free from slavery, of friends chatting with

idea of submission as well as the idea of the adoration remained therefore present in the performance of this highly multifaceted gesture. In the sixth century Procopius still reported the story of how the Persian king Peroze exploited such ambiguity to avoid a humiliation: after being defeated by the king of a Hun tribe, he transformed the *proskynesis* requested by his enemy into the customary gesture made by his people toward the Sun through a specific choice of time and orientation – at dawn and toward East – while maintaining its external appearance⁶⁵⁹.

Christians displayed their faith also assuming the *orans* posture, standing with the hands raised and the arms outstretched. The act of lifting the hands was an ancient gesture which came naturally to all those who wanted to address the divinity or to swear on the gods: ‘*There is no man who does not stretch out his hands towards the heavens when he prays*’, recognized the emperor Julian⁶⁶⁰. Christians for their part stood and prayed toward east to search for their former county, the Paradise, and for ‘*things from on high*’⁶⁶¹. As usual, they had to maintain a proper inner attitude, raising the hands and the gaze (*vultu*) *cum modestia et humiltate*, only slightly, without arrogance, and without anger, so as to become a visible expression of purification and holiness⁶⁶². Moreover, the *schema* obtained by the body in such a position remembered the form of the cross. And this whatever performed with the whole body (imitating Christ’s crucifixion)⁶⁶³ or only with the hand, tracing the sign of the cross (σφραγιδα) on the forehead, or on the eyes, mouth, and heart⁶⁶⁴. It became therefore the distinctive and new form of prayer (*nova orationis forma*) for the Christians⁶⁶⁵. Furthermore, as we have seen, the cross was a *schema* which entailed the idea of domination, rule and victory. It gave therefore salvation to those who looked at it. ‘*If you look upon this image, and have faith in it, you shall be saved*’, declared Moses to the Israelites when he set in front of his tent a bronze image of a cross⁶⁶⁶. Moses exploited

confidence, or of some who had adopted ‘*brotherhood with Christ*’; ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, coll. b, qu. 24 (appendix 14), answers 1-3; ed. RICHARD and MINITIZ 2006, pp. 189-190; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, pp. 164-165. The forms could also differ according to the interlocutor (God, a God’s ministers, places, objects or appointed chiefs), the purpose, or the level of willingness; JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, I, 14; ed. KOTTER 1975, p. 87; tr. FAZZO 1983, p. 43. See also JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, III, 27-32; ed. KOTTER 1975, p. 135; tr. FAZZO 1983, p. 135 ff.

⁶⁵⁹ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 3.17-22; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 18-21.

⁶⁶⁰ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Contra Galilaeos*, 69B-C; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1923) 1953, pp. 322-323.

⁶⁶¹ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Liber de Spiritu Sancto*, XXVII, 66; ed. PRUCHE 1968, p. 484; tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, pp. 130-131, 1326.

⁶⁶² TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione*, XV, 1-2; XVII, 1-2; ed. and tr. INTAGLIATA 1992, pp. 32-33; pp. 36-37. Cf. 1Tim 2:8.

⁶⁶³ TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione*, I, 1; XXIX.4; ed. and tr. INTAGLIATA 1992, pp. 8-9; pp. 60-61. See also JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, II, 62; III, 125; ed. KOTTER 1975, p. 163; p. 194; tr. FAZZO 1983, p. 104; p. 115 (quoting previous sources).

⁶⁶⁴ See for example GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita S. Macrinae*, 985; ed. CALLAHAN 1952, pp. 398-399, tr. CALLAHAN 1967, p. 181. On the habit of tracing the sign of the cross on the forehead in daily life, see MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, p. 95.

⁶⁶⁵ Jews for their part did not dare to rise their dishonoured hands; TERTULLIAN, *De Oratione*, XIV; ed. and tr. INTAGLIATA 1992, pp. 30-33.

⁶⁶⁶ JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apologia Prima*, 60, 2-3; tr. and ed. MINNS and PARVIS 2009, pp. 234-235. The cross was made ‘*in accordance with the design and the operation of God*’ and could fight the ‘*venomous wild creatures*’ encountered in the wilderness; *ibidem*.

this *schema* on different occasions as a powerful and effective weapon⁶⁶⁷. In front of the Amalekites, the lowering or raising of his arms had even a direct effect on the fate of the battle⁶⁶⁸. ‘*Why dost thou, Moses, stretch forth thy hands (παλάμας) in the form of a cross (σταυροφανῶς)?*’, asked a later inscription reported by the Greek Anthology. ‘*By this type (τύπῳ) perish both Amaleks*’, was the answer⁶⁶⁹. Moses’ *schema* of standing with extended arms (τῷ σχήματι τῆς τῶν χειρῶν ἐκτάσεως), explained the Nyssen, was indeed proper for the legislator (τοῦ νομοθέτου) but also prefigured (προδεικνύουσα) the Crucifixion of Christ⁶⁷⁰. Christian priests, therefore, drew upon such cross-like posture to re-enact the gesture of Moses and Christ and to guide their audience to salvation: those who looked at this *schema* during the liturgy and recognized the cross (also in its additional anagogical meaning)⁶⁷¹ were indeed released from passions⁶⁷².

The connection with the sacred history gave therefore to the gestures performed by the priest a unique and effective power. Especially during the Eucharist the officiating priest broke and raised up the bread, mixed the water with wine, and raised up the chalice, to fulfil Christ’s words at the Last Supper ‘Do it in my memory’ (Mt 26:26-8)⁶⁷³. They were not mere outward bodily movements, like when in the Hellenistic processions the participants played the role of gods⁶⁷⁴. They were part of a *mimesis* in

⁶⁶⁷ By extending the arms, he made the frogs disappear in front of the Pharaoh, made the darkness dissolve after the three days of obscurity, and freed the Egyptians from the pain due to the dust of the furnace; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Moysis*, II, 78; II, 82; II, 84; ed. MUSURILLO 1964, p. 56-58; tr. SIMONETTI 1984, pp. 102-105. He also struck twice the sea with his staff, in straight and then in an oblique manner to form the image of the Cross (μηνύει τὸ πρόσχημα τοῦ σταυροῦ) (Gen 14:27); JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Oratio in Sabbatum Sanctum*, 25; ed. KOTTER 1988, p. 134; tr. SPINELLI 1980, pp. 102-103. Then he struck the rock (Num 20:11) two times in the name of God performing the figure of the Cross (εἰκόνα τοῦ σταυροῦ προτυπῶση). On this occasion, he made his gesture effective not only through the oblique movement of the hand, the nod, and the word (ἤρκει τὸ ἅπαξ, ἤρκει καὶ νεῦμα, ἤρκει καὶ λόγος), but also because he renounced his own *schema* (οὐ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ σχῆμα) to depict the figure of the cross (ἀλλὰ σταυροτύπως γράφων) instead; JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, III, 123; ed. KOTTER 1975, pp. 193-194; tr. FAZZO 1983, p. 185 (quoting previous sources).

⁶⁶⁸ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Moysis*, I, 40; ed. MUSURILLO 1964, pp. 18-19; tr. SIMONETTI 1984, pp. 36-37.

⁶⁶⁹ *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA*, I, 60; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1953. vol. I, pp. 30-31. The episode of Moses and the Amalekites was important also in the Carolingian imagery; BUC 2001, p. 47.

⁶⁷⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Moysis*, II, 153; ed. MUSURILLO 1964, p. 83; tr. SIMONETTI 1984, pp. 146-149. For the tendency among early Christian authors to see *typos* of the cross in every passage of the Old Testament, see SIMONETTI 1984, n. 149, 1-2; n. 151, 2, pp. 304-305.

⁶⁷¹ The lowering and raising of the arms of Moses and the priest are also seen by the Nyssen as a symbol of the right spiritual interpretation of the Bible after the humble literal reading of the Jews; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Moysis*, II, 148-150; ed. MUSURILLO 1964, pp. 81-82; tr. SIMONETTI 1984, pp. 142-145; n. 149, 1-2, p. 304-305.

⁶⁷² GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Vita Moysis*, II, 78; ed. MUSURILLO 1964, p. 56; tr. SIMONETTI 1984, pp. 102-103.

⁶⁷³ See among many JUSTIN MARTY, *Apologia Prima*, 65, 3-5; ed. and tr. MINNS and PARVIS 2009, pp. 252-255.

⁶⁷⁴ LÖSSL 2010, pp. 84-87. For the priest performing the role of God, its presbyters playing the role of apostles, and the deacons that of Christ’s ministers, in the first century, see IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Letter to the Magnesians*, VI, tr. in JOHNSON 2009, vol. I, p. 49, 214.

which the minister truly acted like Christ, becoming his image and operating with the same state of mind of him⁶⁷⁵. His gestures were felt therefore once again as giving salvation to the participants⁶⁷⁶. Many liturgical actions involved the use of the hands⁶⁷⁷. The imposition (ἐπιτίθημι) of hands (χειροθεσιά or χειροτονία) was performed on the head of the faithful who entered into the Christian community during the Baptism, on the head of the priest when he received his office, and on the head of a newly appointed authority⁶⁷⁸. This ancient gesture of healing was associated indeed in the Old Testament with the transfer of a superior sacred authority, and in the Acts it became also the channel used by the apostles to transmit the Holy Spirit⁶⁷⁹. Christ himself gave to the right hand of John (who was going to trace in front of him (ζωγραφῶ σοι) the figure of the Church) the power (τὴν δύναμιν) to stretch the palms and lay them (χειροθετεῖ) on his head. John gave, in turn, this power to the hands (ταῖς παλάμαις) of his disciples and priests⁶⁸⁰. The celebrant who made this gesture, sealing it often with the sign of the cross ‘which brings strength and healing’⁶⁸¹ and keeps the devil away⁶⁸², channelled, therefore, the power of the Holy Spirit and Christ⁶⁸³. If the faithful looked with the eyes of the faith (given by God to grasp the supernatural and higher meaning behind the physical dimension of the rite), he could still see the invisible hand of the High Priest, Christ, extended on the head of the newly baptized Christian⁶⁸⁴.

In a society that considered earthly and biblical histories as strictly intermingled, and the Old Testament as a historical source, the liturgical gestures connected with the Scriptures were also

⁶⁷⁵ MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, p. 105. See also THEODOR OF MOPSUESTIA, *Homiliae catecheticae*, XV 20-21; quot. in MARKSCHIES (1997) 2002, pp. 105-106.

⁶⁷⁶ KAZHDAN 2007, pp. 96-98; pp. 126-127.

⁶⁷⁷ See the many liturgical terms with a semantic root in the term χεῖρ recorded by Lampe; LAMPE 1961-1968, pp. 1520-1523.

⁶⁷⁸ Many examples are recorded in THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia religiosa* XV, 4; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. II, pp. 22-23; tr. GALLICO 1995, p. 198. The newly elected Antiochus refused the laying of the hands from an Arian priest and chased away his hand (ἀπεσεῖσατό τε τὴν χεῖρα) because he cannot endure a right hand (δεξιᾶς) stained with blasphemy; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 15; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, p. 237; tr. GALLICO 2000, p. 281-282.

⁶⁷⁹ VERBRUGGE 2000, pp. 1336-1337.

⁶⁸⁰ ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia*, 5, 12-14; ed. MAAS and TRYPANIS 1963, pp. 39-40; tr. TROMBI 2007, vol. I, p. 183.

⁶⁸¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Adversus eos qui differunt baptismus oration*; ed. PG 46, coll. 417-18; tr. JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, p. 156, 1400.

⁶⁸² JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Ad Illuminandos Catechesis III*, 6-7; ed. PIEDAGNEL 1990, pp. 232-236; tr. in ZAPPELLA 1998, pp. 204-206.

⁶⁸³ The Holy Spirit blesses the water and the body of the newly baptized, while God ‘transforms the bread into the Body of Christ and transforms the priest, converting him into mystagogue of hidden mysteries’; GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Sermo in Diem Luminum*, quot. in MATEO-SECO 2010d.

⁶⁸⁴ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Ad Illuminandos Catechesis III*, 3; ed. PIEDAGNEL 1990, p. 220; tr. in ZAPPELLA 1998, pp. 196-197.

credited with an historical identity and with a high degree of authority⁶⁸⁵. This determined the requirement for them to be properly understood and performed, contributing to the process of codification of the liturgical system after the fourth century: the correct performance of the rite was felt like a matter no less important than the theological problems about the nature of Christ⁶⁸⁶, and the need to understand it distinguished once again the Christians from pagans and Jews (seen, as we have seen, as ‘mindless’ performers unable to give a deeper meaning to their liturgical actions)⁶⁸⁷. Homilies and mystagogical treatises helped the clergy to carry out their tasks and provided the Christian with explanations and instructions necessary to achieve a mindful entry into the community, an active and aware participation in the liturgy, and a safe path to Salvation⁶⁸⁸. Fourth and fifth centuries’ Catechesis gave instructions to the neophytes about liturgical object, architectural spaces, and gestures, and explained how the communion had to be received with the hands and fingers not too extended and with the left hand shaped like a throne for the right one. In this way, ‘*the King*’ and ‘*the Body of Christ*’ was received in the hollow of the hand (κοιλίανας τὴν παλάμην) without letting any particles of the Eucharist fall on the floor. The devotee had then to ‘*sanctify*’ his eyes (...) by touching them with the holy Body’, to receive the Blood with a bow (κύπτων) ‘*as a sign of adoration and veneration* (τρόπῳ προσκυνήσεως καὶ σεβάσματος)’, and to sanctify his lips, his ears, his forehead and ‘*other senses*’⁶⁸⁹. Those gestures had such a strong impact on the mind of the audience that artists even reproduced them in the iconography of Christ distributing bread and wine to the apostles: in some finely worked patens and in the sixth century Rossano Gospels the apostles approached Christ’s body and blood bending with the hands covered or cup shaped⁶⁹⁰. In one marginal Psalter of the early ninth century, they even have the hands crossed in the fashion recommended by

⁶⁸⁵ On the historical identity conferred by Christians to liturgical objects see J. LE GOFF, ‘Prefazione’ in BLOCH (1924) 1989, pp. XXX-XXXI. On the way in which Scriptures shaped beliefs and practices of the Christians, who distinguished themselves for their attention toward texts, see CLARK 2004, p. 79.

⁶⁸⁶ KAZHDAN 2007, pp. 126-127.

⁶⁸⁷ ‘We have the same scriptures as the Jews, but they do not understand them properly, whereas we do’, could have been said by Christians; MANGO 2002b, p. 97.

⁶⁸⁸ BORNERT 1966, pp. 30-32. In its primary meaning, the word ‘mystagogia’ refers to the ‘initiation au mystère’, and has to be seen as ‘*signe sensible qui tout à la fois manifeste et cache une réalité spirituelle*’; BORNERT 1966, p. 29. It was thus the ‘path’ that led the faithful to the mysteries of God, through the performing and the understanding of liturgical practices; ZAPPELLA 1998, pp. 66-73.

⁶⁸⁹ CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catecheses mystagogicae quinque*, V, 21-22; ed. PIÉDAGNEL 1988, pp. 170-172; tr. JOHNSON 2009, vol. II, p. 337, 2159-2160.

⁶⁹⁰ For the patens of Riha (Washington, Dumbarton Oaks Collection) and the paten of Stuma (Istanbul, Archeological Museum), both coming from the Kaper Koraon Treasure, and the Communion of the Apostles as a ‘symbolic/liturgical portrayal of the Last Supper’, see MUNDELL MANGO 1986, cat. 34, cat. 35, pp. 159-170. For the Rossano Gospels’ Communion of the Apostles as a composition reflecting the actual rite ‘no longer narrative but liturgical’, and the impact of the liturgy on the manuscripts’ illustrations especially after the ninth century, see GALAVARIS 1973, p. 21. The liturgy of the Eucharist influenced the iconography of the Communion of the Apostles also at a monumental level, where the scene evoked and repeated the same gestures of the clergy in an everlasting performance (see for example the eleventh century bema of the Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki, the cycles of the monasteries of Hosios Loukas in Phocis and Daphni near Athen, and the churches of Hagia Sophia in Kiev and in Ohrid).

the Council⁶⁹¹. The mindful and physically engaging nature of the gestures performed in this occasion is stated also later in the Council of Trullo: the participants, declared one of the canons, were required to pay reverence (προσκύνησιν) to the form of the salvific Cross ‘in mind and word and sentiment (καὶ νῶ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ αἰσθήσει)’⁶⁹², that is, explained both Balsamon and Zonara, actively (πραγματικῶς) and through the sight (ὁρῶντες)⁶⁹³. They have to receive the Communion with a ‘wise approach’ and to become ‘one with it (the Body) through participation (μετουσίᾳ)’, holding their hands ‘in the form of a cross (τὰς χεῖρας σχηματίζων εἰς τύπον σταυροῦ)’. The human body, created in the image of God, was indeed highly preferable to any vessel of gold, ‘inanimate and inferior matter (τὴν ἄψυχον ὕλην καὶ ὑποχείριον)’⁶⁹⁴.

After the sixth century, the Constantinopolitan rite set in the new cathedral of St Sophia became increasingly more imperial and stunning. The Church’s architecture was more and more perceived as mirroring the cosmos and as a space where patriarch and clergy performed a concelebration of men and angels⁶⁹⁵. Physical and visual elements in the liturgy, explained already at the end of the fifth century Pseudo-Dionysius, provided perceptible and material support for the man, a finite being unable to directly contemplate God⁶⁹⁶. Signs and symbols have to be ‘stripped of their veils’ to become the instruments through which the ‘man of intelligence’ can ‘contemplate something which is beyond’⁶⁹⁷. The role of the liturgical actions as a visible support for the faith and the importance of understanding their spiritual meaning continued to be expounded later by Maximus the Confessor. He

⁶⁹¹ CORRIGAN 1992, fig. 70, p. 278; p. 58. In the Khلودov Psalter, the Apostles behind the one drinking from the chalice touched their lips with their hands, reflecting the practice suggested by Cyril of Jerusalem in the fourth century; CORRIGAN 1992, p. 58. Artists were aware of the meaning and the significance of the details present in the rites; GALAVARIS 1973, p. 24.

⁶⁹² *CANONS OF THE QUINISEXT COUNCIL IN TRULLO*, 73; ed. OHME 2013, p. 51; tr. NEDUNGATT and FEATHERSTONE 1995, p. 155.

⁶⁹³ JOHN ZONARAS and THEODORE BALSAMON, *Commentaria in canones conciliorum, Synodi in Trullo, 73*; ed. PG 137, coll. 763-764.

⁶⁹⁴ *CANONS OF THE QUINISEXT COUNCIL IN TRULLO*, 101; ed. OHME 2013, p. 60; tr. NEDUNGATT and FEATHERSTONE 1995, p. 182.

⁶⁹⁵ Liturgical celebrations stimulated the audience’s smell, touch and taste; CUNNINGHAM 2002, p. 109. The eyes played anyway the lion’s share: the onlooker was dazzled by the size, the structure, and the artificial and natural lights of the building; FOBELLI 2005a, pp. 193-207. St Sophia was the ‘temple which seduced the sight’ and its space was experienced as otherworldly; PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio Ambonis*, v. 304; ed. FOBELLI 2005, p. 116; PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 296-298; vv. 348-349; ed. FOBELLI 2005, p. 52; p. 54; tr. BELL 2009, p. 204; p. 206. See also PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 1.61-62; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 26-27; CAMERON 1985, p. 101. For the role of St Sophia in moulding ‘both the shape of the Byzantine Rite and the vision of its meaning’, the phases formative of the Byzantine rite, and the synthesis between liturgical and architectonic arrangements see TAFT 1995a, pp. 47-48; TAFT 1995b.

⁶⁹⁶ PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, I, 3; ed. HEIL 2012, pp. 8-9; tr. LUIBHEID 1987, p. 146; PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*; ed. HEIL 2012, p. 65; p. 74; p. 93; tr. LUIBHEID 1987, p. 197; p. 205; p. 222. On the Alexandrian tradition and the anagogical interpretation of the liturgy as the mirror of the heavenly realities and as an allegory of the progress of the soul toward the divine, see MAYENDORFF 1984, p. 28, p. 31; TAFT 1995a, p. 61. For the influence of the platonic idealism, see BORNERT 1966, p. 37

⁶⁹⁷ PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, IV, 2; ed. HEIL 2012, p. 97; tr. LUIBHEID 1987, p. 226. The mystagogy continued to be understood as a ‘guidance into something mysterious or secretly revealed’; LUIBHEID 1987, n. 3, p. 195. See also BORNERT 1966, pp. 35-36; p. 105.

shared with Gregory of Nyssa a positive evaluation of the corporeal/sensible dimension of the human being, mutually joined with the spiritual/invisible one⁶⁹⁸. In the *Mystagogia* (written around 630) he explained that liturgical acts symbolically and visually represented (συμβολικῶς τυποῦται/εἰκονίζει)⁶⁹⁹ a divine meaning that had to be properly understood. The spiritual contemplation (θεωρία, that is ‘*the spiritual understanding of the seen through the unseen*’) allowed indeed to reach a higher level of existence and the salvation⁷⁰⁰. Maximus was therefore also praised by his contemporaries because he explained not only the hidden meaning of the Scripture but also the meaning behind liturgical details⁷⁰¹.

After the outcome of the Iconomachy and the emphasis on the human, sensible, and therefore reproducible form embodied by Christ, the liturgy came also to be experienced as the image of the life and the earthly ministry of Christ⁷⁰². Liturgical details came to be seen in their realistic and narrative connotation as reflecting episodes in the history of salvation. The iconophile Germanus of Constantinople⁷⁰³ gave a punctual and ‘historical’ explanation of some of the words, vestments, and gestures uttered and displayed in the Church (the ‘*earthly heaven in which the supercelestial God dwells and walks about*’)⁷⁰⁴: the bishop blessed with his fingers (διὰ τῆς ψήφου τῶν δακτύλων) and simultaneously indicated the second coming of Christ in 6500 (‘σφ’) years⁷⁰⁵. When he blessed (σφραγίσαι) the people from his throne he signified (ἐστὶν/ δεικνύων) the act of Christ who raised his hand and blessed (εὐλόγησε) his disciples and the world⁷⁰⁶. The priest bowed down (ἐπικεκυφότως) during the divine mystery and ‘*manifests* (εμφαίνει) *that he converses invisibly* (ἀοράτως) *with the only God*’, like Moses who trembled and ‘*covered his face, fearing to contemplate*

⁶⁹⁸ On the anthropology of Maximus, see for example DE ANGELIS 2000.

⁶⁹⁹ For the employment of the terminology related to τύπος (figure), εἰκῶν (image) and σύμβολον (symbol), see BORNERT 1966, pp. 113-117.

⁷⁰⁰ MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Mystagogia*, II, 250-257; ed. BOUDIGNON 2011, p. 17; tr. STEAD 1982, p. 70. For the process from the material/sensible to the immaterial/spiritual dimension in the rite, see MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Mystagogia*, XXIII; ed. BOUDIGNON 2011, pp. 49-55; tr. STEAD 1982, p. 97. At the end the faithful will be able to grasp the meaning of providence intuitively (κατὰ νοῦν) and any longer through the senses or external phenomena; MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Mystagogia*, XXIV, 1028-1033; ed. BOUDIGNON 2011, pp. 63-64; tr. STEAD 1982, pp. 107-108. For the act of looking and understanding as a salvific act, and the role of physical senses in the salvation, see MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Mystagogia*, V, 501-506; XXIV, 1076-1082; XXIV, 1155-1165; ed. BOUDIGNON 2011, p. 31; p. 66; p. 70; tr. STEAD 1982, p. 82; p. 110; p. 114.

⁷⁰¹ VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, *RECENSION 3*, 19-20; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 75-77.

⁷⁰² MEYENDORFF 1984, pp. 42-47; TAFT 1995a. A similar kind of liturgical exegesis was proposed in the fifth century by Theodore of Mopsuestia.

⁷⁰³ He first declared that the denial of the pictorial representation of Christ implied a denial of his human nature and his Incarnation, as well as a rejection of the goodness of the material world and the historical economy of salvation; MEYENDORFF 1984, pp. 48-52.

⁷⁰⁴ GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1; ed. and tr. MEYENDORFF 1984, pp. 56-57.

⁷⁰⁵ GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 33; ed. and tr. MEYENDORFF 1984, p. 82-83.

⁷⁰⁶ GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 26; ed. and tr. MEYENDORFF 1984, pp. 76-77. The priest also removed the aer from the patens and the chalices like the angel who rolled the stone away from the tomb of Christ; MEYENDORFF 1984, p. 46.

*the God's face*⁷⁰⁷. Germanus also recognized once again the activity of the Holy Spirit in the gestures performed during the Eucharist, when it acted through the hand of the priest (τῆ χειρὶ τοῦ ἱερέως) and therefore 'testifies (ἐμαρτυρεῖ), completes (επισφραγίζει) and changes (τελειοῖ) the holy gifts which are set forth into the body and blood of Christ'⁷⁰⁸. Visual and material devices were passionately celebrated by defenders of the icons as instruments for faith and salvation. John of Damascus, the first systematic theologian who organized earlier theological works to oppose the iconoclast policy of Leo III and Constantine V, also found a balance between the desire for release from passions and acceptance of the world and its components⁷⁰⁹. He continued to praise visible things (εἰκόνες τῶν ἀοράτων καὶ ἀτυπώντων) for providing familiar 'hooks' through which the human being could understand invisible and higher things⁷¹⁰. The body especially had an important role in the rite. Once again, it was with the body that the man could perceive the light, can smell the incense, and can use his *phone* for the prayer. And it was through the body that he can perform *proskynesis*, embraces, kisses, and the sign of the cross, honouring 'through the eyes, the lips, the heart' Christ, the Virgin, and the saints⁷¹¹. Against the iconoclasts who declared that 'only intellectual worship (νοερώς) is worthy of God', Damascenus defended, therefore, 'all corporeal things (τὰ σωματικὰ)', as well as 'the divine mysteries which are fulfilled through matter: bread, wine, the oil of chrism, the sign of the cross (τοῦ σταυροῦ τὸ ἐκτύπωμα)'. 'Since I am human and clothed with a body (σῶμα περικείμεαι)' he declared, aware of his own finiteness, 'I desire to see and be physically present with the 'divine things' (ποθῶ καὶ σωματικῶς ὁμιλεῖν, καὶ ὄρᾶν τὰ ἅγια)⁷¹².

Far away from being mere aesthetic accessories of the body, *schema* and *schemata* in the Christian context were considered as meaningful, symbolic, and effective elements constitutional of the

⁷⁰⁷ GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 41; ed. and tr. MEYENDORFF 1984, pp. 98-99.

⁷⁰⁸ GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 41; ed. and tr. MEYENDORFF 1984, pp. 96-99.

⁷⁰⁹ VILA 2000, pp. 454-463; FAZZO 1983, pp. 19-20. John defended the matter and the 'corporeal things (τὰ σωματικὰ)', without whom the human mind 'will find itself weakened and frustrated'. He also defended himself from the accusation of worshipping the matter: 'I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake' he made clear 'never will I cease honouring the matter which wrought my salvation! (...) because God has filled it with His grace and power'; JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, I, 11; I, 16; ed. KOTTER 1975, p. 84; p. 89; tr. ANDERSON 1980, p. 20; p. 23. See also *Oratio* II, 13-14.

⁷¹⁰ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, I, 11; ed. KOTTER 1975, pp. 84-85; tr. ANDERSON 1980, p. 20. Everyday media were used 'to give suitable form to what is formless (τῶν ἀτυπώντων οἱ τύποι), and make visible (lit. turn to *schemata*) what cannot be depicted (τὰ σχήματα τῶν ἀσχηματίστων), so we are able to construct understandable analogies'; *ibidem*. See also JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, I, 30-31; ed. KOTTER 1975, pp. 144-145; tr. ANDERSON 1980, p. 34. Cf. also the *Oratio* III, 19-21.

⁷¹¹ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, II, 10; ed. KOTTER 1975, p. 98; tr. ANDERSON 1980, p. 57. See also FAZZO 1983, p. 101.

⁷¹² JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, I, 36; ed. KOTTER 1975, pp. 147-148; tr. ANDERSON 1980, pp. 36-37. It seems more appropriate to translate τὰ ἅγια not as 'saints' but rather as 'divine things', as stated also by FAZZO 1983, p. 68. The use of crosses, sacral object, relics, and physical gestures did not mean to adore the matter. They were rather devices for raising the intellect; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 26; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 215-216.

Christian identity. In the early centuries, inside and against the Roman culture to which they exteriorly belonged too, Christians gradually defined their expectations, their values, their attitude toward the body and the visual appearance, and their specific gestural patterns. The function and meaning bestowed to gestures in Late Antiquity were then important enough to long endure in the Byzantine society of later centuries. The values with whom they charged their gestures affected both their employment as literary devices in literature as well as their actual performance in the practices of society. Thanks to their power and impact on people's mind, gestures functioned actively as non-verbal devices of communication as well as a mean through which members of society were able to define their moral qualities, their social identities, and their religious belonging. In a society made of visually recognizable types integrated into classifiable categories, different 'gestural categories' existed which functioned according to specific 'rules' of self-presentation. Furthermore, gestures were widely used to bestow power to religious authorities. They were used with awareness to appeal to the urban congregation, to evoke the biblical past, and even to visually and actively express the feeling of the faithful who wanted to communicate with God and reach the salvation.

The next step will be to survey the conscious and unconscious patterns of non-verbal language used specifically by emperors to deal with political needs and social occasions.

PART III. EMPEROR'S BODY, SCHEMA, AND SCHEMATA. ROLE AND FUNCTION OF GESTURES AND PHYSICAL APPEARANCE IN IMPERIAL IMAGERY AND PRACTICE

In the fourth century, Basil of Caesarea compared the ideal society to a community of bees. Their *basileus*, explained Basil, is elected not after the vote (οὐ χειροτονητὸς) of people unable to discern, nor after an irrational draw, and neither according to a hereditary law that does not take education and virtues into account. Rather, he should receive his primacy and distinguish himself (διαφέρων) by greatness (μεγέθει), goodness of character (τῆ τοῦ ἤθους πραότητι) and *schema* (σχήματι)⁷¹³. The imperial pre-eminence and recognisability passed therefore through both the inner qualities and the features of the outward appearance. Those who arrange (κατασκευάζοντες) the images (εἰκόνας) of powerful men, declared also Gregory of Nyssa, outline the distinctive marks of the form (τόν ... χαρακτήρα τῆς μορφῆς ἀναμάσσονται) and define (συμπαράγραφουσι) the royal dignity with

⁷¹³ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homelias in Hexaemeron*, VIII, 4.3; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 248-249. Naldini translated here the term *σχήματι* as 'form'. For the traditional parallelism between the head of the bees and the king and the way in which Basil reflected contemporary political and social ideas, see NALDINI 1990, n. p. 389.

purple dresses, so that out of habit even the image of a ruler is called 'ruler' because of the resemblance (καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν, βασιλεύς)⁷¹⁴. Outstanding elements characteristic of the imperial *schema* had, first of all, a practical purpose: striking contrasts of colour like gold and scarlet helped the onlookers to pick out the imperial party in triumphal cortege⁷¹⁵. The purple was indeed a distinctive sign through which 'the emperor might be recognized by the army and all the people because of his amazing and unusual attire (φορεσίας)⁷¹⁶. The act of assuming the imperial *schema* by grabbing the material *insignia* was therefore also crucial at the moment in which an emperor took the power: when Zeno managed to retake the power and rose to the Kathisma to preside the games as emperor, for example, he sent immediately his officials to St Sophia to take the imperial *schema* (τὸ σχῆμα τῆς βασιλείας) from Basiliscus and the members of his family⁷¹⁷. When connected with verbs like περιτίθημι the expression σχήματι βασιλικῷ referred to the imperial ornaments and clothes which were imposed on the man from outside. So the barbarian Arbogast 'made Eugenius emperor of the western Romans, clothing him in the imperial regalia (περιτίθησι τὸ σχῆμα) against his will'⁷¹⁸. Even in the imperial context, however, the terms *schema* and *schemata* had to be understood in the light of the terminological density mentioned above to include the gestures and postures assumed by the body underneath the clothes. The distinction between material *insigne* and physical attitude was not always clear: Olympiodorus of Thebes, for example, used the term ambiguously when he wrote that Galla Placidia, after the wedding with Ataulf in 414, was allowed to seat with the *schema* of the imperial power (σχήματι βασιλικῷ) while her husband sat with the chlamys and other dresses proper for the Romans⁷¹⁹. Malalas more clearly included in the *schema* of the alytarch presiding over the Olympic Games in Antioch both the specific ornaments and clothes assumed with the charge, as well as the *proskynesis* involved in the office⁷²⁰. And when he described the ceremonial *schema* of the Indian king

⁷¹⁴ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *De hominis opificio*, 4; ed. PG 44, col. 136; tr. SALMONA 1982, p. 36. Furthermore, the ruler signified (ἐπισημαίνουσα) his dignity with the sceptre and the diadem; *ibidem*.

⁷¹⁵ McCORMICK 1986, pp. 86-87; n. 29, p. 87.

⁷¹⁶ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 2, 9 (8); ed. THURN 2000, 23-24; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. 15-16; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 62, where φορεσίας is more specifically translated as 'Farbstoffe'. Malalas is recording here the story of the philosopher Heracles, who discovered by chance the dye produced by the murex and gave it as a gift to Phoinix, the emperor of Tyre. John of Nikiu mentioned the anecdote referring to the material of the cloth (the silk) rather than the colour, but also agreed that this was a device through which the kings 'became conspicuously distinguished from the multitude'; JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 20, 2; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 21.

⁷¹⁷ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 15, 5; ed. THURN 2000, 303.61-63; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 210; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 391.

⁷¹⁸ The passage, transmitted by the *Excerpta de Insidiis* under the name of John of Antioch, is attributed to Eunapius by Blockley; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 58 (*Exc. de Ins.* 79); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 84-85; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 280.40-42; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 472-473.

⁷¹⁹ OLYMPIODORUS, *Historia*, fr. 24 (*Bibl. Cod.* 80, p. 175); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 186-187 (where *schema* is translated as 'raiment').

⁷²⁰ The first alytarch in Antioch, Afranius, wore a specific white costume and 'received obeisance (προσεκυνεῖτο) as if he were Zeus himself'; JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 12, 7; ed. THURN 2000, 217; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 152; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 292. Later, this *schema* was assumed by Diocletian. He wore a purple

(τὸ σχῆμα τῆς βασιλικῆς τῶν Ἰνδῶν καταστάσεως), he included not only the dresses and the *insignia* of the performers but also attitudes and physical acts such as the standing position of the king and the Senate, the kneeling of the ambassador who paid homage to the ruler (κλίνας τὸ γόνυ προσεκύνησε), the ruler's kissing of the imperial letter's seal, and the embrace and kiss between ambassador and ruler⁷²¹.

Even when referring to the emperor, the *schema* continued therefore to include the material *insignia* and clothes of kingship as well as the way in which the emperor actively arranged and moved his body. This resulting appearance was then a complex matter, and scholars had often been puzzled by the presence in the imagery of clear images of sound authority next to seemingly odd occurrences and 'paradoxes'⁷²². Those apparently conflicting features were the result of a long and gradual process in which elements of different traditions merged and developed until they became part of a rich and diversified repertoire at disposal of the emperor (who had to publicly show a *schema* significant and persuasive) and his audience (who had to judge him according to it).

1. LATE ANTIQUITY (FOURTH-FIFTH CENTURY)

1.1. THE PAGAN REPERTOIRE. MODELS, VALUES, AND PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS

In 357 Constantius II decided to celebrate his *vicennalia* and his victories (especially the one over Magnentius occurred almost half a decade earlier) with a triumphal entry in Rome and a procession through the city⁷²³. The exceptional spectacle had been described in a well-known passage written by the pagan author Ammianus Marcellinus, often considered an illuminating document of the degree of formalism reached by the imperial majesty in the ceremonial context of the late fourth century⁷²⁴.

The emperor, wrote Ammianus, entered into the Eternal City assuming a statue-like posture that aimed to express his supposedly extraordinary inner discipline: seated on a golden chariot, surrounded by the *insignia* and by soldiers equally impressive for the perfection of their movements⁷²⁵, he was the

dress instead of the white one and watched the Games 'making obeisance to the people (προσκυνῶν τὸν δῆμον)'; JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 12, 44; ed. THURN 2000, 239; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 169; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 324.

⁷²¹ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 18, 56; ed. THURN 2000, 384-385; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 268; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 476.

⁷²² Mango, for example, talked about the 'paradox' entailed in the Byzantine doctrine of monarchy, for which an emperor chosen by God could also be occasionally depicted as wicked, pagan or heretic; MANGO 2002a, p. 14.

⁷²³ McCORMICK 1986, pp. 40-41. On the political and ceremonial context of Constantius' visit to Rome, see MATTHEWS 1989, p. 233. See also MacCORMACK 1981, pp. 41-43.

⁷²⁴ For a brief summary of the process through which the empire became a centralized autocracy focused on the emperor, his ceremonies and his capital, see BELL 2009, p. 4.

⁷²⁵ The full-armour which covered the bodies of the horsemen made them look like 'statues (simulacra) polished by the hand of Praxiteles, not men. Thin circles of iron plates, fitted to the curves of their bodies (apti corporis

focus of everyone's gazes⁷²⁶. He proceeded without stirring, showing himself *'as calm and imperturbable (immobilem)'*⁷²⁷. *'As if his neck were in a vice'*, explained Ammianus, *'he kept the gaze of his eyes straight ahead, and turned his face neither to right nor to left, but (as if he were a lay figure (figmentum hominis, lit. the representation of a man) neither did he nod (nec ... nutans) when the wheel jolted nor was he ever seen to spit, or to wipe or rub his face or nose, or move his hands about (fricans manumque agitans)'*⁷²⁸. Also when he apparently lost his imperturbability and stood amazed at the sight of the Rostra, the emperor turned around only his eyes⁷²⁹.

Much had been said about the literary parallelisms of this passage and the allegedly 'eastern' origin of the attitude chosen here by Constantius. Herodotus and Xenophon reported that such a flawless deportment was imposed not so much on the king but rather on his subjects. So the king of the Medians forbade those around him to laugh or spit in front of him. Those devices aimed to exalt the ruler as a superior being and to keep him safe from the members of other powerful families who could potentially threaten his position⁷³⁰. The Persian king Cyrus for his part, declared Xenophon, *'held the opinion that a ruler ought to excel his subjects not only in point of being actually better than they, but that he ought also to cast a sort of spell upon them (καταγοητεύειν)'*. For this reason, he maintained a supreme distance, concealed any physical defect under a Median dress (which made him *'look very tall and very handsome'*) and trained his associates *'not to spite or to wipe the nose in public, not to turn round to look at anything, as being men who wondered at nothing. All this he thought contributed, in some measure, to their appearing to their subject men who could not lightly be despised'*⁷³¹. With this parallelism, Ammianus underlined thus the practical nature of ceremonial details as instruments used, this time, by the emperor himself. Constantius strove to present himself as ruled by a self-control beyond human possibilities, so as to eliminate 'spontaneity in favour of a static symbolism of power' and wide 'the gap between ruler and ruled'⁷³². For this reason he affected *'tokens of no slight*

flexibus), completely covered their limbs; so that whichever way they had to move their members, their garment fitted, so skilfully were the joining made'; AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 8; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 83; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 247. Julian also declared that the armours that covered the limbs of the soldiers of Constantius' II army made them look like statues, yet remained so flexible *'that the wearers can bend even their fingers'*; JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio I*, 37D; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, pp. 96-97.

⁷²⁶ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 4; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 83; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 245.

⁷²⁷ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 9; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, pp. 83-84; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 247.

⁷²⁸ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 10; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 84; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 247.

⁷²⁹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 13; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 84; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 249.

⁷³⁰ HERODOTUS, *Historiae*, I, 99; ed. and tr. ASHERI and ANTELAMI 1991, pp. 118-119.

⁷³¹ XENOPHON, *Cyropedia*, 8, 1.40-42; ed. and tr. MILLER 1953, vol. 2, pp. 324-325.

⁷³² MATTHEWS 1989, p. 233; McCORMICK 1986, pp. 90-91. For the process of 'liturgification of victory celebrations' and the differences with the ceremonies organized at Rome during the principate to display civility in a ritualized and staged context, see McCORMICK 1986, pp. 62-67.

endurance (patientiae non mediocris indicia)’ which were *‘features of his more intimate life (in citeriore vita)’* and *‘granted to him alone (uni illi concessae), as was given to be understood (ut exstimari dabatur)’*⁷³³. With this latter statement, the author made it clear how his entire description of the supreme self-control maintained by Constantius was not intended as a positive judgment of the emperor’s supposedly good qualities. It was rather an indication of how this emperor was trying in every way to peddle these qualities as his own to the audience during the ceremony. Ammianus therefore proved to be a smart member of the imperial audience and proved to be fully aware of the imperial efforts to use expedients to amaze and entice his audience⁷³⁴.

Furthermore, Ammianus addressed his work to the senatorial audience of Rome. Constantius was the Christian emperor who, despite occasional efforts in negotiating with the culturally conservative landowning class, extended the anti-pagan initiatives of his father Constantine and did not show respect to the Senate. He was paralleled therefore with the traditional tyrannical figures of Caligula, Domitian, or Commodus, and described as a haughty and cruel ruler characterized by a selfish understanding of the power and obsessed with defending his position without deserving it⁷³⁵. Constantius was the one who *‘in his pride of lofty conceit (elatus in arduum supercilium)’* never allowed *‘anyone to sit beside him in his car, nor admitted any private person to be his colleague in the insignia of the consulship, as other anointed princes did (...)’*⁷³⁶. Also at the very beginning of the description of the imperial triumph, Ammianus declared that the honour was undeserved and held *‘without a title’*: Constantius did not achieve any personal military victory and *‘nor at critical moments was he ever seen to be foremost (summis primus), or among the foremost (inter primos)’*. The *‘inordinately long’* procession and *‘the splendour of his retinue’* were exaggerated and unnecessary and shown *‘to a populace living in perfect peace and neither expecting nor desiring to see this or anything like it’*⁷³⁷. From a republican point of view, therefore, Ammianus looked at Constantius’ highly formal ceremonial attitude as expressing the emperor’s autocratic character.

⁷³³ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 11; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 84; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 247.

⁷³⁴ Eunapius showed a similar awareness when he praised Eustathius, ambassador of Constantius II at the court of Shapur I, for his oratorical ability as well for the contempt (τήν ὑπεροψίαν) shown toward the ceremonial attractions used in front of him, recognized as means devised to strike him (πολλά ἐς κατάπληξιν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς μηχανησάμενος); EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Vitae Philosopharum*, VI, 44-45; ed. GOULET 2014, pp. 27-28; tr. CIVILETTI 2007, p. 113. For the inducements (*illecebris*) used by Gallus’ wife Constantia to reveal conspiracies against her husband, see AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XIV, 7, 4; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 18; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 55.

⁷³⁵ NERI 1997.

⁷³⁶ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 12; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 84; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, pp. 247-249.

⁷³⁷ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 1-2; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 82; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 243. The ancient emperors who relied on their personal military ability to gain fame and glory, on the other hand, get personally involved *‘when the heat of the battle could tolerate no inaction’* and did not require excessive ceremonial devices in times of peace; AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 3; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 82; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, pp. 243-245.

In the end, Constantius held the equestrian games inside the city and changed his attitude to behave as a citizen integrated into the community. Only at this point, thus, he could be praised for choosing an attitude in line with the republican values. On this occasion, he ‘*respectfully observed the due mean (modum debitum)*’ and enjoyed the sullies and jests of the plebs (*dicitate plebis*). Those latter in turn spontaneously manifested their excitement, maintaining in the while the limit between condescension and freedom⁷³⁸. The presence of two different attitudes⁷³⁹ in Constantius’ self-presentation is witnessed also in the more positively informed description of Aurelius Victor: Constantius, declared the author, was ‘*calm and reasonable in his duties (placidus clemensque pro negotio)* and has ‘*a gentle and agreeable manner of speaking (orandi genere leni iocundoque)*’, but he was also ‘*master of his eating habits, of every passion and all his desires (parcus cibi omnis libidinis atque omnium cupidinum victor)*’⁷³⁹. Olympiodorus of Thebes stated in a similar way that Constantius III, Galla Placidia’s second husband, appeared uneasy in public processions and relaxed in private. In the first case he was ‘*downcast and sullen (κατηφής καὶ σκυθρωπός), a man with bulging eyes, a long (lit. massive) neck and a broad head (μεγαλόφθαλμός τε καὶ μεγαλαύχην καὶ πλατυκέφαλος)*’ (thus, once more, as a statue), *who always slumped (νεύων διόλου) over the neck of the horse he was riding, looking at everybody (οὕτω τῆδε κάκειῖσε λοξὸν ἐκπέμπων τὸ ὄμμα), so that all saw in him (πᾶσι φαίνεσθαι) ‘a mien worthy of a tyrant’ (εἶδος ἄξιον τυραννίδος), as the saying goes’* (that is, in Euripidean’s terms). During the banquet, the emperor, on the contrary, conversed with his subjects and appeared ‘*so cheerful and affable (τερνὸς καὶ πολιτικός) that he even competed with the clowns (ἐρίζειν τοῖς μίμοις) who often played (παίζουσι) before his table (πρὸ τῆς τραπέζης)*’⁷⁴⁰.

Those examples well instantiated a situation in which the ideals of perfect behaviour and public appearance for the emperor were developing toward specific, even if not so clearly outlined, directions. The emperor was increasingly widening the distance with his subjects and was promoting also in official portraits the idea of himself as a superior being by making his body steady and motionless like a stone⁷⁴¹. On other occasions, however, he continued to show himself ‘relaxed’ among his guests. Let us see, first of all, how this latter traditional ‘friendly’ attitude, which shared many continuities with the previous centuries, was still very present at the time, and how the display of the *civilitas* remained an important requirement for a good emperor.

⁷³⁸ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 10, 13; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 84; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 249. For the change of attitude and the actions performed by Constantius once inside the city (he also addressed the senators in the senate-house and the people from the tribunal in the forum), see MATTHEWS 1989, p. 234.

⁷³⁹ AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 42.23; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 129; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 54.

⁷⁴⁰ OLYMPIODORUS, *Historia*, fr. 23 (*Bibl. Cod.* 80, p. 174f.); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 186-187. See also BLOCKLEY 1981, p. 42.

⁷⁴¹ See at least Galerius’ arch in Thessaloniki, Constantine’s arch in Rome, and the triumphal column of Arcadius dedicated by his son Theodosius II at the beginning of the fifth century. In the latter, it is difficult sometimes even to distinguish imperial portraits from the representations of statues of the city.

The culture and traditional ideals of the senatorial and republican aristocracy continued to inform the standards for the *schema* required from a ruler who received the plenitude of the sovereign power by ‘the palace, the Senate and the army’⁷⁴². He had to behave as *primus inter pares*, showing respect for the political privileges and *dignitas* of the Senate and establishing a good relationship between the *principatus* and the *libertas* of his subjects. Historians still provided vivid descriptions of Roman emperors of the past who had embodied well this kind of ideal. The emperor was required to follow the example of rulers like Hadrian, who was very affable (*civilissimus*) ‘in his conversations, even with the very humble’ and denounced those who, ‘in the belief that they were thereby maintaining the imperial dignity (*fastigium principis*), begrudged him the pleasure of such friendliness (*voluptatem humanitatis*)’⁷⁴³. Trajan for his part earned respect because of his *civilitate* and *moderatione* and because he ‘behaved to everyone as an equal (*equalem se omnibus exhibens*)’. He visited his friends and organized dinner parties ‘without making distinctions of rank, often sitting in their carriages, harming none of the senators’ and always acting with calm composure (*tranquillum et placidum*)’. Furthermore, ‘when his friends blamed him for being too accessible to all, he replied that he was the kind of emperor to ordinary citizens as he would have liked emperors to be to him as an ordinary citizen’⁷⁴⁴. Especially Marcus Aurelius, then, ‘dealt with everyone at Rome on equal terms (*aequo iure*)’ and ‘was not inflated to the point of arrogance (*insolentiam*) by the loftiness of his imperial position’⁷⁴⁵. And Alexander Severus refused bows and over-polite and flattering names, avoided excessive luxury in his attire, and assumed a familiar attitude (*familiariter*) with his friends. They could sit with him ‘as equals’ at banquets, and he held the morning levee ‘like any senator with open curtains and without the presence of ushers, or, at least, with none but those who acted as attendants at the doors’, so to appear accessible to those who wanted to pay respect to him⁷⁴⁶.

From this point of view, therefore, ‘good emperors’ were praised for the affable and approachable attitude through which they expressed their *civilitas*, *humanitas* and *moderatio*⁷⁴⁷. They could even allow their subjects to spontaneously relate to them in social occasions like banquets or public shows. Especially in the latter case, they endured public and unscripted mockery which were part of a quasi-official *theatri licentia*⁷⁴⁸. So the mimographer Marullus irritated Marcus Aurelius and his brother

⁷⁴² According to Jones, this was an important element that distinguished the Western and Eastern concept of the monarchy: ‘in the western parts, (...), election was never more than the formal ratification of a usurpation. In the eastern parts genuine elections conferred the imperial power on Jovian, Valentinian, Leo, Anastasius, and Justin’; JONES 1963, p. 17.

⁷⁴³ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *De Vita Hadriani*, 20, 1; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 21; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 61.

⁷⁴⁴ EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium*, 8.4-5; ed. MÜLLER 1995, p. 112; tr. BIRD 1993, p. 49.

⁷⁴⁵ EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium*, 8.12; ed. MÜLLER 1995, p. 118; tr. BIRD 1993, p. 52.

⁷⁴⁶ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Alexander Severus*, 4, 1-3; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, pp. 253-254; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 185. Furthermore, he also ‘forbade men to call him Lord (*Dominus*), and gave orders that people should write to him as they would to a commoner’; *ibidem*.

⁷⁴⁷ See also WALLACE-HADRILL 1982.

⁷⁴⁸ CAMERON 1976, pp. 160-161.

Lucius Verus *'by his jest (cavillando)'*, but went unpunished thanks to the good (*civilliter*) manner of the two emperors⁷⁴⁹. Marcus Aurelius also endured the mockeries of a group of actors who performed a witty dialogue *'on the stage'* about the affair between his wife and her lovers⁷⁵⁰. Only bad emperors who lacked *civilitas* reacted to such ribaldries, like when Commodus promptly banished from the stage some actors who alluded to him *'as a man of depraved life'*⁷⁵¹.

Those were powerful models of behaviour for the emperors of the fourth century. So, the above-mentioned Constantius II's attitude toward the jests of the Roman citizens could be *'explicable within a purely urban Roman tradition'*⁷⁵². At a speech held in early 355 the same emperor is praised by his cousin Julian because he displayed *'justice and moderation (δικαίως καὶ σωφρόνως)'* with his subjects, the members of his court and the army, and because he granted his friends the privilege of addressing him *'as an equal (τῆς ἰσηγορίας) and full freedom of speech (τῆς παρρησίας) without stint, and perfect frankness'*⁷⁵³.

The emperor Julian himself most famously displayed an apparently friendly and human attitude toward the members of his court⁷⁵⁴. Since his earlier education, explained his friend Libanius, he put aside the pride and placed himself on the same level as the other students in the classroom, respecting the *'principle of equality'* and earning affection and *'a glorious victory'*⁷⁵⁵. Julian himself declared in a speech held in front of Constantius that the good ruler is never arrogant but, thanks to his temperance (*σωφροσύνης*) and wisdom (*φρονήσεως*), he had to *'behave toward the people and the magistrates like a citizen who obey the laws (καθάπερ πολίτου τοῖς νόμοις ὑπακούοντος), not like a king who is above the laws (ἀλλ' οὐ βασιλέως τῶν νόμων ἄρχοντος)'*⁷⁵⁶. Once on the throne, Julian expressed those political virtues also through his gestures: he descended from his carriage, *'shakes hands (δεξιὰν διαλεγόμεθα)'* and conversed with rhetors – among whom Libanius – who *'regard it*

⁷⁴⁹ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi*, 8, 1; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 53; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 151.

⁷⁵⁰ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi*, 29, 2-3; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 73; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 203. In the early sixth century Cassiodorus, who received a traditional Roman education, still distinguished between the impertinence (*presumptionis*) of the mob (*loquicita popularis*) against men of rank occurred in the public streets (considered as a crime), and those occurred at the public shows. The circus, explained the author, *'is a place that protects excesses'*, and *'patient acceptance of their chatter (garrulitas) is a proven glory of princes themselves'*; CASSIODORUS, *Variae*, I, 27.4-5; ed. MOMMSEN 1894, p. 29; tr. BARNISH 1992, p. 19.

⁷⁵¹ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Commodus Antoninus*, 3, 4; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 100; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 269.

⁷⁵² MacCORMACK 1981, p. 42. More negative and simplified is the view of McCormick, according to whom *'Constantius, whose rigid hieratic posture throughout the parade has become practically a topos among modern writers on the fourth-century monarchy, condescended to throw some crumbs of consideration to the Roman crowd during the games'*; McCORMICK 1986, pp. 87-88.

⁷⁵³ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio* I, 16D-17B; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, vol. I, pp. 42-43.

⁷⁵⁴ I will not refer here to the highly innovative self-presentation presented by Julian, who combined the image of the bearded philosopher-ruler with the Roman military tradition, but only to the specific gestural and behavioural choices pursued by Julian to display his *civilitas* in continuity with the republican tradition. For Julian's image and the problem of communication between the ruler and the citizens of Antiochia, see GUIDETTI 2015.

⁷⁵⁵ LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 13, 9; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, p. 66; tr. NORMAN 1969, p. 7.

⁷⁵⁶ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio* I, 45D; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, vol. I, pp. 116-117.

*as a better thing not to put on more airs and graces than other folk than to instil fear into them*⁷⁵⁷. When administrating justice, he expressed his affability (κοινότητος) by letting his subject free to express themselves with unrestrained movements: without caring about the formal rules of etiquette, he gave to advocates and clients *'full freedom (ἐξουσίαν) to raise their voices, to shake their fists (χειρὸς ἀνασείσει, literally, to move up and down their hands) and to make all sorts of gestures (πᾶσι σχήμασι) and comments (σκόμμασι) to each other – in short, to use all the tricks of the trade that each party relies on to win a case*⁷⁵⁸. Times, however, were changing, and it was easy to go beyond the limits: Ammianus witnessed another point of view on the too much informal attitude assumed by Julian on some occasions. He *'showed himself (visus est) especially condescending (humilior) by going on foot to their inauguration (i.e. the consular inauguration of Mamertinus and Nevitta in 362) in company with other high officials, an action which some commended but others criticised as affected and cheap (adfectatum et vile)*. He then behaved improperly (*indecore*) when he rushed and *'run at full speed'* to welcome with a kiss the philosopher Maximus during a seat with the Senate. This attitude was in turn an *'unseemly ostentation (per ostentationem intempestivam)*' that made also the philosopher *'appear to be an excessive seeker for empty fame*⁷⁵⁹. Therefore, Mathews also well recognized, both Maximus and Julian presented on this occasion a kind of behaviour unsuitable to their condition: too much pomp and ostentation inappropriate for a philosopher on one side, a spontaneous humility unbecoming an emperor on the other⁷⁶⁰.

In any case, the approachable attitude was always far away from being a real debasement: the emperor was always supposed to be the *'primus'* among his *'pares'* and to embody the most perfect citizen, since he was charged with the high responsibility to act as the head of State and as a model for his subjects. His virtues had to be incomparable: even Julian was equal to the others in appearance but also superior to them, *'for the seed sown in him was the same as in others, but in its fruits he surpassed all young students*⁷⁶¹. His body had then also to be perfect: from a material point of view, it had to be intact and not affected by mutilation, an idea that had ancient roots⁷⁶². Numberless are the mentions of the practice of the mutilation as a way to prevent the strife for power: Olympiodorus of Thebes, for

⁷⁵⁷ LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 18, 150; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, p. 300; tr. NORMAN 1969, p. 377.

⁷⁵⁸ LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 18, 189-191; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, pp. 319-320; tr. NORMAN 1969, pp. 405-407.

⁷⁵⁹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXII, 7, 1; 7, 3; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 258; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 249.

⁷⁶⁰ MATTHEWS 1989, p. 236. The Christian author Socrates of Constantinople also reported that the abolishment of the imperial luxury by Julian was praised by few but blamed by others. This is because, in driving many people to cease their admiration of imperial wealth, it also made them despise power; SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 1.53; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, pp. 258-261; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, pp. 76-78.

⁷⁶¹ LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 13, 9; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, p. 66; tr. NORMAN 1969, p. 7.

⁷⁶² According to Procopius, this idea was taken from Persians, among whom was considered illegal that the one who was going to take power was deprived of an eye or have some other deformities; PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 11.4; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 82-83.

example, reported the attempt made by Priscus Attalus to ensure his usurpation by suggesting the emperor Honorius *'to retire voluntarily to private life and to purchase his survival by cutting off his extremities* (τῶν τοῦ σώματος ἀκρωτηριῶν τῆ περιτομῆ)⁷⁶³. According to another version of the episode reported by the same Olympiodorus, Attalus offered him to retire *'without suffering any harm'*. It was rather one of the ambassador sent by Honorius, the betrayer praetorian prefect Jovian, who suggested that *'Honorius should be mutilated of one limb'* to prevent any future attempt to retake the throne. Attalus censured his suggestion *'saying that it was not customary to mutilate an Emperor who had willingly resigned his office'*. In the end, it was Attalus who was mutilated in Ravenna at the behest of Honorius: he was brought to the first step of a tribunal and here *'the fingers of his right hand were cut off, 'namely the <thumb> and the forefinger* (<ἀντίχειρ> ὁ δὲ λιχανὸς ἔχει τὴν κλῆσιν)⁷⁶⁴. This could possibly refer to the deprivation of an important instrument for the emperor, namely the fingers that accompanied his rhetorical speeches. Immediately after, indeed, the author emphasised the fact that Honorius expressed his approval toward the city of Rome and its revival after the Ataulf's war *'by gesture and word'* (χειρὶ καὶ γλώττῃ τὸν συνοικισμὸν ἐπεκρότει)⁷⁶⁵.

The physical qualities of the imperial body also had to outwardly express his moral firmness and his political skills, in line with old physiognomic beliefs. His ability to rule could be read from his face and in his body: *'gazing long and earnestly on his eyes, at once terrible and full of charm, and on his face attractive in its unusual animation* (uultumque excitatius gratum)', for example, the soldiers who attended the proclamation of Julian as Ceasar *'divined what matter of man he would be, as if they had perused those ancient books, the reading of which discloses from bodily signs the inward qualities of the soul* (per corporum signa pandit animarum interna)⁷⁶⁶. The emperor could master his conduct through a proper education (ἀνατροφή or παιδεία) aimed at improving his physical as well as his spiritual qualities. *'You were of course bound to have the princely nurture* (τῆς βασιλικῆς τροφῆς) *that should train your body to be strong, muscular, healthy, and handsome'* declared Julian in the panegyric addressed to Constantius II, *'and at the same time duly equip your soul with courage, justice, temperance and wisdom'*. While the soul required literary studies, the body ought to be trained with suitable and practical physical exercises, and not with those *'that fit one merely for public display* (πρὸς τὰς ἐπιδείξεις)⁷⁶⁷. A Roman emperor had to be trained to actively engage in the power, unlike a ruler

⁷⁶³ OLYMPIODORUS, *Historia*, fr. 10.2; ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 166-167. For the contemporary account of Philostorgius, see below, p. 153.

⁷⁶⁴ OLYMPIODORUS, *Historia*, fr. 14; fr. 26 (*Bibl. Cod.* 80, p. 170; p. 176); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 174-175; pp. 190-191. Attalus was then included in the triumph organized by Honorius in Rome, where he likely suffered a *calcatio colli* (see below, p. 178).

⁷⁶⁵ OLYMPIODORUS, *Historia*, fr. 26; ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 190-191.

⁷⁶⁶ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XV, 8, 16; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 59; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 173.

⁷⁶⁷ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio* I, 10D; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, pp. 26-27.

like Cyrus who merely *'play at being emperor (παίζοντα μιμεῖσθαι)*⁷⁶⁸. He must distinguish himself from the barbarians, among whom there was no difference in matters of education between the prince and the citizens. It would indeed have been *'foolish to demand superlative excellence from one's rulers when one takes no pains to make them better than other men'*⁷⁶⁹. Moreover, to receive the same education as a private citizen could bring an *'inevitable familiarity (παραδουμένη συνήθεια)'*, which *'little by little steals into men's souls and breeds contempt (ὑπεροψίαν) for their betters'*, causing difficulty in governing on the subjects⁷⁷⁰. According to this view, therefore, it was education, and not pomp, that was the instrument by which the emperor had to ensure the respect of his subject and his authority. To find such an emphasis in Julian's work is hardly surprising, given the importance paid by this emperor to the organization of the public education based on the study of classics. The education, he declared, results indeed *'in a healthy condition (διάθεσιν) of mind, I mean a mind that has understanding (διανοίᾳς) and true opinions (ἀληθεῖς δόξας) about things good and evil, honourable and base'*⁷⁷¹.

The theme of the education of the prince was a long-standing and widely employed *topos*. Claudian, who celebrated Honorius for his being *'born a king'*⁷⁷², described the harsh physical and moral training he received from his father. This latter forbade him any kind of *'luxurious eases'*, strengthened his *'young limbs with hard toils'* and exercised his *'tender powers'* with cold, heat, marches in all conditions, and sleepless nights of watching⁷⁷³. And when it came the time to take the power, Theodosius clearly warned his son that the state (*condicio*) of the emperor of Rome had to be supported by virtues and not only by blood, unlike the ruler of Parthia for whom a noble lineage and birth *'though wantoning in idle luxury'* was enough⁷⁷⁴. In line with those statements, an anecdote transmitted by Suida and attributed to Eunapius criticized the emperor Jovian by describing him as a man who took the power not from his personal virtues but thanks to his father's reputation (δόξαν). Despite his physical strength and war experience he was untrained (ἀμελέτητος) and uneducated (ἄγευστος παιδεύσεως), so that he obscured and disfigured through laziness (διὰ ῥαθυμίας) what was provided to him by nature. And when the citizens of Antiochia, ill-disposed toward him for handing

⁷⁶⁸ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio* I, 13A; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, pp. 32-33.

⁷⁶⁹ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio* I, 14B-C; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, pp. 34-37.

⁷⁷⁰ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio* I, 15A; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, pp. 36-39.

⁷⁷¹ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Epistula* 36, 422A; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1923) 1953, pp. 116-117; quot. in MATHEWS 1963, p. 53.

⁷⁷² He was *'palace-nurtured even from life's threshold'* and his *'towering fortune has never known the condition of a private citizen (ardua privatos nescit Fortuna penates)'*. *'When thou wast born thou wast born a king (regnum cum luce dedit)'* declared the author; CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Tertio Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VII, 10-15; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 270-271. See also CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VIII, 121-127; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 294-297.

⁷⁷³ CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Tertio Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VII, 39-50; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 270-271

⁷⁷⁴ CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VIII, 212-224; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 302-303.

over the city of Nisibis to the Persians and for burning their library, wanted to strike the imperial authority with chants, parodies and pamphlets, they underlined this gap between outward physical beauty and inner unworthiness. They addressed him, among many epithets, as ill-starred and preening Paris (Δύσπαρι, εἶδος ἄριστε), a reference to the most famous handsome man who lacked moral virtues⁷⁷⁵. A certain old woman, who saw him tall and handsome (μέγαν καὶ καλόν) but learned that he was stupid (ἀνόητον), even declared aloud ‘How tall and big (μῆκος καὶ βάθος) is the silliness (μωρία)!’⁷⁷⁶.

The same gap, expressed in a more subtle manner, is declared also by Ammianus: Jovian ‘walked with a dignified bearing (incedebat autem motu corporis gravi)’, had a ‘cheerful expression (vulto laetissimo)’ and was ‘unusually tall’, but he was also ‘accustomed to jest (iocari) in public with his intimates’, ‘only moderately educated (mediocriter eruditus)’ and ‘an immoderate eater’⁷⁷⁷.

To receive a princely education was, however, not a guarantee: when Eunapius had to describe the emperor Gratian without having access to direct information⁷⁷⁸, he explained that ‘one can infer what kind of man he was, since, though still young, he had been Emperor from childhood, and yet had learned (μὴ μεμαθηκώς, lit. he did not acquire the habit of) neither how to rule nor how to be ruled (οἶον τὸ ἄρχον καὶ οἶον τὸ ἀρχόμενον). For greatness of character (τὸ τῆς φύσεως μέγεθος) is especially shown when one’s natural virtue (φύσις) overcomes the conduct and mores (ἀγωγὴν καὶ συνήθειαν) that have been implanted in one and forces them to grow better’. He decided thus to draw Gratian’s

⁷⁷⁵ These were the slanderous words with which Hector addressed his brother (*Il.*, III, 39; XIII, 769), handsome as a god (θεοειδής) and beautiful in the appearance (καλὸν εἶδος) like a powerful leader, but ultimately devoid of strength or value in his heart (*Il.* III, 44-45).

⁷⁷⁶ EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 29; ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 44-47; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, I 401. The story has also been transmitted with some differences by the *Excerpta de Virtutibus et Vitiis* under the name of John of Antiochia, and Blockley considered the two versions as coming independently from the same source; *EXCERPTA DE VIRTUIBUS ET VITIIS*; ed. BÜTTNER-WOBST 1906, I vol., pp. 200-201; BLOCKLEY 1983, n. 62, p. 136. In the most recent edition of the text, anyway, Roberto treated both the *Suidae* and the *Excerpta*’s fragments as part of John’s *Chronica*; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 273.1-2; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 456-461.

⁷⁷⁷ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXV, 10, 14-15; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 380; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 563. Rohrbacher understood the reference to the tall stature and to the initial difficulty in finding an imperial robe long enough to cover him as a reference to the poor fit of the imperial robes and therefore to a further subtly attempt to present Jovian as an illegitimate emperor; ROHRBACHER 2002, p. 33.

⁷⁷⁸ The reports, complained Eunapius, were ‘closely guarded secrets in the palace’, or ‘contained many and various discrepancies and did not reveal the simple truth, but rather concealed it like some forbidden treasure’. He, therefore, had to act as a painter ‘who seek to capture the sitter before him (παράδειγμα χαρακτηρίζουσιν)’ and ‘the likeness of the face (τὸ πρόσωπον ὁμοιότητα) (...) through some of its minor characteristics (μικρά τινα τῶν ὑποκειμένων συμβόλων) – a deep furrow on the brow, prominent sideburns, or some similar insignificant detail of the features (τοιούτῳ τι μικρὸν καὶ παρημελημένον τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὄψιν), which, if overlooked, causes the portrait (τὸ εἶδος) to fail, but if rendered accurately, is the sole reason why the likeness (ὁμοιότητος) had been caught’; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 50 (*Exc. de Sent.* 55); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 76-79.

portrait 'from the available examples of his behaviour (ἐκ τῶν ὑποκειμένων παραδειγμάτων) upon which all agree to a man, even those whose habit it is to spread the usual idle gossip'⁷⁷⁹.

The *Epitome de Caesaribus* also declared that Gratian had a good education, elegance in speaking, and rhetorical skilfulness but did not have the science of ruling a state both by inclination and by practice, a fact that ultimately aroused the army against him⁷⁸⁰. Even more harshly, Ammianus declared that he was 'a young man of splendid character (indolis), eloquent (facundus), self-restrained (moderatus)', but that a 'natural inclination (natura) for unbecoming conduct, which was given free rein by his intimates, turned him to the frivolous pursuits of the emperor Commodus'⁷⁸¹. Gratian therefore seems to have been a victim of flattery, 'a weapon irresistible and fearful even to rational people', which could corrupt even the most honest man. Theodorus, a notary under Valens endowed with a physical beauty matching his virtues, for example, became pray of other members of the court who took advantage of his 'easy-going nature and his relaxed and approachable social manner' (τὰ κέρδη καὶ τὰς κοινὰς τύχας), to turn him into a man who 'lusted after wealth and public office'⁷⁸². Proper education and a good character/disposition were both requirements for being a good ruler, clearly declared also Aurelius Victor referring to the emperor Didius Julianus. He was a noble-born man distinguished for his knowledge of the law, but since his character (*ingenium*) was unable to restrain passions (*cupidini*), his learning was 'a feeble thing (imbecillum)⁷⁸³. Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, on the contrary, had 'remarkable natural abilities (naturae beneficiis)' ruined because they were not 'emanated from cultivated minds (a doctis pectoribus)' and therefore 'gave offence because of their boorishness (insultate)'. 'Learning, refinement and courtesy (eruditionem elegantiam comitatem)', indeed, 'are essential, particularly in emperors, since without these qualities natural talents are despised as if they are unfinished or even crude'⁷⁸⁴.

At all times the emperor had to outwardly show his superior education and character. The physical self-displayed was a highly effective instrument and a constitutive element of power, and the imperial body was something that had to be seen in plain sight⁷⁸⁵. It could assure the soldier about the emperor's safety: when a rumour spread about the alleged death of Julian, the army rushed to his

⁷⁷⁹ EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 50 (*Exc. de Sent.* 55); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 78-79.

⁷⁸⁰ *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 47.5-6; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, pp. 173-174; tr. BANCHICH 2009.

⁷⁸¹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXXI, 10, 18; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 185; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 455. For the importance given by Ammianus to proper education, see BLOCKLEY 1981, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁸² EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 39.1 (*Exc. de Sent.* 37); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 54-55.

⁷⁸³ AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 19.2-3; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 97; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 21. See also ROHRBACHER 2002, p. 46.

⁷⁸⁴ AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 40.12-13; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, pp. 122-123; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 47.

⁷⁸⁵ The reference to the eyes of the presents fixed on the imperial presence is a widespread *topos*: see, for example, how the emperor Julian attracted the sight of the ordered multitude, whose eyes were all turned upon him 'not only with a fixed gaze, but also with great admiration'; AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXII, 2, 4; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 252; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 191.

residence and waited to see him *'resplendent in the imperial garb (augusto habitu)*⁷⁸⁶. It can also contribute to gain or lose support from the people, like when Julian provoked the anger of the Antiocheans by failing to show up in the theatre and at the races⁷⁸⁷. Especially on the battlefield, the emperor had to act as a powerful visual example and gain the approval of the soldiers by standing on an elevated structure (a platform, a hill, or a shield)⁷⁸⁸. Zosimus recounted a case where a potential emperor who behaved in a manner unfitting for authority could even lose the support of his troops: when the soldiers saw (θεωροῦντες) Aemilianus *'behaving (προσιόντα, a derivative of προσεῖδον, expressing thus the idea of behaving in the aspect and in the appearance) more like a common soldier (στρατιωτικῶς) than a general (ἀρχικῶς)*', they considered him *'unfit (ἀναρμόδιον) to be emperor'* and killed him⁷⁸⁹. On the contrary, when appointed as Caesar by Constantius II, Julian was remarkably introduced to the soldiers as a *'young man of quiet strength, whose temperate behaviour (mores) is rather to be imitated than proclaimed'*⁷⁹⁰. Ammianus reported how, on the occasion of his coronation by the troops in 360, Julian made a big deal out of the attire chosen by the hasty army, eager to appoint him as their Augustus with what they have at their disposal. Instead of the traditional diadem, the soldiers proposed to Julian *'a woman's adornment'* and then *'a horse's trapping', 'so that being crowned with it he might display at least some obscure token of a loftier station (uti coronatus speciem saltem obscuram superioris praetenderet potestatis)'*. Despite all the disregard he had flaunted for the ceremonial attire, Julian refused both the solutions as *'not fitting for him to wear'* and *'shameful (turpe)'*, until one of the soldier *'took off the neck-chain (torquem) which he wore as draconarius and boldly (confidenter) placed it on Julian's head'*. *'Driven to the extremity of compulsion, and perceiving that he could not avoid imminent danger if he persisted in his resistance'*, Julian was thus forced to accept⁷⁹¹. Those statements did not aim to criticize a supposedly unworthy condition of the emperor, who clearly understood the inappropriateness of the situation by feeling shame for the forced *schema* not fitted for the role. They rather aimed to underline the rashness of the soldiers, who had violently rebelled against the authority. Zosimus described them as *'inflamed with rage'* while they *'rose from their drinking in uproar', 'going to the imperial quarters with the cups still in their hands'* and bursting

⁷⁸⁶ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XX, 4, 20-22; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 192; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 29.

⁷⁸⁷ The refusal was due to Julian's *'sense and moderation (φρόνησιν καὶ σωφροσύνην) to all things'*, but it ultimately led the citizens, who were *'naturally fond of shows (φιλοθεάμων δὲ ὧν φύσει)'*, *'to say harsh, hurtful things about him'*; ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, III, 11.4; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.1, p. 25; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 56. See also CAMERON 1985, pp. 175-176.

⁷⁸⁸ The military proclamation on the shield, originated in the classical antiquity, entailed ideological concepts based upon the cosmological metaphor of the rising sun. It found its artistic counterpart in the *imago clipeata*; L'ORANGE 1953, esp. ch. 11 and ch. 12; KANTOROWICZ 1963.

⁷⁸⁹ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, I, 29.1; ed. PASCHOUD 1971, vol. I, p. 28; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 9.

⁷⁹⁰ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XV, 8, 10; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 58; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 169.

⁷⁹¹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XX, 4, 17-18; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, pp. 191-192; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 27.

in Julian's home 'without ceremony (σὺν οὐδενὶ κόσμῳ)⁷⁹². The usual 'expected' *schema* was indeed assumed at the time of the legitimate and official proclamation in 355, when Julian appeared to the troops 'brilliant with the gleam of the imperial purple'. The soldiers themselves had behaved in a totally different manner, since 'they neither praised him beyond measure nor less than was fitting, and therefore their words were esteemed as those of censors, not of soldiers'⁷⁹³. When Julian celebrated then as legitimate emperor the quinquennial games at Vienne, he 'wore a magnificent diadem, set with gleaming gems', an image which is counter-posed by Ammianus himself to the previous occasion, when 'he had assumed and worn a cheap crown, like that of the director of a gymnasium attired in purple'⁷⁹⁴.

In the military context as well the emperor had to employ powerful rhetorical gestures. The mention of the *nutus* (nod) or the signal (σύνθημα; σημειῶν) in the battlefield, we have to remember, continued often to refer ambiguously to the order given by the emperor whether or not physically performing a specific movement of the head or of the hand. In its abstract nuance, for example, Ammianus refers to the iniquities committed in Rome 'according to the nod (ad nutum) and wish ((ad voluntatem)' of the praefect Maximinus under Valentinian⁷⁹⁵. Signals understood in their more concrete dimension are the ones employed in occasions involving silence or distance: so Zosimus underlined the importance of the planned signals (σύνθημα; σημειῶν) made during the battle to give order to the troops and specified that they were made with a sound, an *insigne*, or a hand⁷⁹⁶. They were then crucial in course of complots and political 'traps', when it was necessary to give the signal for action (σύνθημα ... τὸ δρᾶμα δίδωμι) to the soldiers at the right moment⁷⁹⁷.

Gregory S. Aldrete has already shown how a Roman emperor, the 'supreme orator whose words carried the greatest significance', studied since childhood the art of rhetoric (gestures included) and used this skill to command, win support, and strengthen his words in front of the Senate and large

⁷⁹² ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, III, 9.2; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.1, p. 21; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 54

⁷⁹³ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XV, 8, 15-16; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 59; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 173.

⁷⁹⁴ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXI, 1, 4; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 216; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 93. See also LIBANIUS, *Oratio*, 18, 98-99; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, pp. 278-279; tr. NORMAN 1969, p. 343.

⁷⁹⁵ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXVIII, 1, 43; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 68; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 113.

⁷⁹⁶ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, II, 16, 18-19, 23; IV, 26; IV, 38-39.

⁷⁹⁷ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, I, 65.2; ed. PASCHOUD 1971, vol. I, p. 56; ed. BEKKER 1837, pp. 56-57; tr. RIDLEY 1982, pp. 20-21. The misunderstanding of those signals remains always possible and could have disastrous consequences. Later in the sixth century, Procopius told the story of the ships full of Sicilian grains, sent to Rome by pope Vigilius, which were captured by the men of Totila when the sailors failed to understand the signal given by the guards. Those latter noticed indeed the enemies concealed inside the walls and tried to signal (σημαίνειν) to the men on the ships not to come ahead 'by weaving their cloaks (τὰ ἱμάτια σείοντες)', 'but the men on the ships failed to comprehend (οὐ ξυνιέντες) what they were doing, supposing that the Romans in Portus were rejoicing and inviting them to the harbour'; PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Gotico*, III (VII), 14.11-12; ed. and tr. DEWING 1962, vol. IV, pp. 412-413.

audience at a public meeting⁷⁹⁸. In the fourth century, descriptions of proper or improper way of moving during a speech were often used, it is true, as narrative device to make clear the right or unjust position of the parts involved in a dispute. So Ammianus Marcellinus employed those expedients to emphasise the behaviour of good Romans against false courtesans in the description of the trial between the *magister militum* Marcellus, who moved false charges against Julian in front of the emperor Constantius II, and the *praepositus cubiculi* Eutherius, who in turn defended the Caesar. Marcellus arrived in Milan ‘*blustering and making trouble* (strepens et tumultuans)’, since he was ‘*a vain talkative fool* (vanidicus) *and all but mad* (amenti propior)’. Once admitted to the council, then, he began to talk accompanying his words with ‘*mighty gesticulation* (cum motu quodam corporis loquebatur)’. Eutherius for his part finally revealed the truth by speaking ‘*modestly* (verecunde) *and in few words* (modice, lit. with due measure)’⁷⁹⁹. The dignified attitude of Eutherius, suitable to his Roman virtues, clashed therefore against the disordered and messy movements of Marcellus, which associated him with a mad person.

But also at a more practical level, rhetorical gestures of command and speaking continued to be an important imperial attribute widely employed in public speeches to underline words and to express moral and political values, as well as to amaze, exhort and therefore also to control the audience. The emperor has to corroborate his words not only with his *eloquium/eloquentia*, but also with his outward appearance, the tone of his voice and his gestuality. So the emperor Trajan is mocked by the emperor Julian in the pages of his satirical work *Caesares* because, despite his ability in speaking (δυνάμενος λέγειν), he had an easiness of temper (ὑπὸ ῥαθυμίας), for which reason he gave to his secretary the task of writing his speech. When he had to personally make his speech in front of the gods at banquet, therefore, he initially ‘*shouted rather than spoke* (φθεγγόμενος μᾶλλον ἢ λέγων)’, using weak arguments to underline his supposed superiority over the other rulers⁸⁰⁰. When Libanius wanted to criticize Constantius II, he also chose to target his ability as an orator. In contrast with Julian – the emperor who ‘*made his entry into the senate house*’ and skilfully delivered his speech here – Constantius not only did not care about the Senate. He also ‘*did not come to attend its sessions, for because of his incapacity for public speaking* (μὴ δύνασθαι λέγειν)’. He thus ‘*shunned a place that required an orator’s presence*’⁸⁰¹.

⁷⁹⁸ ALDRETE 1999, pp. 85-97.

⁷⁹⁹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res gestae* XVI, 7, 2-3; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, pp. 76-77; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 227. Ammianus had already connected wide gestures with the kind of men which during the Principate offended the greatness of Rome. For the contrast between *ostentatio* and *veritas* in republican Rome, see CORBEILL 2002, p. 204.

⁸⁰⁰ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Caesares*, 28; ed. NESSELRATH 2015, p. 130; tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1949, p. 393. Immediately after, nevertheless, he will display his oratorical qualities.

⁸⁰¹ LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 18, 154; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, p. 302; tr. NORMAN 1969, pp. 379-381.

The ancient gesture of power of the raised right hand, which had a high symbolic value in Greek and Roman iconography and literature⁸⁰², remained the most 'iconic' one representative of the imperial authority especially in the juridical and military setting. So, when Honorius wanted to express his approval for the revival of the city of Rome after the Ataulf's war, he made it with his 'gesture and word'⁸⁰³. And Valentinian, just unanimously acclaimed Augustus by his troops in Nicaea, rose on a high platform dressed up with a purple robe and diadem and introduced his speech by uncovering his arm – '*in order to speak more conveniently* (ut expeditus loqueretur)⁸⁰⁴– and by raising his right hand '*with the authority of an emperor who was full of confidence* ('ui principis fiducia plena')⁸⁰⁵. Even if it was ultimately the spoken word that played the major role in those occasions⁸⁰⁶, therefore, it was with the gesture that the ruler showed to be fit to rule. Even the gods could exploit its authoritative power: in the fifth century's Life of Proclus, the divinity of the Lydian city of Adratta revealed his affinity with the philosopher 'dear to god' through an apparition in which he spoke '*in the way that one pronounces an encomium of someone in the theatre*', that is, '*in an actor's tone* (ὑποκρίσεως), *with his hand extended in a gesture* (τοῦ σχήματος τῆς χειρὸς ἀποτεινόμενον)⁸⁰⁷.

Rhetorical gestures can be distorted, instead, in the case of the *tyrannoi*. Zosimus reported that Magnentius staged a trick (μηχανησάμενος) against Constantius II and feigned a peaceful attitude by sticking his spear in the ground (πήξας ἐν τῇ γῆ τὸ δόρυ) '*as if he wished to treat for peace*', and beckoning with his right hand (τῇ δεξιᾷ νεύσας)⁸⁰⁸. Finally, also the soldiers could in turn answer not only with the sounds produced by the striking of their shield (seemingly the last vestige of the original spontaneity which marked earlier manifestations of consensus)⁸⁰⁹. They could also perform formal and pre-fixed gestures, clear and visible. This is the case of the gesture-act performed by the soldiers when

⁸⁰² L'ORANGE 1953, pp. 162-164; BRILLIANT 1963, pp. 23-25; NEUMANN 1965, pp. 78-81; SALADINO 1995, esp. pp. 34-36.

⁸⁰³ See above, p. 116.

⁸⁰⁴ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXVI, 2, 3; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 5; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 577.

⁸⁰⁵ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXVI, 2, 5; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 5; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 577.

⁸⁰⁶ The imperial words were no more considered as a mere speech uttered by a military commander, but rather as '*no less approved than the words of some oracle*'; AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXI, 5, 9; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 223; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 113.

⁸⁰⁷ MARINUS, *Vita Procli*, 32; ed. SAFFREY and SEGONDS 2002, p. 38; tr. EDWARDS 2000, p. 108.

⁸⁰⁸ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, II, 48.2; ed. PASCHOUD 1971, vol. I, p. 121; tr. RIDLEY 1982, pp. 44-45.

⁸⁰⁹ See, for example, the soldier who approved the choice of Constantius II and welcomed Julian as new Caesar by joyfully sticking the shield against their knee. '*This*', explains Ammianus, '*is a sign* (indicium) *of complete approval; for when, on the contrary, they smite their shields with their spears it is an indication* (documentum) *of anger and resentment*'; AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XV, 8, 15-16; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 59; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 173. And when Julian was finally proclaimed Augustus, they acclaimed him '*rising to their feet and clashing their spears against their shields with mighty din, almost with one voice*'; AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XX, 5, 8; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 194; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 35.

they took their oath in front of Julian: when he convinced them to engage in the war, they were so moved that they swore their loyalty by '*aiming their swords at their throats*'⁸¹⁰.

The perfect *schema* required by the pagan audience from the emperor continued thus to be shaped according to the traditional republican values. It included a respectful attitude toward the subjects and the showing off of an exceptional and superior body, mirror of the good education and of the moral and political superiority necessarily required from the head of the State. On the other hand, the influence of the Hellenistic doctrine of the divine kingship, already present in Roman culture since at least the first century, and the spiritual and monotheistic direction assumed by the society in the storm of cultural changes of the third-fourth century, led the emperor to highlight his association with the gods⁸¹¹. The emperor presented himself as a divinely ordained institution charged with the high responsibility of directing the citizens' affairs and leading the empire to rule the world⁸¹². Especially after the late third century, he became a divine being worthy of veneration himself⁸¹³. This association was emphasised in the official panegyric and artistic production, where the imperial body assumed especially a sacred character⁸¹⁴.

In historical descriptions of ceremonial practices, where attitudes aimed at increasing too much the distance between ruler and ruled (like the above-mentioned statue-like posture of Constantius II) were possibly seen also as the sign of an autocratic kind of government, the official introduction of gestures expressing the sacred and god-like nature of the authority constituted a problematic issue. This is the case of the *adoratio* or *proskynesis* reserved for the emperor (a gesture which involved the kissing of the purple, the kneeling or, more often, the full prostration in front of the emperor).

The prostration was employed since ancient time, as we have seen, by those who wanted to submit themselves, show their respect or their penitence, or beg for help from a superior authority. The emperor remained unquestionably free to require the *proskynesis* from barbarians: they could bend their knees, offer a golden crown and do obeisance to the emperor as a '*lord of the world and of its*

⁸¹⁰ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXI, 5, 10; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 223; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, pp. 113-115. This soldier's oath was followed by that of the officials and all the intimates of the emperor; *ibidem*.

⁸¹¹ For a summary of the main philosophical trends that have contributed to rationalize the idea of a divine monarchy in Hellenistic times and then in Rome, see PERTUSI 1990, esp. pp. 16-19, with bibliography; RUNCIMAN (1977) 2003, p. 41. For the worship paid by Greece to the goddess Roma and the Roman provincial governors under the Principate, and the way in which Octavian associated himself with the cult of Rome as a useful mean to gain the loyalty of the provinces, see JONES 1963, p. 11. For the passage from the Principate to the Empire and the absolute and bureaucratic monarchy strongly affected by religious tone, see especially ALFÖLDI (1934) 1970.

⁸¹² HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 2; p. 63.

⁸¹³ DECKERS 2000.

⁸¹⁴ See MacCORMACK 1981, also for the concept of *deus praesens* and for the way in which the relation between emperor and god was expressed especially in art and in panegyrics related to the ceremony of the *adventus*.

people', like the Saracen princes received by Julian⁸¹⁵. The Quadi '*pitifully offered themselves* (προτεινομένους) *as suppliants*' too, and threw themselves '*most miserably* (οἰκτρὸτατον καταστάς)' before Julian's throne⁸¹⁶. And when Zizais, a youth of royal stature among the Sarmatians, came to beg for peace in front of Constantius II, he made a *proskynesis* that was fully charged with reverent awe. He performed '*as if lying lifeless*', without uttering any words, overwhelmed by fear and amazement and thus displaying his respect through his own entire body. His example was followed by his soldiers: they waited full of fear and speechless until Constantius II gave the signal for their petition, and then '*threw down their shields and spears, stretched out their hands with prayers, and succeeded in many ways in outdoing their prince in lowly supplication*'⁸¹⁷. The barbarians expressed in this way their condition as slaves of the emperor who conquered them – an idea that could be further underlined by the hands tied behind their back⁸¹⁸. Another category, that of the *tyrannoι*, could also express in this way a general inferior condition and ask forgiveness because of their impious attempt to seize the power. Licinius, besieged in Nicomedia, '*threw himself* (καθίσταται) *before Constantine as a suppliant* (ἰκέτης) *and bringing him the purple, acclaimed him as emperor and lord, and begged pardon for what happened*'⁸¹⁹. In order to beg the emperor, it was also possible to clasp the knees: this ancient gesture (it could be found at least since Homer) was used for example by Justina when she '*clasped the emperor's* (Theodosius) *knees and begged him neither to let the death of Gratian go unpunished*'⁸²⁰.

The attempt to demand this kind of gesture also to members of the court, senators and aristocrats, on the contrary, was presented by authors informed by republican values as something barbarous and humiliating. The members of the court were not defeated enemies, and the gesture assumed, therefore, the meaning of a worship that recalled the practices of the Persian and the Hellenistic courts and the claims of the 'bad' emperors of the tradition like Caligula, Nero and Domitian – a relationship promptly underlined as a mean of critique. In the *Historia Augusta* the practice to be adored in the Persian manner (*adorari regum more Persarum*) was attributed to Helagabalus and was directly opposed to the refusal of the 'good' emperor Alexander Severus, who in turn did not suffer this kind of flattery⁸²¹. '*God forbid that any free man should ever print a kiss on my feet*'-was used to cry out then Maximinus the Elder (who, despite his brutality, always '*rose to greet many distinguished men*'). He manifested with those words the distance between him and his nephew Maximinus the Younger,

⁸¹⁵ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXIII, 3, 8; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 299; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 325.

⁸¹⁶ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, III, 7; ed. PASCHOUD 1979 vol. II.1, p. 18; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 53.

⁸¹⁷ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVII, 12, 9-10; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, pp. 123-124; ROLFE 1950, vol. I, pp. 373-375.

⁸¹⁸ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, III, 22.6; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.1, p. 41; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 62.

⁸¹⁹ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, II, 28.1; ed. PASCHOUD 1971, vol. I, p. 100; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 36.

⁸²⁰ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, IV, 44.2; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.2, p. 312; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 91.

⁸²¹ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Alexander Severus* 18, 3; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 264; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 211.

who in turn behaved arrogantly (*superbissimus erat*) by seating in front of high dignitaries, and displayed his haughtiness during his levees when ‘*he stretched out his hand, and suffered his knees to be kissed, and sometimes even his feet*’⁸²².

The words of the *Historia Augusta* reflected the stage in the growing of the formalism reached under Diocletian, the emperor who allegedly achieved ‘what Alexander the Great had attempted six centuries earlier’⁸²³: he is described as embracing the absolutist and autocratic style of the Hellenistic and Persian kings, by calling himself ‘Dominus’ and by introducing at court, as an official act, the greeting to the authority as a sacred being. The traditional opinion that Diocletian was the ruler who transformed the Roman *princeps* into an oriental monarch is no doubt an oversimplified view but yet it is hard to deny that his age marked a decisive stage in the process of the imperial ‘Absonderung’, i.e. elevation of the emperor above the ordinary mortals. Several republican sources presented this situation in a critical manner. Aurelius Victor mentioned that Diocletian, an otherwise good emperor, was not from a noble background and therefore, since those from humble origins are often excessively proud and ambitious, he used for his clothes rich decorations which ‘*went beyond good taste (civilia) and betrayed a vain and haughty disposition (tumidique et affluentis animi)*’. Even worse, then, ‘*he was the first of all after Caligula and Domitian to permit himself to be called ‘Lord (dominum)’ in public and to be worshipped (adorari) and addressed as a god (appellarique uti deum)*’⁸²⁴. Eutropius, who also admired Diocletian, even more harshly reported that unlike the emperors before him (who were only ‘*greeted (salutarentur)*’), he gave order to be ‘*revered with prostration (adorari)*’, ‘*a practice more in keeping with royal usage than with Roman liberty (regiae consuetudinis formam magis quam Romanae libertatis invexerit)*’. Unlike the previous emperors who distinguished themselves only for the purple, he began to use ‘*clothing and shoes decorated with gems*’⁸²⁵. Ammianus also defined the act of kissing the purple as a ‘*foreign and royal form of adoration (externo et regio more instituti adorari)*’, which went against the habits of the emperors who were previously ‘*saluted like the higher officials*’⁸²⁶.

Constantius II also embraced this kind of ceremonial appearance and was used to receive the *proskynesis*. He jealously guarded this privilege: Ablabius, a man so rich and powerful that ‘*all men marvelled that he did not aspire to be emperor*’, ruined himself by insolently and arrogantly accepting the ceremonial gestures of the *proskynesis* when he was drawn into a trap by the emperor himself⁸²⁷.

⁸²² HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Maximini duo* 28, 1; 7; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. II, pp. 24-25; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 369.

⁸²³ JONES 1963, p. 17.

⁸²⁴ AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 39.2-7; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 117; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 41. For the causal relationship between lack of education and haughty self-display, see ROHRBACHER 2002, p. 46; p. 164.

⁸²⁵ EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium*, 9.26; ed. MÜLLER 1995, p. 136; tr. BIRD 1993, p. 63.

⁸²⁶ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XV, 5, 18; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 50; ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 145.

⁸²⁷ Constantius sent to Ablabius’ luxurious estate in Bithynia some swordsmen. They prostrated (προσεκύνησάν) in front of him, as usually made by Romans in front of the emperor (ὡσπερ νομίζουσι Ῥωμαῖοι βασιλέα προσκυνεῖν). The gesture made Ablabius arrogant (σοβαρῶς) and superb (βαρύτερος),

Julian for his part withstood those innovations. We have seen how he preferred the traditional friendly, at most superior and decorous, appearance. In opposition to Diocletian, he was also the first emperor to address his subjects as *'My friend (ὦ ἑταῖρε)'*. The friendly attitude, explained indeed Libanius, was seen by Julian as *'more productive of good will (εἰς εὖνοιαν)'*. He indeed *'did not think that it heightened his majesty for them to be frightened and silent, to fold their hands (τὸ εἶσω τὴν χεῖρα ἔχειν), to prostrate themselves to the ground (τὸ κύπτειν εἰς γῆν) and to study his shoe-toe in preference to his face (τὸ βλέπειν εἰς τὸ ὑπόδημα μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ πρόσωπον), and in all their words and actions to be seen (ὀρᾶσθαι) as slaves rather than free men'*. The imperial power (τὴν βασιλείαν αὐξεῖν) was increased indeed not so much by those devices but rather by the sight of the present person (κεῖνα). Even when he was forced to wear the imperial purple vest, *'he did so as if it were nothing out of the ordinary. In wearing it, he did not look himself up and down and examine its hue (...). Nor did he measure the happiness of his reign by the depth of his purple'*⁸²⁸. Ceremonies and an attire made of outstanding clothes and *insignia* were indeed mere empty devices in themselves: when a wealthy citizen conspired against Julian *'making himself a purple robe out of a silk cloak'*, the emperor ordered to bring to him also purple shoes, so that *'he may be able to learn what insignificant rags amount to without great power'*⁸²⁹.

In the effort to present his persona in line with the republican values, therefore, Julian refused on many occasions to use ceremonial devices aimed at stressing too much his 'divine' or god-like nature. Nevertheless, he never questioned the exceptional and unique bond between his power and the divine, and could still enjoy being praised for this connection in panegyrics and in art. No tension was felt in this choice: already the *civilitate* and *moderatio* exhibited by Trajan did not prevent him to be *'considered god-like (deo proximus)'*⁸³⁰. And thanks to his perfect and ordained attire even Alexander Severus, the emperor contrasted directly with Heliogabalus for his refusal of the *adoratio*, was looked at by the inhabitants of the province *'as to a god (ut deum)'*⁸³¹. As for Julian, he could cause to paint his figure *'on the public picture'* in juxtaposition with *'a representation either of Jupiter coming out (προφανόμενον) of heaven and presenting him (παρέχοντα) the symbols of the imperial power, a*

to the point that he even asked for the imperial purple. Instead of the purple robe, the soldiers gave him the 'purple death' (τὸν πορφύρεον θάνατον, a Homeric expression) and pulled him into pieces like a sacrificial animal; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Vitae Philosopharum*, VI, 28-31; ed. GOULET 2014, p. 24; tr. CIVILETTI 2007, p. 109. For the purple and the special disposition of the tissue of the imperial mantle as imperial prerogative, see also AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XVI, 8, 8; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, p. 80; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. I, p. 237.
⁸²⁸ LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 18, 189-191; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, pp. 319-320; tr. NORMAN 1969, pp. 405-407. For the debasement of the symbolic charge of imperial *signa* and the refusal of the most striking signs of the imperial power carried on by Julian, see MICHELI 1996, pp. 7-8.

⁸²⁹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXII, 9, 10-11; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 1, pp. 272-273; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 249.

⁸³⁰ EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium*, 8.4; ed. MÜLLER 1995, p. 112; tr. BIRD 1993, p. 49.

⁸³¹ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Alexander Severus*, 50, 2-3; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 291; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 279. The soldiers, in turn, loved him *'like a brother, or a son, or a father'*; *ibidem*.

crown or a purple robe, or else of Mars, or of Mercury, with their eyes intently fixed upon him, as if to express their admiration of his eloquence and military skill'⁸³². This description, it is true, is provided by the Christian Sozomen and referred to the famous event in which the emperor secretly pushed Christians to worship gods 'under the pretext of rendering due honor to him'. However, it also seems to suggest a god-like representation of the imperial persona in art in line with that which characterized Diocletian and Maximianus⁸³³. Libanius praised often his friend's special role as favourite of the immortals: they descend from heaven, take Julian by the hair and speak to him during a banquet⁸³⁴. And Julian himself declared, through the words of his 'hero' Marcus Aurelius, that the proper task of a good emperor's life is the act of imitating god (τὸ μιμεῖσθαι ... τοὺς θεούς) in the spirit (κατὰ τὴν διάνοιαν)⁸³⁵.

The renewed emphasis on the supernatural and god-like dimension of the imperial persona led to a fresh philosophical reflection aimed at clarifying how the emperor could achieve the *mimesis* with the divinity and how his mortal body was connected with his soul. The resulted ideas will have deep consequences on the perception of imperial appearance and behaviour.

In the fourth century, pagan authors managed to deal with the conversion of rulers to the new Christian religion, providing ideas suitable for both Christians and non-Christians alike through the Platonising language, in its Neoplatonic re-elaboration⁸³⁶. In this perspective stood out most of all Themistius, the pagan philosopher and orator who put his philosophical background at the practical service of the imperial ideology and managed to politically survive under the fourth century Christian emperors by skilfully exploiting his consummate ability as a rhetorician. Themistius managed to master especially the language and the themes more convincing for the members of the senatorial class, in order to manipulate their opinion and impress even this side of the audience, but also acting as the perfect mediator between the imperial authority and the senatorial interests. This effort included thus

⁸³² SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 17.3-4; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 178-180; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 339.

⁸³³ See for example the pictorial program of the Temple of Ammon in Luq̄sor, where Diocletian and Maximian received the *adoratio* of the subjects while Zeus crowned them from above; DECKERS 2002.

⁸³⁴ LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 18, 172; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, p. 310; tr. in NORMAN 1969, p. 393. For Julian's ascension in heaven after his death, see LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 18, 304; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, p. 369; tr. NORMAN 1969, pp. 483-485.

⁸³⁵ JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Caesares*, 34; ed. NESSELRATH 2015, pp. 136-137; tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1949, p. 407. On the occasional stress on the Tyche as the factor governing the promotion to kingship, see HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 139-140.

⁸³⁶ Neoplatonism could be easily reconciled with Judaeo-Christian vision of the Creation and a single God: they shared an intellectually coherent system and ideas concerning the division of the cosmos in a sensible and an intelligible part (knowable respectively with the physical senses and the intellectual activity), and the vision of the cosmos as a progression to a single divine power (the One), from which emanates the multiplicity of the inferior beings. What was total 'anathema' for Platonists was rather the idea of the mix between the Divinity and the sensible matter in the Incarnation; HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 62-63. The relationship was not always so smooth: Eunapius for example was attacked by a Christian reader (possibly Arethas of Patras) for 'stealing' ideas taken from the Christian religion; BLOCKLEY 1983, n. 57, pp. 134-136.

also the development of a peculiar ‘philosophy of the imperial appearance’, where he bestowed philosophical values to the ruler’s behaviour as a matter that went beyond the problem of good or bad behaviour for a model-citizen⁸³⁷. In line with contemporary developments that, as we will see, were also marking the Christian theological reflection over the imperial ideology, Themistius gave a philosophical Neoplatonic ground to the divine origin of the kingship and the god-like nature of the emperor, chosen by God for the good of his subjects. ‘Do you want to know what is philosophy’s contribution?’, asked in his speech toward Jovian. ‘She declares that the king is law embodied, a divine law which has come down from on high at last, an outpouring of the everlastingly Good, a providence of that nature closer to the earth, who looks in every way for imitation, who is absolutely divinely born and divinely nourished’⁸³⁸. The divine-like nature of the kingship is a widespread common *topos* in Themistius, and he could address even the Christian Theodosius as a king who ‘resemble Zeus. For, as his attendant and interpreter, he is entrusted with no paltry portion of Zeus’ realm in the flock of mankind’⁸³⁹. In any case, the distinction between God and the emperor is never surpassed. God indeed is characterized by ‘eternal life, superabundance of power (περιουσία δυνάμεως), and unceasing benefaction toward mankind’, while only the latter quality is attainable for the king ‘who shares in our common nature’⁸⁴⁰.

The ruler is recognized thus as a being characterized by an exceptional condition between mortal and divine. But how, asked Themistius, ‘a man who walks upon the earth and is clothed in flesh (σάρκα) can be thought to possess the form (ἴνδαλμα) of Him who is seated beyond the furthest vault and beyond everything that is?’⁸⁴¹. Eunapius also addressed the problem when he praised his hero Julian, the embodiment of all that was desirable in a ruler⁸⁴². Julian, explained Eunapius, in the moment of his proclamation was chosen as a leader by the army because ‘through the strength of his personality and his stature, as great as that of God, extirpated from himself that governing force of life which drags men down and, raising himself up from deep, deep waters, beheld the heavens and the beauty therein and, though himself clothed in flesh, held converse with the incorporeal spirits (τοῖς τε ἀσωμάτοις ὠμιλήσε σῶμα ἔχων ἔτι)’⁸⁴³. The mortal dimension of the emperor could be overcome indeed only through exceptional virtues and a perfect conduct informed by the imitation of God. The emperor,

⁸³⁷ HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 32-33; pp. 37-38.

⁸³⁸ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* V, 64b; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 76; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 160-161.

⁸³⁹ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XV, 188b-c; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 231; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 240.

⁸⁴⁰ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* VI, 78d-79a; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 94; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 190-191.

⁸⁴¹ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XV, 188d; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 232; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 241.

⁸⁴² BLOCKLEY 1981, p. 15.

⁸⁴³ EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 28.1 (*Exc. de Sent.* 24); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 42-43. See also MATHEWS 1963, p. 51.

explained in more detail Themistius, must have moral virtues like *philantropia*⁸⁴⁴, kindness, courage, justice, benevolence, and practical wisdom. He had to rule by exercising justice and by avoiding flattering. And he had to show a moderate attitude (σωφροσύνη) and a self-control that gave evidence of his capacity to govern passions⁸⁴⁵. The ruler has to repress especially the anger, a short-lived madness which is more dangerous in the hands of a powerful man ‘*who could do anything once enraged*’⁸⁴⁶. ‘*For what is more divine than a just man who has the power to do many wrongs (but does not)?*’, acknowledged Themistius. ‘*Self-control indeed comes near this. For what use is a ruler who is not free? This is the tyrant who at one and the same time rules other men and gives himself up as a slave to his passions*’⁸⁴⁷. Even if praises and punishments are both tools for the government (‘*the one increasing virtue, the other curtailing wickedness*’), it is only the ‘*guilty and inhuman tyrant*’ who ‘*exceeds the errors in his punishment, while he fails to do justice to deeds well done in his honour*’⁸⁴⁸. Themistius discerned then between what is *of the king*, his ‘*accident*’, and what is *the king*, his substance and real essence, much more difficult to grasp since knowable only through the intellect:

‘*(...) every king has but small power to maintain his rule by his hands or even his entire body in comparison with the force of his mind; whoever is able to see that, he is the one who can distinguish the true king and admires you, not what is yours. And indeed, the others also experience what one might expect. For the soul is quite simply something which is more difficult to perceive than the body. The eyes of most men see the latter in an instant but are unable to apprehend the former. The surface attributes which surround the king (τῷ δὲ βασιλεῖ τὰ ἔξωθεν περικείμενα), being intricate (ποικίλα) and pleasing to the eyes (ἀγαπητὰ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς), cheat the sight of what is within (ἐκκρούει τῶν ἐνδοτέρω τὴν θέαν) (...)*’⁸⁴⁹.

What matters most, it is true, it to ‘*discern the true king*’, since the imperial external features could amaze or turn aside those who ‘*are beguiled around the temple portals but are not willing to gaze upon the sacred images within*’⁸⁵⁰. However, the imperial duty to act in imitation of God went also through the outward appearance. Since God is revealed through his Creation (τὰ ποιήματα), indeed, also the

⁸⁴⁴ For the concept of *philantropia* in Themistius, an ancient concept which by the fourth century became a rule of conduct common both to Christians and non-Christians alike, see HEATHER AND MONCUR 2001, p. 24, p. 67. For the developments of the term, see also HENRY 1967, p. 301-302.

⁸⁴⁵ Themistius quoted the passage in the Republic in which Plato mentions the self-control together with the majesty and mindfulness as characteristics of the ideal king; THEMISTIOUS, *Oratio* III, 46a; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 55; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 132. The comparison between the government and the wheeling of a ship was an old image too. From Plato, it became a common *topos* in classical antiquity.

⁸⁴⁶ THEMISTIOUS, *Oratio* I, 7b-c; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 7-8; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 84-85.

⁸⁴⁷ THEMISTIOUS, *Oratio* I, 6a; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 6; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 83.

⁸⁴⁸ THEMISTIOUS, *Oratio* I, 13a; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 14; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 91. The same concept, which had Platonic roots (Rep. 577E) is declared by Julian the Apostate, for whom the good ruler had to show mercy even when in anger, to take away his harshness and display his kindness; JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio* I, 48A-B; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, pp. 122-125. Indeed ‘*kings ought never to behave insolently, nor use their power without reserve, nor be carried away by their anger like a spirited horse that runs away for lack of the bit and a driver*’; JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Oratio* II, 50B-C; ed. and tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1954, pp. 134-135.

⁸⁴⁹ THEMISTIOUS, *Oratio* I, 2b-c; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 2; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 79.

⁸⁵⁰ THEMISTIOUS, *Oratio* III, 45c-d; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 55; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 131-132.

'king's actions (πράξεις) demonstrate (φαίνουσιν) royal virtues'⁸⁵¹. The emperor had to externally show off in the body his god-like qualities: he had to fulfil his role as model and principle of order through his image (εἰκὼν) made clear (σεσήμανται) on coins and showed up on stamps (χαρακτήρ). This image functioned 'as an education in the good, each man imitating his leader as best as he can, as the leader himself has imitated God'⁸⁵². He has to show his worthy soul and his good mind also by carrying the image of the 'spiritual idea of kingship'⁸⁵³. Body and soul are once again interconnected, and collaborated together on the bestowing of imperial legitimacy. 'But be sure, O noble man', urged Themistius, 'that neither beauty, nor physical stature, nor swiftness, nor might makes a good king, unless he should carry in his soul some form (ἴνδαλμα) of resemblance to God'⁸⁵⁴. For 'there is no benefit in keeping an upright diadem (ὀρθὴν ... τιάραν), but a twisted character (διεστραμμένον ἦθος), and to have a golden sceptre but a soul more worthless than lead, to clothe one's body in fine and intricately worked garments while exhibiting a mind naked of virtue (...)'⁸⁵⁵.

Theodosius could be praised therefore for being 'perfect and sound in limbs (ὀλόκληρον καὶ ἀρτίπουν), illustrious in both forms of beauty, those of the spirit and of the body. Nor was this in fact an idle boast, for here there is an emperor to behold (πάρεστιν ὄρᾶν), for whom I had need of Homer's words 'Never did I look with my eyes on one so excellent / nor yet so noble' – for you are like a king'⁸⁵⁶. 'The very sight of you is enough to dispel all fear from the spirit', declared Themistius in another oration, where he praised the emperor's mild eyes, his unperturbed voice, and the calm that emanated from his face⁸⁵⁷. Even the emperor's perfectly controlled gestures became a worthy sight. Valens and Valentinian sat on their thrones and gave their assent 'by a mere nod and a short phrase (νεύματι φιλοῦ καὶ ῥήματι μικρῷ)'⁸⁵⁸, while Theodosius administered justice and preserve the empire assuming the typical posture 'seated on the throne, both with small phrases and slight nods (νεύμασι φιλοῦς)'⁸⁵⁹. And when the leaders of the Goths surrendered to Saturninus, they clung 'to the king's knees (...) until they won a kindly nod (νεύματος εὐμενοῦς) and a voice which did not rouse war but was full of kindness (...)'⁸⁶⁰. The emperor's statue-like posture and perfectly controlled body became,

⁸⁵¹ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* I, 3a; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 3; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 80.

⁸⁵² THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XV, 192a-b; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 236; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 245. On the responsibility with which the emperor is charged as a good example for his citizens, see also THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XV, 195d; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 240; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 250.

⁸⁵³ HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, n. 272, p. 133. Employing an overtly platonic language, Themistius praises thus Constantius II for being 'like an exact image of the form (ὡσπερ τύπον ἀκριβῆ τῆς μορφῆς)'; THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* III, 46b; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 55-56; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 133.

⁸⁵⁴ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XV, 188c; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 232; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 240-241.

⁸⁵⁵ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* I, 11c; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 12; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 89.

⁸⁵⁶ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XIV, 180d; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 222; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 225.

⁸⁵⁷ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XV, 190b; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 234; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 243.

⁸⁵⁸ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* VI, 80a; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 95; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 192.

⁸⁵⁹ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XV, 189d-190a; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 233; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 242.

⁸⁶⁰ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XVI, 210c; ed. DINDORF p. 256; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 279.

therefore, outward signs not only of a ruler who have a superior mind. They also showed the virtues through which the ruler acted in imitation to god and duly fulfilled his superior role.

Not all the authors expressed such a level of philosophical thought about the relationship between imperial soul and body. However, those ideas remained widespread also in other texts. In the above-mentioned speech attributed by Claudian to Theodosius, the emperor warned his son to be kind (*pius*) and to show *clementia*, which ‘alone makes us equal with gods’⁸⁶¹. He had to control passions (especially anger and lust) and to be king of himself in order to ‘assure an inviolable sanctuary for a spotless soul’ and to ‘hold rightful rule over the world’⁸⁶². The emperor lives indeed ‘in the sight of the whole world’, and both his deeds and vices are public: ‘the splendour of their lofty station allows nought to be concealed; fame penetrates every hiding-place and discovers the inmost secrets of the hearts’⁸⁶³. Furthermore, his good behaviour is a moral duty since ‘the world shapes itself after its ruler’s pattern (componitur orbis regis ad exemplum), nor can edicts sway men’s mind as much as their monarch’s life; the unstable crowd ever changes along with the princeps’⁸⁶⁴. Imperial virtues were transmitted to the emperor’s friends and the other functionaries⁸⁶⁵. And public imperial ceremonies ‘served as the standard by which lesser magistrates’ ceremonies were measured and modelled’, while ‘every Roman official was an emperor in miniature’⁸⁶⁶.

Finally, given the importance of education in classics in the preparation of the imperial service, the examples of the past are recognized as powerful models to be followed or to be avoided by the emperor⁸⁶⁷. The pervasive character of those ideas is testified indeed in narrative literature of the fourth century. Several anecdotes stressed the unworthiness of an emperor’s soul and the illegitimacy of a usurper by denigrating their behaviour and way of moving without self-control. So a ‘bad emperor’ like Heliogabalus can be described in the *Historia Augusta* by overturning the classic image of the emperor mastering his words and gestures in public speaking, reporting that he ‘never refrained from filth conversation (verbis ... infamibus) and would make indecent signs with his fingers (cum et digitis in pudicitiam ostentaret) and would show no regard for decency (pudor) even in public gatherings or in the hearing of the people (in conventu et audiente populo)’⁸⁶⁸. He displayed his lack of restraint also

⁸⁶¹ CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VIII, 276-277; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 306-307.

⁸⁶² CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VIII, 225-268; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 302-307.

⁸⁶³ CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VIII, 269-275; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 306-307.

⁸⁶⁴ CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VIII, 229-303; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 308-309.

⁸⁶⁵ On this idea in Themistius’s speeches, see HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, pp. 72-73.

⁸⁶⁶ McCORMICK 1986, p. 253.

⁸⁶⁷ CLAUDIAN, *Panegyricus De Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, VIII, 303-319; 396-418; ed. and tr. PLATNAUER 1956, vol. I, pp. 308-309; pp. 314-317.

⁸⁶⁸ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Antoninus Heliogabalus* 10, 7; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, pp. 230-231; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 129.

by laughing so loud in the theatre *'that no one else could be heard by the audience* (ut publice in theatro solus audiretur)⁸⁶⁹. The same critique is moved in the *Epitome de Caesaribus* to Philip the Arab, a man *'rose from humble station'* who was reproached even by his young son because he was *'too wantonly roaring with laughter'* during the Secular Games⁸⁷⁰. However, it was especially the anger which did not have to be outwardly shown by a good emperor. *'Even if he felt anger* (θυμόν)*'* declared indeed the physician Oribasius to Julian, *'should not show it in his eyes or in his voice* (διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων καὶ τῆς φωνῆς ἐκφορεῖσθαι)⁸⁷¹.

The loss of self-control was something that could physically shine especially through inappropriate gestures and movements, an idea often expressed in the descriptions of historical emperors of *Historia Augusta*. So Maximinus the Elder, *'passionate* (ferus)*'* by nature, received the news of the appointment of his enemy Gordianus and was *'flamed with fury that you would have thought him not a man but a wild beast. He dashed himself against the walls, sometimes he threw himself upon the ground, he screamed incoherently* (incondite) *aloud, he snatched at his sword as though he could slaughter the senate* (who approved the appointment) *then and there, he rent his royal robes, he beat the palace-attendants'*⁸⁷². The emperor, *'blazing with rage* (iracundia)*'*, went to his room, but *'still he could not control his fury, and finally, to get oblivion from his thoughts, he so soaked himself with wine on that first day, they say, that he did not know what had been done'*⁸⁷³. His fury was *'impossible to describe'* and he seemed *'to go wholly mad'*⁸⁷⁴. Ammianus described the savage and cruel nature of Valentinian, increased by his bad counsellors, which surfaced in his outward appearance: *'when he was in a passion* (ut irascentis)*'*, indeed, *'often his voice and expression, his gait and his colour, were changed* (vox et vultus, incessus mutaretur et color)⁸⁷⁵. The passion was so violent that ultimately brought him to die from apoplexy when he had to suffer an insolent embassy of the Quadi who tried to justify their rebellious compatriots. While in the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, where Valentinian is praised as the perfect *princeps*, it was pointed out that he expired during the legatio *'as the result of a hemorrhage* (impetu

⁸⁶⁹ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Antoninus Heliogabalus*, 32, 7; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 247; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 171.

⁸⁷⁰ EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS, 28.3; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 158-159; tr. BANCHICH 2009.

⁸⁷¹ The emperor agreed to the advice by replying *'You are right'*; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 28.2 (*Exc. de Sent.* 25); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 42-43. Blockley explains that this passage, like others, is taken from 'an anecdotal necrology' on Julian; BLOCKLEY 1983, n. 58, p. 136.

⁸⁷² HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Maximini duo* 17, 1-2; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. II, p. 16; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 349.

⁸⁷³ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Maximini duo* 17, 4-5; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. II, p. 16; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 349.

⁸⁷⁴ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Gordiani tres*, 13, 3-4; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. II, p. 39; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 405. Those highly coloured descriptions cannot be found in Herodian, the main source for the biography of this emperor; MAGIE 1924, n. 60, p. 349

⁸⁷⁵ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXIX, 3, 1-2; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 110; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, pp. 233-235. The prefect Maximinus *'was added as an ill-omened incentive'*, and from his appointment the emperor had *'no one to give better advice or to restrain him'*; *ibidem*. During a reception, then, the *magister officiorum* Leo *'added blazing fuel* (urente irarum nutrimenta)*'* to Valentinian who *'burned with tremendous rage* (in immensum excanduit)*'* against his guests who did not behave in a proper manner; AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXX, 5, 10; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 146; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 341.

sanguinis), *his voice lost, his senses intact* (voce amissa, sensu integer)⁸⁷⁶, Ammianus described in detail that Valentinian ‘burst into a mighty fit of wrath (*ira vehementi percussus*)’. After a moment of apparent calm, then, ‘as if struck by a bolt from the sky’ he remained speechless, his body began to overheat, and ‘his face was tinged with a fiery flush’. To avoid him to fall ‘before the eyes of a throng of the common sort’, his servant took him into another room and laid him upon a bed while ‘all parts of his body were burning hot’⁸⁷⁷. In the very moment in which he was going to die, the gestures which were accorded to his imperial role were substituted by irrational and odd movements: he ‘tried to speak or give some orders, as was indicated by the gasps that often heaved his sides, by the grinding of his teeth, and by movements of his arms as if of men fighting with the cestus (that is, like a boxer)’⁸⁷⁸. The emperor Valens also displayed temporary losses of self-control which had serious political consequences. His ‘despotic anger (*regaliter turgidus*)’, reported Ammianus, drag him to inflict unjust or excessively harsh punishments⁸⁷⁹. He ‘broke out into frenzied fits of rage (*rabiem saeviebat*)’ that pushed him during processes to deviate ‘from the high-way of justice’⁸⁸⁰. He was ‘prone to intolerable anger (*intoleranter irascebatur*) when to be angry at all was shameful (*tunc magis, cum eum puderet irasci*)’⁸⁸¹, and was like a ‘menacing madman (*fremebundus et minax*), to whom nothing ought to have been permitted, since he thought that everything, even what was unjust, was allowed to him’⁸⁸². This was even more serious for him, since ‘it is the duty of a good ruler to restrain his power (*restringere potestatem*), to resist unbounded desire and implacable anger (*resistere cupiditati omnium rerum et implacabilibus iracundiis*)’⁸⁸³. Eunapius, referring to the excessive punishment inflicted by Valens to the adherents of the usurper Procopius⁸⁸⁴, declared indeed that even if it is human to condemn innocents, the power of the king does not have to depend on violence. Only magnanimity could show his supernatural nature and the strength of his power:

⁸⁷⁶ *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 45.8; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 173; tr. BANCHICH 2009. The *Epitome* reported only some rumours that he died of ‘overeating and satiety’; *ibidem*.

⁸⁷⁷ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXX, 6, 3-5; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 149; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, pp. 349-351.

⁸⁷⁸ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXX, 6, 6; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, pp. 149-150; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 351. Zosimus also mentioned the ‘unreasonable demands (*λόγους ὑπὲρ τὸ μέτριον*)’ of the Quadi as the reason for the emperor’s anger (*ἀγανακτήσας*). He briefly recorded that Valentinian ‘did not survive his frenzied anger (*ὀργῆς*); the blood rushed down to his mouth and choked him’; ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, IV, 17.2; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.2, p. 278; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 77.

⁸⁷⁹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXIX, 1, 18; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 98; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 197.

⁸⁸⁰ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXIX, 1, 27; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 100; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 203.

⁸⁸¹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXIX, 1, 20; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 99; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 199. Even worse, he relied on ‘secret whispers’ for his decisions; *ibidem*.

⁸⁸² AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXIX, 2, 10; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 106; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 221. See also AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae* XXXI, 14, 16; XXXI, 14, 6.

⁸⁸³ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXIX, 2, 18; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 107; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 227.

⁸⁸⁴ See below, pp. 138-139.

*'It is magnanimous (μεγαλόψυχον) and very much a characteristic of God (λίαν θεοειδές) to spare even the guilty, while it is within the human nature (τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως) to condemn even the innocent. For the inflicting of unusual punishment springs from the rationale of power (λόγῳ ... τῆς ἀρχῆς) whose purpose is to constrain the subject by fear, whereas the omission of punishment derives from great virtue, in that the kingly power, in its greatness and majesty, depend upon itself without resort to punishment*⁸⁸⁵.

Once again, the imperial lack of steadiness, both of mind and body, could have serious consequences on the State, and this also because of the imitative and persuasive force of the imperial persona. Acting as a censor, stated indeed the *Historia Augusta*, the good emperor proves his *equilibrium* and leads people away from evil and toward the good (*moderatissimus in hominibus deterrendis a malo, invitandis ad bona*)⁸⁸⁶. So an emperor like Alexander Severus demonstrated the power of an optimum model of behaviour driving his soldiers to behave like senators⁸⁸⁷. The character of the rulers (*moribus praesidentium*), declared also Aurelius Victor, can change to the opposite what is good or bad in the state⁸⁸⁸. Their virtues could indeed relieve desperate situations while their vices could ruin the more stable ones⁸⁸⁹. And Zosimus chose to criticize Theodosius II by declaring that, crazy after being defeated in Thessaly and in Macedonia, he destroyed morality by promoting shameful pleasures involving 'comic actors, depraved dancers, dissolute music'. Since 'everyone who imitated the emperor's behaviour (τὰ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐζήλουν ἐπιτηδεύματα) regarded these things as the limit of human happiness', indeed, they imitated his madness and 'the state was ruined'⁸⁹⁰. Eunapius explained even the barbarians heading toward the Roman territory with Theodosius' laziness. This resulted from the fact that he indulged in his human nature and disregard the care for his soul:

*'God has set (ἐγκατέμιξεν) a deadly trait (δεινόν γέ τι χρῆμα) in human nature (ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσεσιν), like the poisonous gall in a lobster or thorns on a rose. For in high authority he has implanted love of pleasure and ease, with the result that, while they have all the means with which to unite mankind into one polity, our Emperors in their concern for the transient turn to pleasure (τὸ θνητὸν σκοποῦσαι πρὸς τὸ ἥδὺ καταφέρονται) while neither pursuing nor showing interest in the immortality which is brought by glory*⁸⁹¹.

⁸⁸⁵ EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 34.9 (*Exc. de Sent.* 35); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 50-51. On the use of *sententiae*, often in form of proverbs, which 'encapsulated the moral of the story in Eunapius', see BLOCKLEY 1981, p. 16.

⁸⁸⁶ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi*, 12, 2; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 57; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 129.

⁸⁸⁷ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Alexander Severus*, 50, 1; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 290; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 279. The emperor's wife was also taken as a model of behaviour by the matrons; HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Alexander Severus*, 41, 1-2; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 283; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 261.

⁸⁸⁸ AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 13.7; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 92; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 15.

⁸⁸⁹ AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 35.14; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, pp. 114-115; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 47. Those kinds of statements are commonplaces in Aurelius' work; BIRD 1994, n. 11, p. 84.

⁸⁹⁰ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, IV, 33.3-4; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.2, p. 296; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 85.

⁸⁹¹ EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 55 (*Exc. de Sent.* 56); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 78-81. For the critique built by Eunapius against Theodosius, shared also by Zosimus, see BLOCKLEY 1981, p. 21.

Finally, even if the emperor had to restrain his passions and control his public demeanour, and even if the imperial appearance was recognized as something that could be skilfully adapted and improved as a political instrument, the ‘good’ behaviour required from him included the necessity to avoid simulation and to always show the true inner being. So the ‘bad’ emperor Tiberius could be criticized for being an insidious and deceptive man who always pretended (*simulans*) an attitude opposite to his real intention⁸⁹². And Hadrian can be defined as a ‘varius multiplex multiformis’ being who concealed his envious and hedonistic mind simulating (*simulans*) restraint, affability, clemency⁸⁹³. The emperor’s men could also be subject to the same kind of critique: under Valens, the proconsul Festus, a ‘*man naturally wicked* (φύσει πονηρὸς)’, ‘*showed no external sign of his madness* (ἡ μανία οὐ θύραθεν) *but it raged deep within* (ἀλλ’ ἔνδοθεν ἐλύσσα καὶ ἐμαίνετο)’ punishing many people⁸⁹⁴.

The connection between theatre and power and the image of the ruler as a performer who acted on a stage was a long-standing *topos*. According to the third-century account of Cassius Dio, already Augustus, at the end of his days, mocked (διέσκωψε) the entire life of men by asking his associates to clap their hands (κρότον) after the manner of comic actors (ὁμοίως τοῖς γελωτοποιοῖς), as if they were in front of the death of a mime (ὡς καὶ ἐπὶ μίμου τινὸς τελευτῆ)⁸⁹⁵. The emperor and his associates are described here as fully aware of the performative character of the court and of the role they had to play until the very end, when even the emperor was finally allowed to reveal his ‘cards’. Themistius, amazed about the recent events and the trouble-free sharing of power between Valens and Valentinian, used such a metaphor too. He claimed that the events ‘*surpass the stage*’ avoiding the ancient dramas filled with episodes of struggle between brothers⁸⁹⁶. Even those used to flatter those in authorities under Valens are defined by Ammianus as men ‘*who with various pretences of approval applaud every word of the same man of loftier fortune, emulating (affectando) the witty flatteries of the parasites in the comedies*’⁸⁹⁷.

⁸⁹² He pretended to support what he detested, to oppose what he actually desired, and appeared meek with those whom he wanted to punish; *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 2.4; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 136; tr. BANCHICH 2009; AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 2.1; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 78; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 2.

⁸⁹³ *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 14.6; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 150; tr. BANCHICH 2009.

⁸⁹⁴ The fragment, transmitted by the Suida, had been attributed to Eunapius; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, Φ, 279; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 39.8; ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 56-57.

⁸⁹⁵ CASSIUS DIO, *Historia Romana*, LVI, 30.4; ed. and tr. CARY 1955, vol. VII, pp. 68-69. According to the earlier version reported by Suetonius, the emperor asked his friend if he had recited the farce of the life (*mimum vitae*) well, and then asked, in Greek, to dismiss him with an applause. Later John of Antioch will repeat the story: he ended slightly differently the anecdote by telling that Augustus, in this way, manifestly bantered the human life (δηλονότι ἀποσκώπτων εἰς τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον); JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 158; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 276-277. For the later authors who reported the story, see ROBERTO 2005, n. p. 276.

⁸⁹⁶ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* VI, 74b-c; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 88; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 184.

⁸⁹⁷ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXVIII, 4, 12; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 79; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 145.

The imagery of the emperor performing like an actor was marked by a negative connotation when he passed the boundaries and publicly dressed up and performed like an actor. In the minds of the authors and the audience of the fourth century remained vivid the descriptions offered by Tacitus, Suetonius, Herodian, and Cassius Dio of the shameful theatrical activities of Caligula and Nero⁸⁹⁸. ‘*What more profitable spectacle do you think educated men could have than to see an emperor who disgraces himself (ἀσχημονοῦντα)?*’ asked Philostratus through the words of Apollonius, when he complained about Nero’s activities as singer and gladiator. ‘*Man is the plaything of god, as Plato thought us, but if an emperor becomes the plaything of man, and degrades himself to please the masses, what reflections might he not prompt in lovers of wisdom*’⁸⁹⁹. Unlike Nero who participated in the Olympic Games and was more engaged in his role as actor than in his imperial duty, indeed, the performance of the emperor had to remain hidden⁹⁰⁰. If not, he could be associated with Commodus, who continued to be stigmatized as cruel and bloodthirsty⁹⁰¹, a ‘new Caligola’ who denigrated his position by acting as actor, dancer, gladiator, or charioteer in the Hippodrome⁹⁰². Or he could be seen as Heliogabalus, the worst among the emperor-actors, who played the role of Venus in the drama of Paris, outwardly assuming (*schemate figurabat*) the lascivious stances, gestures and facial expression of the goddess⁹⁰³. A bad emperor could also occasionally disguise himself under a lower *schema* (often involving the wearing of a common cap), following the example of Caligula and Nero, to make a drinking-trip or to visit prostitutes and public spectacles: this is the case of Lucius Verus (‘a second Nero’⁹⁰⁴ who sometimes

⁸⁹⁸ Caligula played the part of a god and gave himself to performance arts; AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 3.10; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, pp. 80; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 3; *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 3.5; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 137; tr. BANCHICH 2009. Nero rode as a charioteer, danced and sang with his cithara in public, used theatrical props like a tragic actor and dressed up like a young bride-to-be or like an animal; AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 5.5-7; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, pp. 83-84; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 7; *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 5.5; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, pp. 139-140; tr. BANCHICH 2009; EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium*, 7.14; ed. MÜLLER 1995, p. 102; tr. BIRD 1993, p. 44.

⁸⁹⁹ PHILOSTRATUS, *Vita Apollonii*, IV, 36; ed. and tr. JONES 2005, vol. I, pp. 396-397. The problem, stated his interlocutor Philolaus, was the fact that Nero was so savage that a man could be arrested and die without even having seen him; *ibidem*.

⁹⁰⁰ PHILOSTRATUS, *Vita Apollonii*, V, 7; ed. and tr. JONES 2005, vol. II, pp. 9-15.

⁹⁰¹ AURELIUS VICTOR, *De Caesaribus*, 17.4-5; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, pp. 96; tr. BIRD 1994, p. 20; EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium*, 8.15; ed. MÜLLER 1995, p. 120; tr. BIRD 1993, p. 53.

⁹⁰² HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Vita Marci Antonini Philosophi*, 19, 4-6; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 64; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 179; HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Commodus Antoninus* 1, 8; 2, 9; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 98; p. 100; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 267; p. 269. For the way and the regularity in which Commodus ashamed himself even assuming the *habitus* of Hercules or that of an Amazon and then mixing them with imperial visual elements like the purple, see HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Commodus Antoninus* 5,5; 11,10; 11,12; 15,3; 8,7; 8,8; 9,2; 11,9. For those descriptions, the *Historia Augusta* harked back to Herodianus.

⁹⁰³ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Antoninus Heliogabalus*, 5, 4-5; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 226; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. I, p. 115. He could even appear in woman’s costume or in the garb (*habitu*) of a boy in front of prostitutes and catamites (HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Antoninus Heliogabalus* 26, 5; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 242; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 159) and he could get himself up (pinxit se ut) ‘as a confectioner, a perfumer, a cook, a shop-keeper, or a procurer, and even practiced all these occupations in his own house continually’; HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Antoninus Heliogabalus* 30, 1; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 245; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 165

⁹⁰⁴ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Verus* 10, 8; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 83; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 231

was recognized and engaged himself in brawls, returning to the palace with a black and blue face)⁹⁰⁵, Commodus⁹⁰⁶, Gallienus⁹⁰⁷, and Heliogabalus⁹⁰⁸.

The love for theatre, dance, or singing, therefore, could be part of the education of the ruler only if this was driven by a proper moderation⁹⁰⁹. When those pleasant activities were brought to excess, and when the emperor was dragged outside the limits of the *decorum* in unseemly public behaviour outside what it was required from his social category, he became the target of the republican critique. *'It is one thing that is desired in an emperor, and another that is demanded of an orator or a poet'*, declared the author referring to Gallienus' ability in the *ars oratoria*, in poetry and arts, which he displayed in public⁹¹⁰. On the contrary, a good emperor like Alexander Severus could display his skilfulness in singing and playing, since he *'never did openly while emperor'* and display them only in front of his slaves as unique witnesses⁹¹¹.

The act of pretending in its most negative connotation was connected with the moment in which a *tyrannos* attempted to perform the role of the emperor without the necessary skills. Ammianus described in those terms the ridiculous proclamation of Procopius, who rebelled against Valens and tried to become emperor in Constantinople in an embarrassing (*ludibriose*) and almost theatrical spectacle in the Hippodrome. He assumed an outward appearance well-suited to his inner unworthiness, which strongly clashed with the expectations of the audience. He arrived escorted by the soldiers, an apparent sign of honour that yet made he look like not an emperor but rather a prisoner⁹¹². At the moment of the supposed election he did not wear the purple mantle (which was impossible to find at the moment) but a gold embroidered tunic *'like an attendant at court'*, while *'from foot to waist (a calce in pubem) he looked like a page in the service of the palace; he wore purple shoes on his feet, and bore a lance, and a small piece of purple cloth in his left hand (purpureum pannulum laeva manu gestabat); just as sometimes on the stage (ut in theatri scaena simulacrum) you might think that a splendidly decorated figure was suddenly made to appear as the curtain was*

⁹⁰⁵ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Verus*, 4, 6; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 77; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 215.

⁹⁰⁶ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Commodus Antoninus*, 3, 7; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 100; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, p. 271.

⁹⁰⁷ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Gallieni duo*, 21, 6; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. II, p. 99; tr. MAGIE 1932, vol. III, p. 63.

⁹⁰⁸ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Antoninus Heliogabalus*, 32, 9; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 247; MAGIE 1921, vol. I, pp. 170-171. He was so greedy that *'on one single day, it is said, visited every prostitute from the Circus, the theatre, the Amphitheatre, and all the public places of Rome'*; *ibidem*.

⁹⁰⁹ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Antoninus Pius*, 11, 2; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 44; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 127; HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Marcus Antoninus Philosophus* 4, 8; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 50; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 143.

⁹¹⁰ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Gallieni duo* 11, 6-9; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. II, pp. 89-90; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. III, pp. 39-41.

⁹¹¹ HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Alexander Severus* 27, 7; 27, 9; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 271; tr. MAGIE 1924, vol. II, pp. 231-233. On the contrary, Commodus is said to have frequently engaged in the above-mentioned shameful behaviour *'before the eyes of the Roman people (spectante saepe populo Romano)'*; HISTORIA AUGUSTA, *Commodus Antoninus*, 12, 12; ed. HOHL 1971, vol. I, p. 109; tr. MAGIE 1921, vol. I, p. 295.

⁹¹² AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXVI, 6, 14; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 15; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 607.

raised, or through some mimic deception (mimicam cavillationem)⁹¹³. Only a proper *paludamentum* could make a man a legitimate emperor, recognized also Icks, and in this case the outfit of Procopius is laughable and not worthy of the charge. Ammianus, therefore, associated his appearance with the stage, 'a world of pomp without power'⁹¹⁴.

All the tricks of the usurper were revealed, however, in the moment in which Procopius's body failed to support his bearer during the performance of the traditional imperial speech. The contrast between the presumption of the impostor who assumed the imperial attire and the reality of the events produced laughable results. Procopius started to gain some more confidence and advanced '*boldly*' while the troops surrounded him '*with upraised standards*' and holding their shields on the head '*from fear of his being pelted from housetops with stones or pieces of tile*'. In front of this spectacle, '*the people neither opposed nor favoured him, nevertheless, they were aroused by the sudden charm of novelty which is inborn in most of the commons (...)*'. Then, when Procopius '*had mounted the tribunal, and all were filled with amazement fearing the gloomy silence, and believing (as indeed he had expected) that had merely come to a steeper road to death, since a trembling which pervaded all his limbs (per artus tremore diffusus) hindered his speaking, he stood for a long time without a word. Finally, he began with broken and dying utterance to say a little, justifying his action (...)*'. In the end, he was hailed emperor only thanks to some '*who had been hired for the purpose*' and pushed the population to acclamations, '*in a disorderly fashion*'⁹¹⁵. Icks has also underlined how Procopius is attacked here for his rhetorical skills, rather than just putting an unworthy speech in his mouth. Ammianus seems thus more interested in the form than in the content of the pretender's speech, strengthening the impression of Procopius as a man without much competence or charisma. Even the disordered acclamation which followed did not reflect the *vox Dei*⁹¹⁶. Themistius also described the event as dominated by a '*gloomy, frowning, pursuing silence as if it were something solemn, unsociable, ill-omened, full of disgust, boasting about his hatred toward all and the hatred of all toward him*'. Procopius was '*a counterfeit (παράσημος) emperor*' rather than a real one, a contrast emphasized also through a powerful oxymoron: Procopius indeed was '*grinning, calling all to himself, smiling a deceitful smile (μειδιῶν μειδίαιμα δολερὸν), a smile full of laments, a smile that was the origin of many tears*'⁹¹⁷. Zosimus provided later a shorter description of the events according to which Procopius sent a mob made of slaves and volunteers in Constantinople during the night: they '*aroused all the people, who came out of their houses and gazed at Procopius as if he were a king out of a play*

⁹¹³ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXVI, 6, 15; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 15; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, p. 607.

⁹¹⁴ ICKS 2011, p. 365.

⁹¹⁵ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXVI, 6, 17-18; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 16; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. II, pp. 609-611,

⁹¹⁶ ICKS 2011, p. 365.

⁹¹⁷ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* VII, 90b – 91d; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 107-109; tr. VANDERSPOEL 1995, pp. 164-165.

(ὡσπερ ἀπὸ σκηνῆς βασιλέα σχεδιασθέντα)⁹¹⁸. Zosimus had already described another usurper, Magnentius, as ‘playing’ the imperial role: during a banquet celebrating his son’s birthday, at midnight, Magnentius ‘rose from the table as if from necessity, and leaving the guests for a short time, reappeared (ἐφάινετο) clothed in imperial garb (τὴν βασιλικὴν ἡμφιεσμένος στολήν) as if in a play (ὡσπερ ἐν σκηνῇ). All the guests acclaimed him emperor, and likewise all the inhabitants of Augustodunum, where this happened’⁹¹⁹.

From this brief outline, we have seen how the features of the ideal imperial behaviour expected from the pagan side of the audience have been developed in a multifaceted and complex form. On one side, the necessity to strength his power and secure his position led the emperor to increasingly turn his body toward a fixed and motionless formalism. We have seen how the members of the audience, Ammianus *in primis*, were well aware of the actual nature of such attitudes: the display of perfect self-control of the body or the lack of movements were clearly recognized as ceremonial devices employed with effort by an emperor eager to present himself as a supernatural and perfect being with a superior moral steadiness, according to the contemporary political theories. Furthermore, emperors were also increasingly taking advantage of the trends coming from the East to enforce their relationship with the gods and present themselves as sacred and god-like beings. Starting at least from the late third century, they were much concerned to glorify their public appearance in order to foster feelings of loyalty and adoration⁹²⁰. However, they did not leave aside the necessity to include in their ceremonial behaviour the display of their supposed *civilitas*. When the occasion required showing respect toward the republican institution they still have to please the part of the audience who was smart enough to understand the actual purpose of those mechanisms and wanted to see demonstrations of respect, *civilitas*, and *moderatio* more than a *proskynesis*. The traditional republican view of the emperor *primus inter pares* who acts friendly, with moderation, and according to a superior physical and spiritual education, remained well anchored in the mind of the audience and the authority. This imagery was transmitted and promoted by descriptions of good or bad historical rulers that harkened back to classics but also reflected the actual moral and ethical view of the writers, who aimed to spread and instil certain values in the mind of those in power, so as to influence their choices in behavioural and ceremonial matter. Authors could assume a positive or a negative stance according to their bias, and different emperors could have preferred an attitude more than another (Julian *in primis*). But in general, we can say that the different *schemata* in the imperial practice were all weapons at disposal

⁹¹⁸ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, IV, 5.5; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.2, p. 266; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 73.

⁹¹⁹ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, II, 42.3; ed. PASCHOUD 1971, vol. I, p. 114; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 42.

⁹²⁰ CAMERON 1985, pp. 181-182. The ‘sacralization’ of the emperor could be seen as an attempt to discourage civil war and turmoil due to the lack of fixed rules of succession; ROHRBACHER 2002, p. 163.

of an emperor who, like the chameleonic Augustus in the pages of Julian⁹²¹, assumed different aspects and performed different roles through a perfectly trained body or through a powerful rhetorical gesture.

Furthermore, the 'complexity of the relationship between personal character and the nature of the imperial office' never allowed to leave the mortal and individual dimension of the emperor aside from the debate. The greatness of the power (*potestatis amplitudo*) itself, recognized clearly Ammianus, '*is always wont to lay bare a man's inmost character (animorum interna)*' bringing to light the good qualities but also the faults of an emperor⁹²². The philosopher Themistius put much effort to combine the idea of an emperor invested by God but mortal like all his subjects, urging his ruler to show off his inner moral qualities and the essence of his power (that is, his soul) also through his mortal body. The emperor had to show what it was *him*, his essence, through what it was *of him*, his substance.

On the stage of the court, therefore, a dangerous game was at stake: without the divine approval proved by a successful rise to the power, but also without a body expressive of his moral virtues, his superior education, and his control over mortal passions, the emperor failed to act as a model and could lose legitimacy, an idea widely employed as a literary weapon by contemporary authors. He has to juggle different expectations with different *schema*, always avoiding any kind of theatrical simulation. At worst, indeed, he could always remain an actor playing a role not fitted to his persona. Not surprisingly given the central place conferred to the problem of the relation between soul and body in the Christian thought, the idea of a compresence in the imperial persona of an affable and formal attitude, a human and a divine dimension, and all the problems around the relation between imperial body and imperial soul, will constitute a prolific ground in the hands of the Christian writers. Let us see how they managed to navigate among those ideas and suggestions to develop their own models and to build up their own theological perspective on the imperial *schema* through the peculiar 'syncretism' that would become characteristic of Byzantine mentality⁹²³.

⁹²¹ Octavian was like a chameleon who changed his colour (*χρώματα*) (from white to red) and his expression (from a gloomy to a charming one): '*What a changeable monster is this (Βαβαί τοῦ παντοδαποῦ τούτου θηρίου)!*', exclaimed Silenus when he saw him, wondering which kind of tricks he was preparing against him and the other gods; JULIAN THE APOSTATE, *Caesares*, 4; ed. NESSELRATH 2015, p. 110; tr. WRIGHT (1913) 1949, p. 351.

⁹²² AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXX, 7, 1; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 150; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 353; see MATHEWS 1989, pp. 238-239.

⁹²³ Haldon referred in this term to the plurality of cultural traditions that shaped the ways in which Byzantines interpreted their world; HALDON 1990, pp. 281 ff.

1.2. A CHRISTIAN SCHEMA FOR A CHRISTIAN EMPEROR

During and after Constantine's reign the 'Christianization of the Roman Empire'⁹²⁴ grew stronger every day. The emperor remained nevertheless the heir of the pagan Roman rulers and comfortable with ideals and models provided by the classical antiquity which were set as established benchmarks for the following centuries. Whether pagan or Christian, indeed, the emperors as well as the authors who described them and the members of the court, were all parts of a political elite permeated by Hellenic *paideia* and often by a rhetorical-literary education based on reading ancient classics and studying the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy⁹²⁵. This education 'helped to give social identity and solidarity to the sons of the upper classes'⁹²⁶ and provided personal and civic values which partially dictated expectations and judgments about the power and the behaviour more suitable for a ruler. Christian authors continued therefore to praise or criticize the physical appearance of their emperors in line with the ideas provided by the pagan tradition, while some gestures remained as the continuation and the natural extension of the late Roman ones⁹²⁷.

But the adoption of Christianity also imposed changes which deeply affected the meaning of those inherited patterns. A new political theory and thus also a more variegated and theologically weighted imperial *schema* were required to express the role of an emperor who now had to act not only like a perfect citizen, a general, a lawgiver, and a divinely appointed ruler, but also as the most perfect Christian and devoted faithful with even more serious responsibilities for the salvation of his subjects' souls. And this whether described in words or depicted in images or performed with the actual bodies. In order to achieve it, Christian authors re-elaborated the ideas and the images at their disposal and combined them with the theological motifs of the Fathers of the Church and with other sources of imagery. Dealing with the literary strategies employed by authors of the fourth to the seventh century, Claudia Rapp distinguished between two main 'imitative modes' followed by the emperor: on one side the Roman one (applied then also by Christian authors to the hagiographical accounts) which involved the illustration of words, deeds and characters of men from a glorified past to provide a moral and educative *exemplum* (ὑπόδειγμα or παράδειγμα). The Christian imitative mode was, on the other

⁹²⁴ That is, the process through which the emperors after Constantine adapted the political structure of Rome to the new mission of the Christian authority; DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 98.

⁹²⁵ For the mixed audience at the imperial court and the pagan presence in the Roman Senate at the end of the fourth century, see CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 33; HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 22. For the necessity, for the Christian emperors, to build up a partnership with the Hellenic pagan landowning elite present in the Senate of Constantinople, in order to obtain an enduring success, see *ibidem*, pp. 22-23; pp. 48-57.

⁹²⁶ PENELLA 2009, p. 9. For the knowledge and acceptance of Neoplatonic ideas among the members of the Senate in the mid-fourth-century Constantinopolitan imperial court, see HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, *passim*, and esp. p. 31.

⁹²⁷ This was what happened-in general in the case of the imperial *insignia* as well. 'Der byz. Kaiserornat, d.h. die Gesamtheit der byz. kaiserlichen Herrzeichen, ist die genuine Fortsetzung des spätrömischen Kaiserornates in der Entwicklungsstufe, die dieser zZ. Konstantins d.Gr. erreicht hatte'; WESSEL 1978, p. 370.

hand, a 'hermeneutical strategy' and connected the present with the biblical past by presenting the former as an 'image' that reproduced and reflected its archetype⁹²⁸.

Already Gilbert Dagron had recognized the impact of the Old Testament models on the theory of the priestly kingship in Byzantium⁹²⁹, with a Christian emperor who acted not only as a censor on his subject's behaviour but also as 'manager of an economy of salvation (...) with a mission to convert and to fulfil the prophecies' contained in the Old Testament. According to Dagron, the role of the Old Testament in superimposing models became soon more influential than the classical tradition, since 'it was this that gave substance to the very notion of a Christian Empire'. Figures like Melchisedek, Saul, David, Solomon, and Moses, became thus prototypes of the *basileia* at the head of chosen people⁹³⁰. The impact of the Old Testament was not limited to the political theory and to the rhetorical dimension, but it also provided practical guiding principles and 'ready-made types' to follow. There were thus also occasions in which imperial descriptions seem to suggest a third kind of imitative model (briefly mentioned by Rapp), in which emperors shaped their behaviour and their words to evoke Old Testament figures in a conscious imitative conduct⁹³¹. The Scriptures remained, therefore, a rich mine of behavioural patterns not only, as we have seen, for the Christian clergymen and faithful men. The emperor looked at them too, to fulfil the requirements of his different roles and to express political ideas. And since 'no new event was wholly true not any emperor wholly authentic until they had been recognized and labelled by reference to an Old Testament model'⁹³², also gestures, attitudes, and behaviours conformed to those model could contribute to confer constitutional value to the power of those who performed them.

The most powerful model which affected the imperial *schema* was the figure of Christ as emerged from the New Testament and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. While in the imperial iconography a mutual relationship started to connect the portrait of the emperor with that of Christ, in the abstract political theory and in the concrete dimension of the emperor's outward appearance the emperor started to build up with Christ a special connection, which developed and re-formulated in Christian sense the Hellenistic concept of the emperor as god's likeness on earth. By this point of view, the emperor could be considered as a sacred being more divine than common men, the favourite and special protégé of the divinity, his companion (*comites*) and provisional delegate on earth⁹³³. The

⁹²⁸ RAPP 2010, pp. 177-179.

⁹²⁹ In general, Dagron assumed that the Old Testament had a more normative role, while the New one was more concerned with the moral sphere. On the problem of the reception and employment of the Jewish culture (the 'heritage of the 'deicide' people') in the Christian context, see DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 49.

⁹³⁰ DAGRON (1996) 2003, pp. 3-4.

⁹³¹ RAPP 2010, p. 181.

⁹³² DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 50.

⁹³³ JONES 1963, p. 17. On the difference between Christian and pagan Roman theory of the divine origin of power, see also RUNCIMAN (1977) 2003, pp. 39-42. Numberless studies recognized the relationship between Christian and imperial iconography in the fourth and sixth centuries. On the mutual imitation between emperors and gods

new Christian system of thought and the new imagery provided by the biblical texts gave thus to the imperial gestures and postures, especially those performed in the ceremonial context, a new substance and a new meaning. They came to be seen, in Dagron's words, as belonging to exegesis more than ideology⁹³⁴ and as visual elements that had to be 'decoded' by a Christian audience well trained to grasp allusions and nuances by the hearing of biblical lections and by the vision of the liturgy⁹³⁵.

This process of building up a Christian imperial *schema* has an identifiable onset in the writing of Eusebius of Caesarea, devotee of the emperor Constantine, which constituted the first coherent systematization of a political theory (or 'political ideology') for a Christian emperor. Like other panegyrists of his time, Eusebius was well aware that his audience was a mixed group of pagans and Christians alike and that this situation called for innovative solutions understandable and valuable by both parts⁹³⁶. Constantine remained the *primus inter pares* but he was also the vicegerent of Christ, delegated by Him to rule. He had to reveal to his subject the power of the Cross and lead them to a godly life and salvation. This was achieved by pursuing perfection and the *mimesis* of Christ, making his earthly court a reflex and, from a Neoplatonic point of view, a 'divine emanation' of the heavenly one⁹³⁷. Furthermore, the imagery of the Old Testament equipped Constantine with the powerful type of Moses, leader of the new chosen people⁹³⁸.

Those elements were integrated (rather than merely superimposed) in the imagery presented in the *Life of Constantine*, a 'literary hybrid' written after 337⁹³⁹. Here Eusebius consolidated his theological-political building and systematically expressed the kind of appearance expected from a Christian

(*imitatio deorum* on the part of the emperors, *imitatio imperatorum* on the part of the gods) and the parallelism between the *Adventus* of the ruler and the Entry of Christ in Jerusalem, see KANTOROWICZ (1944) 1965; KANTOROWICZ (1961) 1965. For a different point of view which tended to 'downsize' this influence, especially in the early representations of Christ, see the work of the Krautheimer's pupil Thomas Mathews, in turn harshly challenged by Deckers; MATHEWS 1993; DECKERS 1996; DECKERS 2001. For the way in which the Hellenistic culture and the imperial Roman iconography shaped the iconography of Christ as King before and after Constantine, see BESKOW 1962. For the Christianization of the monarchy's ritual symbolism, see also MacCORMACK 1981, pp. 93 ff.

⁹³⁴ Dagron refers to the insoluble exegetical debate over the king-priest, periodically revived by an extreme sensibility to words, images and gestures; DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 3.

⁹³⁵ HENRY 1967 (dealing with the influence of biblical and liturgical reminiscences in writings).

⁹³⁶ DAGRON (1996) 2003, pp. 133-134; CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 33-34.

⁹³⁷ For the Middle Platonic idea of the *mimesis* in Clement, Origen, and then Eusebius, see TARTAGLIA 1984, p. 21. The idea 'that the earthly kingdom is a copy or model of the heavenly one (by *mimesis*)' recognized furthermore Cameron, is shared by Eusebius with Philo and with Hellenistic and Platonic traditions; CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 187.

⁹³⁸ CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 7, pp. 35-37; RAPP 2010, pp. 182-183; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 12, 1; I, 19, 1; I, 20, 2; I, 38, 2; 38, 5; II, 12, 1. Not only at a theoretical but also at a material level, Constantine brought to his new capital the holy rod of Moses (he went out on foot to receive it at the Aemilianos Gate and then brought it to the Great Palace); DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 98.

⁹³⁹ On the date and circumstances of the composition, see CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 9-13. The text was an 'uneasy mixture' of imperial panegyric (*lógos basilikós*), narrative history, and a biographical/hagiographical text, since Eusebius praised the virtues and the deeds of the emperor in chronological order. Furthermore, it had a didactic purpose and offered advice to Constantine's sons like a 'Mirror of Princes'; CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 1; p. 12; pp. 27-34; TARTAGLIA 1984.

emperor. The central role played by the visual dimension in Eusebius' description is stated since the beginning, when the author debated over the traditional dispute between written biography and visual portrait as the best device to preserve the memory of mortal men. Images (εἰκόνα), whether pictures obtained with colours or statuary figures (σχήματα), are, it is true, perishable '*configurations* (ἰνδάλματα) *of corruptible bodies, and did not portray the shapes* (ἀποτυποῦντα ἰδέας) *of an immortal soul*'⁹⁴⁰. Biblical narration and biographical accounts of virtuous men on the other hand are given by God to feed the hopes and to provide good examples for faithful men⁹⁴¹. Since the words alone could be weak in transmitting the virtues of men, and since '*one must model oneself on the human painter* (μιμήσει τῆς θνητῆς σκιαγραφίας)', Eusebius declared nevertheless that he will dedicate to Constantine a '*verbal portrait* (διὰ λόγων εἰκόνα)'. Constantine actions were the mirror of his God-given virtues and were given '*to every one whose desire is stimulated to divine affection by the representation of noble deeds* (ἢ τῶν καλῶν μίμησις)⁹⁴². He offered a *parádeigma* to be imitated which stood on the eyes of his subjects and especially during religious festivities he was adopted (ἐπεγράφοντο) by praetorians and bodyguards as the '*tutor in religious conduct* (διδάσκαλον εὐσεβῶν ... τρόπων)⁹⁴³.

Eusebius' Constantine used his gestures and his behaviour to present himself as the image (εἰκόνα) of Christ's monarchical reign⁹⁴⁴, chosen by God '*as universal ruler and governor*' (so that '*no man could claim the precedence which he alone possessed, since the rest owed the rank they held to election by others*')⁹⁴⁵, and simultaneously as the humble servant of God⁹⁴⁶. He showed his respect toward the Church by shifting the recipient of the friendly and approachable attitude required by an emperor *primus inter pares*, from the senatorial order to the ministers of God. He personally received and regarded with the highest consideration even the most humble among the members of the clergy – he

⁹⁴⁰ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 3, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 180; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 68. Eusebius is referring here to the votive portraits which glorified ancient's tombs.

⁹⁴¹ Those stories guaranteed '*immortal hopes to mortal eyes*'; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 3, 3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 182; tr. CAMERON AND HALL 1999, p. 68.

⁹⁴² EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 10, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, pp. 190-192; tr. CAMERON AND HALL 1999, pp. 70-72. For the virtuous nature bestowed on Constantine since his youth by divine inspiration and imitation, see EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 12, 3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 196; tr. CAMERON AND HALL 1999, p. 73

⁹⁴³ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* IV, 18, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 474; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 159.

⁹⁴⁴ '*Making him the model of his own monarchical reign, he (Christ) appointed him (the emperor) victor over the whole race of tyrants and destroyer of the God-balling giants, who in mental frenzy raised weapons against the Sovereign of the universe himself*'; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 5, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 182; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 69. Winkelmann translated here εἰκόνα as 'model'.

⁹⁴⁵ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 24, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 212; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 78-79.

⁹⁴⁶ '*As a loyal and good servant, he would perform this and announce it (ἔπραττε καὶ ἐκήρυττε), openly calling himself a slave and confessing himself a servant of the All-sovereign, while God in recompense was close at hand to make him Lord and Despot*' and vanquisher over his enemies; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 6, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 184; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 69.

looked beyond their modest appearance (σχήματος) to see not the man but *'the God honoured in each'* – and allowed them to seat at his own table⁹⁴⁷. Unlike his predecessors (who forbade bishops to meet in council), he assembled them *'to his presence, and allowed to enter the palace, to proceed into its inner chambers, and to share the imperial hearth and table'*⁹⁴⁸. Constantine, thus, *'like a universal bishop* (κοινὸς ἐπίσκοπος) *appointed by God convoked councils of the ministers of God'* and attended them seating *'among them as if he were one voice among many* (ὡσεὶ καὶ τῶν πολλῶν εἷς), *dismissing his praetorians and soldiers and body guards of every kind, clad only in the fear of God and surrounded by the most loyal of his faithful companions'*⁹⁴⁹.

More official occasions required on the other hand a more formal kind of attitude. At the Council of Nicaea, held in 325 in the central and biggest room of the imperial palace, Constantine showed the traditional magnificent appearance (almost angelic) which included marvellous dresses and precious stones⁹⁵⁰. In this case, he expressed his respect toward the other participants through a rigorously assigned arrangement of seats and a foreordained system of signals made of gestures and postures. The participants took their appointed seat along (ἐν τάξει) either side of the hall *'with a proper ceremony* (σὺν κόσμῳ τῷ πρέποντι), and then remained silent while the emperor's men made their entrance one after the other⁹⁵¹. Then, at the *'signal* (ἐπὶ συνθήματι) *which announced the Emperor's entrance'*, all rose from their seat and remained standing while the Emperor *'walked along between them'*⁹⁵². When the emperor *'reached the upper end of the rows of seats and stood in the middle* (μέσος ἕστη), he showed, in turn, his respect toward the bishops by waiting to sit down (on *'a small chair* (καθίσματος) *made of gold'*, specified Eusebius) until *'the bishops assented* (ἐπινεῦσαι). All the bishops, then, in turn *'did the same after the Emperor'*⁹⁵³.

⁹⁴⁷ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 42, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 240; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 86.

⁹⁴⁸ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 1, 5; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 350; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 120-121.

⁹⁴⁹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 44, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, pp. 242-244; tr. CAMERON 1999, p. 87. *'You are bishops of those within the Church'*, declared Constantine during a dinner, employing the same metaphor to underline his role as *primus inter pares* among them, *'but I am perhaps himself a bishop appointed by God over those outside'*. In accordance with this saying, he exercised a bishop's supervision over all his subjects, and pressed them all, as far as lay in his power, to lead the godly life'; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 24; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 480; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 161.

⁹⁵⁰ He walked among the bishops *'like some heavenly angel of God, his bright mantle shedding lustre like beams of light, shining with the fiery radiance of a purple robe, and decorated with the dazzling brilliance of gold and precious stones. Such was his physical appearance* (ἀμφὶ τὸ σῶμα); EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 10, 3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 364; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 125.

⁹⁵¹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 10, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 364; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 125. The emperor's men, specified Eusebius, were not his usual soldiers and guards but only *'his faithful friends'*; *ibidem*.

⁹⁵² EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 10, 3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 364; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 125.

⁹⁵³ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 10, 5; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 364; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 125. Those nuances disappeared in the shorter account wrote later by Sozomen, according to whom the emperor passed through the seat until the head of the conference, took his seat *'on a throne* (ἐπὶ θρόνου), and

The act of raising or sitting in front of a person was a powerful way to visually express the respect (or the disrespect) of the parts involved in a public encounter. For example, it publicly expressed the conflict of power between Severian, bishop of Gabala in Syria and preacher in Constantinople, and Serapion, deacon of Constantinople. The struggle reached its peak when one of the contenders refused to rise in front of the other. According to Socrates of Constantinople, nobody could stand the pride and the arrogance (τὴν ὄφρῦν καὶ τὴν ἀλαζονείαν) of Serapion, a man who attacked everyone beyond what was appropriate⁹⁵⁴. One day, then, at the entrance of Severian, he failed to show him the honour due to a bishop (τὴν προσήκουσαν ἐπισκόπῳ τιμὴν ... οὐκ ἀπένευμεν) and remained seated. Serapion later swore that he had not seen him, but Severian interpreted the gesture as a sign that he had paid little heed to the presence of a bishop. He could not bear Serapion's contempt and even accused him before an assembly of bishops⁹⁵⁵. According to Sozomen, it was Severian the arrogant one who displayed greed for honour and adulation during his speeches. This attitude led Serapion to keep his seat in front of Severian who was passing, *'instead of rising to salute him'* (οὐκ ἐξάνεστη ἐπίτιδες τοῖς παροῦσιν ἐνδεικνύμενος), *'in order to show his utter contempt for the man* (ὡς ὑπερφρονεῖ τὸν ἄνδρα). *Severian was offended by this manifestation of disrespect'* and thus uttered the fateful expression⁹⁵⁶.

Finally, at the banquet after the Council, the emperor replaced the traditional friendly attitude with formality, so to underline the symmetry between the contemporary events and the biblical history, and to make the event appear like *'an imaginary representation* (φαντασιοῦσθαι εἰκόνα) *of the kingdom of Christ'*⁹⁵⁷.

only then *'the synod was then commanded to be seated'*; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 19.1-2; ed. BIDEZ 1983, p. 202; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 254. More rhetorical and apparently due to Eusebius' self-satisfaction seems the mention of the extraordinary gesture performed by the emperor during the speech delivered by the author himself on the Saviour's tomb. The emperor was so involved that he *'stood up and listened'* together with the audience, despite the objection of Eusebius who *'begged him'* to return back to his throne; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* IV, 33, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 492, 494; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 165. ⁹⁵⁴ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 11, (VERSION B) 14; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 312-313; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 146.

⁹⁵⁵ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 11, (VERSION A) 16-17; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, p. 308-309; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 146. On the question around the origin of the two versions of the episode, see P. MARAVAL in HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL 2006, n. 2, pp. 306-307. According to Sozomen, the offense was so great, that the bishop even uttered a blasphemous utterance (for which he was harshly rebuked by John Chrysostom); SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VIII, 10.3-4; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 278-280; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 405.

⁹⁵⁶ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VIII, 10.3-4; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 278-280; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 405.

⁹⁵⁷ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 15, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 370; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 127. For the parallelism between the council, which brought *concordia* between men coming from all the parts of the empire and the Apostle's assembly, see EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 7, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 360; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 124. For the palace as a church, and the emperor as the guide for the prayers, see EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 17, 3; IV, 17; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 204; p. 472; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 76; p. 159.

In general, during the council Constantine was the healer of the Church's and of the Empire's body affected by the heresy⁹⁵⁸ and was the moderator responsible for the orthodox faith⁹⁵⁹: this role compelled him, therefore, to express his faith and his spiritual qualities both with the words as well as with his body. But while his words were uttered mostly in Latin and had to be translated into Greek⁹⁶⁰, the attitude of his body was more clearly and universally understood. Everybody, declared indeed Eusebius, hastened to the council not only for the desire of contributing to the peace but also for the desire of looking with their own eyes *'the spectacle of that strange marvel, to see such a great Emperor'*⁹⁶¹. The two dimensions of the *schema* (the humility to express his faith and his deference toward God on one side, and the splendour due to his belonging to a superior and 'sacred' rank on the other)⁹⁶² joined harmoniously in Constantine's body and were reflected also in his face and in his posture:

*'As for his soul, he was clearly adorned with fear and reverence for God: this was shown (ὑπέφαινον) by his eyes, which were cast down (ὀφθαλμοὶ κάτω νεύοντες), the blush of his face (ἐρύθημα προσώπου), his gait (περιπάτου κίνησις), and the rest of his appearance (εἶδος), his height (μέγεθος), which surpassed all those around him (...) by his dignified maturity, by the magnificence of his physical condition (τῆς τοῦ σώματος εὐπρεπείας), and by the vigour of his matchless strength. All these, blended with the elegance of his manners (τρόπων ἐπιεικεία) and the gentleness of imperial condescension (πραότητί τε βασιλικῆς), demonstrated (ἀπέφαινον) the superiority of his mind (διάνοια) surpassing all description'*⁹⁶³.

The emperor thus visually showed the superiority of his mind through a humble gaze and a vigorous body, harmonized together by his elegant manner. He also used his imperial *neuma* to command⁹⁶⁴. And he relied on gestures when *'he thought that he ought to rule his subjects with instructive argument, and establish his whole imperial rule as rational'*: talking about theological topics in front of

⁹⁵⁸ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 62; 65, 1; 69, 1; III, 19, 1; III, 21, 4.

⁹⁵⁹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 13, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 368; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 126-127.

⁹⁶⁰ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 13, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 368; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 126. He makes his speech in Latin, but anyway he could speak Greek *'for he was not ignorant of that language either'* and could make himself *'pleasant and agreeable, persuading some and shaming others with his words'*; *ibidem*.

⁹⁶¹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 6, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 358; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 123.

⁹⁶² In a slightly different manner, Dagron looked at this attitude as a 'conjuration' between the Greek *hubris* and the Roman egalitarianism which became the Christian virtue of humility; DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 3.

⁹⁶³ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 10, 4; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 364; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 125.

⁹⁶⁴ *'On the emperor's command (βασιλικῶ νεύματι) pagan shrines were destroyed, and the 'vaunted wonder of the noble philosophers was razed to the ground, pulled down by military force'*; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* III, 55, 5; III, 56, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 426; p. 428; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 145. The same term is employed referring to the God's will (θεοῦ νεύματι) which made Maxentius' army be defeated on the Milvian bridge; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 38, 4; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 232; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 84.

'countless multitudes', 'standing quite straight with intense face and subdued voice', he initiated the audience with awe 'and then when the hearers let out favourable exclamations he would indicate that they should look to heaven (ἄνω βλέπειν εἰς οὐρανὸν διένευε) and save the adulation and honour of their reverent praises for the King over all'⁹⁶⁵.

Constantine acknowledged the power of God also and mostly through the prayer, which was also a way to ask, in a utilitarian way, for divine help and protection⁹⁶⁶. The prayer involved, especially in the military setting, the symbol of the cross, to which an overwhelming and effective power was attributed. Well-known is the relationship which bound this symbol together with the imperial victory since the legend of the vision of the Cross at the Milvian Bridge in 312. According to Eusebius, a 'remarkable divine sign (θεοσημεία)' in the form of a cross-shaped trophy inscribed with the words 'By this conquer' appeared in the sky in front of Constantine and his army at midday. During the night Christ appeared to him alone and 'urged him to make himself a copy (μίμημα)' of this and to use it as a protection and saving sign (τῷ σωτηρίῳ σημείῳ) against the enemy⁹⁶⁷. The emperor, therefore, explained (φράζει) the 'shape of the sign' (τοῦ σημείου τὴν εἰκόνα) to goldsmiths and jewellers in order to have a reproduction (μίμημα or ὁμοιώματα) of it and its specific design (σχῆματι) made of gold and precious stones⁹⁶⁸. It was transferred to the *labarum* and used in battle⁹⁶⁹ to win over Maxentius.

Once back in Rome, then, Constantine bestowed his victory to God with 'a statue made to represent himself (ἰδίας εἰκόνοσ ἐν ἀνδριάντι)' holding in his hand (ὑπὸ χεῖρα) a tall pole (δόρυ) in the shape

⁹⁶⁵ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 29, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 488-490; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 164. For the rhetorical skills displayed by the emperor when delivered edifying instructions in theological matters, see also EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* IV, 55, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 522; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 174-175.

⁹⁶⁶ The Emperor indeed 'judged that the prayers of the godly made a great contribution to his aim of protecting the general good, so he made necessary provision for these, becoming himself a suppliant of God and bidding the leaders of the churches make intercessions for him'; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 14, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 470; tr. CAMERON 1999, p. 158.

⁹⁶⁷ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 28-29; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 218-220; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 80-81. For the problems related to the event according to different sources, see the summary of CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 204-208. The recount of the vision, not present in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, is defined by Cameron as a 'mature reflection of Eusebius on Constantine's divinely inspired rise to power', which 'supplies a structural and ideological need at this point into narrative'; CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 7.

⁹⁶⁸ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 30-31; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 220; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 81-82.

⁹⁶⁹ Constantine 'changed the most honourable symbol of the Roman power (τὸ ἐπισημώτατον σύμβολον τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς) into the sign of Christ (εἰς Χριστοῦ σημεῖον)'; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 4.2; ed. BIDEZ 1983, p. 126; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 242. Only temporarily, the emperor Julian will replace the sign of the cross (σταυροῦ σύμβολον) and will restore 'the ancient form of the standard of the Roman armies (τὸ πρότερον σχῆμα τὸ κορυφαῖον τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν συνημάτων)'; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 17.2; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 178; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 339. For the practical employment of the symbol of the cross as an instrument during the battle, which worked through the sight, see also EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 37, 1; II, 7; II, 16, 1-2.

of the cross (σταυροῦ σχήματι)⁹⁷⁰. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius specified that the statue held this sign (variously called τοῦ σωτηρίου τρόπαιον / τὸ σωτήριο σημεῖον / τῷ σωτηριώδει σημεῖω) in its right hand (ἐπὶ τῇ δεξιᾷ κατέχοντα)⁹⁷¹. A strong boundary was thus created between the form of the cross and the imperial hand to express the power of the faith and the divine protection upon the emperor⁹⁷². Moreover, the *schema* of the cross could be reproduced also through the imperial body. Constantine not only reinterpreted in Christian sense the image of the Hellenistic ruler and the *Sol Invictus* and exhibited on golden coinage ‘*the great strength of the divinely inspired faith fixed in his soul*’, with a portrait (εἰκόνα) in which he looked ‘*upwards in the manner (τρόπον) of one reaching out to God in prayer*’⁹⁷³. He also expressed his relationship with God with a portrait, set above the entrances of imperial palaces in various cities, in which he was ‘*standing up (ἑστὸς ὄρθιος), looking up to heaven, his hands extended in a posture of prayer (τὸ χεῖρε δ’ἐκτεταμένος εὐχομένου σχήματι)*’⁹⁷⁴. By stretching his arms in the ancient *orans* posture for the invocation of the divinity, Constantine, like Moses, assumed simultaneously also the form of the cross. Constantine, who ‘*continually announced the Christ of God (...) taking pride in the practice*’, also ‘*made himself quite plain, at one time (νῦν μὲν) marking his face with the Saviour’s sign (τὸ πρόσωπον τῷ σωτηρίω*

⁹⁷⁰ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 40, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 236; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 85. The idea was emphasised in the imperial iconography and could clash against the pagan attitude toward the war: the openly anti-Christian like Eunapius blamed indeed the content of the panels set in the middle of the Circus to celebrate the emperor Theodosius’s victories because they depicted not the bravery of the Emperor or the strength of his soldiers ‘*or anything that was obviously a proper battle*’ but ‘*a hand extended as is from the clouds*’, labelled as ‘*the hand of God driving off the barbarians*’. This was seen as a nonsense which ‘*reduced the successes of the Romans to mockery and laughter*’; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 68 (*Exc. de Sent.* 72); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 108-109.

⁹⁷¹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IX, 9.10-11; ed. SCHWARTZ 1908, vol. II, p. 832; tr. SCHOTT 2019, p. 444. The event is quoted almost *verbatim* in CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 273, AD 312; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 521; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 10. For the problem of the actual form of the sign, which could also reproduce a lance, see PIETRI 2013, n. 3, p. 237.

⁹⁷² The sign of the cross was also reproduced in the biggest room of the palace ‘*as a protection (φυλακτήριον) for his Empire*’; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* III, 49; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 414; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 140.

⁹⁷³ For the power of the upright gaze to create a boundary between the divinity and the pagan philosophers, see; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Vitae Philosopharum*, VI, 102-106; XXIII, 50; ed. GOULET 2014, pp. 38-39; p. 105; tr. CIVILETTI 2007, pp. 133-135; p. 269. Also Caracalla, in a totally different context, and charged with a negative connotation, was ‘*drawn by the intrigues of flatterers*’ to assume the same ‘*fierce expression and neck turned toward his left shoulder (which he had noted in Alexander’s face)*’, thinking to have a ‘*very similar countenance (vultus)*’; *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 21.4; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 156; tr. BANCHICH 2009. Themistius, confusing Marcus Aurelius with Antoninus Pious and under the influence of the Christian imagery, wrote that the emperor who saved his thirsty army and caused to rain by raising his hand (ἀνασχῶν τὸ χεῖρε) to heaven and saying ‘*I entreat you and supplicate the giver of life with this hand with which I have taken no life*’, made it because he saw ‘*a representation of this act in a painting (ἐν γραφῇ εἰκόνα τοῦ ἔργου)*’; THEMISTIUS, *Oratio* XV, 191b; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 235; tr. HEATHER AND MONCUR 2001, p. 244; n. 117, p. 244.

⁹⁷⁴ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 15, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 472; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 158-159. The same kind of posture was required from the soldiers, who also had to ‘*acknowledge the God over all (...), to whom it was right to offer the lawful prayers, lifting up their hands high towards heaven, extending their mental vision yet higher to the heavenly King, and calling on him in their prayers as the Giver of victory and Saviour, as their Guardian and Helper*’; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 19; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 476; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 160.

κατασφραγίζομενος σημείῳ), *at another* (νῦν δέ) *proudly delighting in the victorious trophy. This he displayed on a very high panel set before the entrance to the palace for the eyes of all to see, showing in the picture the Saviour's sign* (τὸ μὲν σωτήριον <σημεῖον>) *placed above his own head* (ὑπερκεῖμενον τῆς αὐτοῦ κεφαλῆς) *while stepping and piercing together with his sons the dragon under his feet*⁹⁷⁵.

Eusebius, therefore, put next to each other the references to the physical gesture of the sign of the cross performed by Constantine and the material symbol placed upon his head to declare that the victory over the enemies was given by God: the dragon (a reference both to enemy's humankind Satan but also to Licinius, the enemy of the emperor) was indeed defeated *'by the power of the Saviour's trophy which was set up over his head'*⁹⁷⁶ and was powerful in making demons flee. The cross stated itself therefore as the quintessential and long-living symbol of the divine origin of the imperial power, as efficacious support to the victory and symbol of the divine protection. It could be carried in the emperor's hand, on the *labarum* or as a replacement of the *victoria* on the *globus cruciger*⁹⁷⁷. It could be placed as a relic next to his hands or his head, when he had the holy nails made into bridle-bits and a helmet (περικεφαλαίαν), which he carried on the battlefield⁹⁷⁸. But it could also be a physical gesture performed with the hand or shaped with the whole body.

The fact that the sign of the cross was then firmly included in the habit of the fourth/fifth-century emperors since their education is also documented by Gregory of Nazianzus' story of the emperor Julian who had received a Christian education and therefore sought refuge in this ancient remedy (φάρμακον) during his descent to the *'terrific ádyton'*⁹⁷⁹: Sozomen more clearly explained that Julian, who *'had turned to his new religion* (paganism) *when already a man'*, was taken by the fear of the demons and *'unconsciously fell into his earlier habit* (ἔλαθεν ὑπὸ τῆς προτέρας συνηθείας), *and signed himself* (κατασημάνας ἑαυτόν) *with the symbol of Christ* (τῷ συμβόλῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), *just as the Christian encompassed with untried dangers is wont to do'*⁹⁸⁰. Julian and his brother Gallus had

⁹⁷⁵ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* III, 2, 2; 3, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 352-354; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 121-122. Other the opinion of Tartaglia, who understood the latter as a reference to the emperor's face impressed on the *labarum*: *'Rese ben nota la propria immagine (...) con l'imprimere il suo stesso volto sull'emblema salvifico* (scil. sul labaro)'; TARTAGLIA 1984, p. 122.

⁹⁷⁶ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* III, 3, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, pp. 352-354; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 122. In this manner the Emperor *'portrayed images'* of the words of the Prophets *'setting true representations in pictorial arts* (ἀληθῶς ἐντιθεὶς μιμήματα τῆ σκιαγραφία); *ibidem*.

⁹⁷⁷ On the orb, symbol of 'Weltherrschaft' of the Roman emperors and attribute of the imperial power especially after the third-fourth centuries, and the debate about its belonging to the sphere of iconography (according to Schramm) or the actual performance of power (according to Alföldi), see WESSEL 1978, p. 404.

⁹⁷⁸ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 17.9; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2004, pp. 180-181; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 21. According to another version of the story, Constantine incorporated the nails into his diadem; see KALAVREZOU 1997, p. 54 and n. 5. On the defensive function of those relics, mentioned also by Ambrose, see KLEIN 2006.

⁹⁷⁹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.52; 4.55; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 121-123.

⁹⁸⁰ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 2.5; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, pp. 86-88; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 326.

been indeed *'cultured and educated in a manner corresponding to the dignity of their birth'* which at this point included not only sciences and bodily exercises, but also the learning of the respect toward the clergy and the martyrs' tombs. In this way *'their habits and actions indicated no dereliction from piety'* (διὰ τῶν ἡθῶν καὶ τῶν ἔργων τὴν εὐσέβειαν ἐπεδείκνυντο)⁹⁸¹. Being *'formerly a Christian'*, *'born from pious parents'* and *'initiated in infancy according to the custom of the Church'* (κατὰ τὸν θεσμόν τῆς ἐκκλησίας)⁹⁸², the sign of the cross remained also deeply bounded in his *habitus* and re-emerged as an efficacious gesture to rely upon in the moments of fear and danger.

Finally, Constantine's body gained also a supernatural condition through a proper training. He subjected himself to *'fasts and harsh treatment of the body'* (ἀσιτίαις δὲ καὶ κακώσει τοῦ σώματος) before a battle to win God's favour⁹⁸³. He conversed (προσωμίλει) with God *'like someone participating in sacred mysteries (...)'* with his whole strength of soul and body (πάση ῥώμῃ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος), *'kneeling'* (γονυπετῶν) in suppliant petition and even *'intensifying the rigour'* (ἐπιτείνων τὴν ἄσκησιν) during the Feast of the Saviour⁹⁸⁴. Thanks to this physical and spiritual constant training, he received *'divine gifts'*: a supernatural soul, revealed by the foresight which allowed him to predict conspiracies against him⁹⁸⁵, and a supernatural body. The latter received divine honours (θεοπρεπέσιν ... τιμαῖς) not only *'when he was still among us'*⁹⁸⁶ but also after his death, occurred on the day of Pentecost (21 March) 337 in Nicomedia. Constantine's body, it is true, was corruptible – the incorruptible soul, that is *'he himself'* and *'that part of him which is the soul's intelligence and love of God'*, left it in its ascent to God – and when he died he *'bequeathed to mortals what was akin to them'* (τὸ συγγενὲς παραδοῦς)⁹⁸⁷. His corpse, however, was not turn to ashes on the funeral pyre. Eusebius was amazed to see that *'the one who was recently visible in a mortal body'* was *'amazingly present with us even after his life is ended'*⁹⁸⁸, and reported that it was brought to Constantinople in a golden coffin covered with a purple cloth. It was then placed as *'a wonderful spectacle'* on an elevated bier in the palace, surrounded by candles, with the diadem and dressed in the purple robe. For three days it was *'guarded day and night by a huge circle of people keeping vigil'* while the commanders of the army, the members of the court and of the Senate, and all the people *'who were bound by law to pay homage*

⁹⁸¹ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 2.7-11; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, pp. 88-90; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 326.

⁹⁸² SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 2, 7; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 88; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 326.

⁹⁸³ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* II, 14, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 284; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 100.

⁹⁸⁴ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* IV, 22, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 478; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 160.

⁹⁸⁵ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 47, 2-3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 248; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 88-89.

⁹⁸⁶ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 9, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, pp. 190-191; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 71.

⁹⁸⁷ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 64, 2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 532-534; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 178-179.

⁹⁸⁸ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, I, 2, 1; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 178; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 67.

(προσκυνεῖν) to the Emperor first, making no change in their usual routine, filed past at the required times and saluted the Emperor on the bier with genuflections (γονυκλινεῖς) after his death in the same way as when he was alive (οἷα περ ζῶντα). 'Alone of mortals', commended further Eusebius, Constantine 'reigned even after death, and the customs were maintained just as if he were alive (...) demonstrating the ageless and deathless reign of his soul'⁹⁸⁹. In the end, the corpse was placed in the shrine of the Holy Apostles⁹⁹⁰. Far away from being a god on earth, therefore, the Christian emperor was clear in pointing at his human nature and at the frailty shared with humankind by showing off his dead body in public. At the same time, however, this very same body owned a special nature revealed by its incorruptibility, gained likely through 'the usual measure for the preservation of his corpse (τοῖς εἰωθόσιν εἰς τὸ διαρκέσαι σκευάσαντες τὸν νεκρόν)' mentioned by Philostorgius on the occasion of the funeral of Constantius II⁹⁹¹, and by the honours conferred by those present.

The imperial body expressed the divine basis of the power and could even contribute to legitimize (or delegitimize) the authority. The integrity of the imperial body was still considered important by Christians: Philostorgius included the above-mentioned story of the mutilation of Priscus Attalus in his Church History⁹⁹². Furthermore, the symbolic meaning of meaningful limbs (heads and hands), already present in the Roman legislation, was further and formally elaborated in the context of the Christian morality, according to the New Testament (the hand which had sinned had to be punished (Mt5:30)) and also in line with the tradition of shameful deaths displaying the misbeliefs of a character. Let us remind at least the treatment conferred to the head and the right hand of the treacherous patrician Rufinus under Arcadius: when he was executed, the population underlined the symbolic connotation of the punishment by putting a stone in his mouth and asking to give a donation to 'the insatiable one (Δότε τῷ ἀπλήστῳ)⁹⁹³. The tradition of shameful deaths displaying the misbeliefs of a character, then, influenced as well the view of general polluted bodies, which were placed in an even closer relationship with the figures of despicable emperors and *tyrannoi*. The last term was used especially after the fourth century to refer to a defeated usurper who threatened the legitimate authority, but it

⁹⁸⁹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, IV, 67, 1-3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 536; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 179-180. See also SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 40.1; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2004, pp. 260-261; tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 35; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 279, AD 337; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 532-533; tr. in WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 22.

⁹⁹⁰ For the interpretation of this passage as a 'Christianisation' of the *apoteosis*, see CAMERON and HALL 1999, pp. 347-348. For the way in which Constantine's funeral differed from the *consuetudo Romana*, the pagan elements which still characterized the cult of the emperor at the time, and the devotion paid to Constantine' remains later in the fourth and fifth centuries, see WORTLEY 2006.

⁹⁹¹ PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 6a-7a; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, p. 364; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 84.

⁹⁹² PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, XII, 3-5; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, p. 536; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 156.

⁹⁹³ PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, XI, 3; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, p. 516; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 146. See also ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, V, 7.6; ed. PASCHOUD 1986, vol. III.1, pp. 14-15; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 102; MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 395.5; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 6; CROKE 1995, n. p. 64.

never fails to include also the traditional meaning of a ruler marked by low political and moral qualities⁹⁹⁴. Those kinds of men sinned against God with their bad ruling, their heresies, or their attempts to overthrow a divinely established institution, and deserved to be disfigured and physically punished with painful agonies by the wrath of God. This idea was well present in the mind of the authors and their audience: it reached back to the biblical examples of Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod and was shared also by pagans⁹⁹⁵. So Galerius polluted his soul by killing innocent Christians, and was therefore hit by a divine punishment '*beginning with his very flesh and extending to his mind*': it caused him a purulent inflammation from his private parts to the viscera, from which germinated maggots, a deathly stench and putrefaction⁹⁹⁶. The punishment of Maximian Daia also involved the consumption of his body '*so that his whole physical appearance (τὸν πᾶν εἶδος) as he had been before become unrecognizable*'⁹⁹⁷. The shameful and violent death of Arius provided the most powerful model of divine physical punishment for religious crimes. Surprised by a relaxation of his bowel while he was making himself a spectacle during a parade, Arius died according to Socrates in a public toilet behind Constantine's forum – a '*place suited to the filth that flowed from his tongue*', will specify later Theophanes Confessor⁹⁹⁸. At that moment his bowels protruded together with the evacuations, followed by a stream of blood⁹⁹⁹. Even more gruesomely, Julian, governor of Egypt in the fourth century, was punished by the divine wrath (θεομηνίαν) for his sacrilegious booty of sacred vessels with the putrefaction of his genitals and rectum. Worms then '*crept into the living flesh, and did not*

⁹⁹⁴ For the terminological development of the term τύραννος and τυραννίς in Late Antiquity, see especially NERI 1997.

⁹⁹⁵ See for example the '*most fitting death*' paid by Maximianus, who attempted to kill Constantine and was '*a man inclined to every kind of harshness and cruelty, faithless, perverse and utterly devoid of grace*'; EUTROPIUS, *Breviarium*, 10.3; ed. MÜLLER 1995, p. 112; tr. BIRD 1993, p. 65.

⁹⁹⁶ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 57, 1-2; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 262; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 93; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VIII, 16.3-5; ed. SCHWARTZ 1908, vol. II, pp. 788-790; tr. SCHOTT 2019, pp. 418-419.

⁹⁹⁷ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 58, 4; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 264; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 94. See also EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IX, 10.14-15; ed. SCHWARTZ 1908, vol. II, pp. 846-848; tr. SCHOTT 2019, p. 450, where it is specified that not only his body appeared like a skeleton, but also that his eyes felt from their sockets and '*left him maimed*'. Also later Theophanes Confessor reported the '*divine anger (θεία ὀργή)*' felt on Galerius in the guise of a flame which '*kindled in the depth of his innards and his marrow*' and made his eyes fall. His flesh then '*became putrid and fell from his bones*' and '*having rotten always, he vomited up his God-opposing soul*'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5807, AD 314/15; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 15; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 26.

⁹⁹⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia* AM 5827, AD 334/5, ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 32; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 52.

⁹⁹⁹ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 38.6-9; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2004, p. 256-259; tr. ZENOS 1983, pp. 34-35. The story, originally reported by Athanasius, is reported by several sources. The manner of Arius' death, explained Socrates, was made perpetually memorable by the passers-by, who continued to raise their fingers in the direction of the place; *ibidem*. Even the seat on which he died was considered cursed and avoided by the population; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 30.6; ed. BIDEZ 1983, p. 368; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 280.

*cease their gnawing until they put an end to his life*¹⁰⁰⁰. The punishment could even strike depicted or carved bodies. The divine wrath (θεομηνία), for example, struck with lightening the statue of Julian the Apostate at Caesarea Philippi: it *'broke off the parts contiguous to the breast'* so that *'the head and neck were thrown prostrate* (τὴν κφαλὴν σὺν τῷ ἀρχένι κατέβαλε), *and it was transfixed to the ground with the face downwards at the point where the fracture of the bust was; and it has stood in that fashion from that day until now, full of the rust of the lightening*¹⁰⁰¹.

Furthermore, bad rulers and *tyrannoi* continued to be blamed also by Christian authors for assuming a *schema* not accorded with their social status or with their inner souls. They were blamed for misusing their bodies like all the 'bad Christians'. Eusebius, who also complained about the *'unspeakable deceit'* of those who *'adopted a false facade* (ἐπιπλάστως σχηματιζομένων) *of the Christian name*¹⁰⁰², reported that Maxentius fled the battle taking off his imperial dress (κόσμον), *'for which he was not fit'*, and assuming the *schema* (ἐν ... σχήματι) of a menial¹⁰⁰³. Licinius on the other hand *'deceitfully pretended* (εἰρωνεῖα καθυπεκρίνετο) *'to sue for an amicable treaty with Constantine, while in fact he was preparing for war*¹⁰⁰⁴. Hilary of Poitiers, when he was free to assume a critical stance toward the 'heretic' Constantius II after his death in 361¹⁰⁰⁵, addressed him with a speech in which he joined together biblical references and the widespread *topos* of the emperor hiding his intentions beneath the surface. Constantius was a deceptive persecutor (*persecutorem fallentem*), a luring enemy (*hostem blandientem*), a precursor of the Antichrist, a liar who called himself Christian, a pseudo-prophet, and

¹⁰⁰⁰ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 8.2-4; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 128; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, pp. 331-332. For a similar divine punishment of three members of the court under Julian, see PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 10; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, pp. 410-414; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 105-106.

¹⁰⁰¹ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 21.1-2; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 208; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 343. This statue replaced by Julian's order the one which was believed to represent Christ, erected according to the legend by the hemorroissa.

¹⁰⁰² Those kinds of people were among the serious society's diseases, since the kindness, the generosity, the straightforwardness of the faith and the sincerity of Constantine's disposition *'led him to trust the outward appearance* (τῷ σχήματι) *of those reputed to be Christians, who with a faked attitude* (πεπλασμένη ψυχῆ) *contrived to keep up the pretence of genuine loyalty to him'*; EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* IV, 54, 2-3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 520; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 174.

¹⁰⁰³ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* I, 58, 3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 264; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 93. Socrates of Constantinople will underline in this way the unworthiness of Valens at Adrianople, when, according to some, he exchanged his imperial *schema* (ἀμείψαντα τὸ βασιλικὸν σχῆμα). After his death, then, he was not recognized for he had no imperial *schema* (οὐκ ὄντος βασιλικοῦ σχήματος) with which to identify him; SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 38.9-10; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PERICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 146-147; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 117.

¹⁰⁰⁴ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini* II, 15; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, p. 284; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 100.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Constantius II adhered to the doctrine of *homoiousia* in an unfortunate attempt to establish uniformity of doctrine in the Church, and send in exile the bishop Hilary, who had long been involved in the controversy. Also before Constantius's death, anyway, Hilary attempted to persuade him and declared that an emperor had to be respected in as much as he respected the Church: *'though the deepest respect should be paid to the Emperor because, indeed sovereign comes from God, nevertheless his ruling is not being adopted passively by episcopal judgements, because what belongs to Caesar should be rendered to Caesar but to God what belongs to God'*; HILARY OF POITIERS, *Liber adversus Valens et Ursacium*, I, I, 5; tr. WICKHAM 1997, p. 18.

a wolf disguised as a lamb (*ovem putantes, lupum senserunt*). His face did not express what was hidden into his heart and into his mind (*est enim aliquid in corde, quod dissimulatur in vultu et velatum est mente*). As usual, anyway, his real nature could be recognized by its fruit (*a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos*), that is by his deeds and by his gestures (*gestorum fructu*) which were insincere and deceitful. He welcomed a priest with a kiss (*osculo*) like that of Judas who betrayed Christ, and bent his head for benediction while treading on the faith (*caput benedictioni submittis, et fidem calces*)¹⁰⁰⁶. Finally, also Orosius applied the theatrical terminology to the miserable Priscus Attalus. In front of this emperor done, undone, redone and made disappear (*facto infecto refecto ac defecto*), he wrote, Alaricus laughed of the mime and watched the comedy of the empire (*mimum risit et ludum spectavit imperii*). This usurper, like Procopius before him, was laughed at (*lusus est*) with a parade and brought by the Goths as an empty effigy of the empire (*inane imperii simulacrum*), until his capture by Honorius¹⁰⁰⁷. The master among the deceiving emperors was Julian, the apostate (ἄποστάτην) and chameleonic being who fooled the Christians with his deeds and behaviour¹⁰⁰⁸. In his *Oratio against Julian* Gregory of Nazianzus largely applied to the imperial description a theatrical imagery: Julian staged the drama of the impiety (παίξις τὸ τῆς ἀσεβείας δρᾶμα)¹⁰⁰⁹ and proved to be an unrestrained man, almost a ham actor, rather than the philosopher-king he claimed to be¹⁰¹⁰. He disfigured his jawbone by blowing the bellows at the time of sacrifices¹⁰¹¹. Even his funeral involved a procession of comic actors (μῦμοι γελοίων) who followed the bier dancing and insulted the emperor by recalling his apostasy, his defeat and his dishonourable death¹⁰¹².

In general as well, it seems that also in the Christian circles was present the awareness of the theatrical nature of the imperial court: Gregory described indeed the imperial court where his brother Cesarius

¹⁰⁰⁶ HILARY OF POITIERS, *Liber in Constantium Imperatorem*, 5-7; 10-11; ed. ROCHER 1987, pp. 176-180; pp. 186-192; tr. LONGOBARDO 1997, p. 48-50; p. 54-58. The same deceitful nature is accorded to Marcellus, the heretic bishop of Ancyra, who is also described by quoting similar biblical terms; HILARY OF POITIERS, *Liber adversus Valens et Ursacium*, I, II, 4; tr. WICKHAM 1997, p. 23. Cf. HILARY OF POITIERS, *Commentarius in Matthaëum* (7:15), VI, 4; ed. PL 9, col. 952; tr. LONGOBARDO 1988, p. 91, where Hilary underlined the importance of a coincidence between how a man presents himself with words and how he behaves in deed (*ut non qualem quis se verbis referat, sed qualem se rebus officiat spectemus*).

¹⁰⁰⁷ OROSIUS, *Historiarum adversus paganos*, VII, 42.7-9; ed. and tr. LIPPOLD and CHIARINI, pp. 394-395

¹⁰⁰⁸ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4, *passim*, but especially 4.62; 4.79; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 126-127; pp. 140-141. 'Apostasia' first appeared in Julian's own writing, while 'apostàs' (i.e. rebel or traitor in classical Greek) became an epithet for Julian starting from the writing of Gregory; MORESCHINI 2000, n. 9, p. 1192.

¹⁰⁰⁹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.71; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 132-133. See also *ibidem*, 4.82, pp. 142-143.

¹⁰¹⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.78; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 140-141; n. 316, p. 1212. He did not remain impassive and unperturbed (as would have been praised by his philosophical education) but filled the palace with shouts and noises even as he administered justice, punching and kicking many; *ibidem*, 5.21, pp. 202-203. Libanius for his part described Julian as a man sober in his habits and who *'did not betake himself to feasting and drinking and the amusements of the stage* (τῶν μίμων ἡδονᾶς); LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 18, 119; ed. FÖRSTER 1904, p. 286; tr. NORMAN 1969, p. 355.

¹⁰¹¹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 5.22; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 202-203.

¹⁰¹² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 5.18; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, p. 201-202.

was serving as functionary, as a mask or a scene made by many momentary realities, which served to act out the drama of this world while living for God¹⁰¹³. The emperor's use of deceits and tricks was however now an even more serious matter, declared Gregory, given his responsibility to be an example in front of his subjects. Unlike the private citizen, who will sometimes be forgiven for acting craftily (τεχνικῶς), the emperor has indeed a different role (ἀξίας) and was shameful for him to hide his intentions with shrewdness (τέχνη)¹⁰¹⁴. Julian made clear this deceitfulness already in his youth, as he received his education at the behest of the good emperor Constantius II and concealed his impiety (ἀσεβείας) under an attitude due to circumstances (ὑπὸ τοῦ καιροῦ)¹⁰¹⁵. Socrates of Constantinople and Sozomen recounted in details how Julian pursued his philosophical education and adhered to the pagan religion lulling the suspicion of the emperor: he '*made an outward profession of piety* (εὐσεβεῖν πλάττεσθαι)' and '*concealed his own sentiments* (ὑποκρινόμενον καὶ εἰς τὸ προφανές ἐξάγειν τὴν γνώμην)¹⁰¹⁶. He who had previously been a true Christian then pretended to be one (πλαστὸς ἐγενέτο) by shaving, by pretending to imitate the life of the monks (τὸν τῶν μοναχῶν ὑπεκρίνετο), and by studying philosophy in secret while reading Christian books in public (ἐν τῷ φανερωῷ)¹⁰¹⁷. Once he was proclaimed emperor and openly stripped himself of his pretense of Christianity (τὴν ὑπόκρισιν τοῦ χριστιανίζειν)¹⁰¹⁸, then, he also surrounded himself with equally deceptive kind of men: he did no longer show respect to the members of clergy¹⁰¹⁹, but promoted rather flatterers who pretended to be philosophers but were more distinguished by dress (ἐκ τοῦ σχήματος) than by culture, and deceitful men who always made their master's religion their own¹⁰²⁰.

Despite all the simulation, Julian's real nature and unworthiness could always be grasped from his physical features by a good observer like Gregory of Nazianzus. He encountered Julian in Athens when they were still students, and although Gregory was certainly not one of those who had been given the power of divination from birth, he was nevertheless able to notice the strangeness of Julian's

¹⁰¹³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 7.9; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 258-259. See also *ibidem*, 14.21, ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 352-353.

¹⁰¹⁴ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.81; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 142-143.

¹⁰¹⁵ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 4.30; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 106-107.

¹⁰¹⁶ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 2.14; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 92; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 327

¹⁰¹⁷ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 1.19-20; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, pp. 250-251; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 76. Similar also Sozomen, for whom Julian shaved and '*adopted externally the monkish mode of life* (τὸν μοναχικὸν ἐπλάττετο βίον)'; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 2.17; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 94; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 327.

¹⁰¹⁸ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 1.39; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, pp. 254-255; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 77.

¹⁰¹⁹ See on the other hand the respect toward presbyters displayed by Constantius. Despite his heretical tendencies, Constantius followed the attitude of his father Constantine and treated the priest with honour, gave them freedom of speech and ordered them to have free access to the palace; SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 2.3; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, pp. 22-23; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 36.

¹⁰²⁰ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 1.56; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, pp. 260-261; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 78.

behaviour (ἡ τοῦ ἥθους ἀνωμαλία) and his excessive agitation (τὸ περιττὸν τῆς ἐκστάσεως), so that he was able to foresee the future bad behaviour of the ruler. The unstable disposition of the emperor's soul was portended, as usual, by irrational and out-of-control physical movements: an unstable neck (ἀὐχὴν ἀπαγῆς), restless and startling shoulders (ὤμοι παλλόμενοι καὶ ἀνακοπτόμενοι), eyes agitated and darting to all sides (ὄφθαλμὸς σοβούμενος καὶ περιφερόμενος), a frenzied gaze (μανικὸν βλέπων), shaking feet that would not stay in place (πόδες ἀστατοῦντες καὶ μετοκλάζοντες), a nostril breathing insolence and disdain, laughable features of the face (προσώπου σχηματισμοὶ καταγέλαστοι), unrestrained and exuberant laughter, signs of approval or denial without any reason (νεύσεις καὶ ἀνανεύσεις σὺν οὐδενὶ λόγῳ), hesitant speech interrupted by breathing, incoherent and unintelligent questions, answers that were no better and that overlapped one another, without any rules. From those prognostics, Gregory was allowed to see what kind of person Julian will be afterwards, so that he exclaimed 'What a scourge the Roman Empire feeds!'¹⁰²¹.

Ever worse Julian, despite his claim to be like a philosopher in moderation and self-control (σωφροσύνην), was not able to contain himself and made his hidden dispositions (τὸ κρυπτόμενον ἦθος) visible when he got angry against Christians, against Persian ambassadors, and, especially, against the citizens of Antioch¹⁰²². We have already seen how pagan authors felt the problem of the anger in connection with rulers and how it was held responsible for clouding the mind and the judgment of the emperor. Christian authors related the problem also with the models provided by the Old Testament like Nebuchadnezzar, the mad king who still in the fifth century was described by Theodoret of Cyrillus as a 'most savage and most insane tyrant (...) so filled with rage as to betray his soul's dismay on his face (τῷ προσώπῳ). 'It is typical of deranged people' commented Theodoret, 'to say and do what is irrational and disorderly' and 'even today you could see people possessed by demons acting and suffering this way'¹⁰²³. The wrath characterized the emperors who killed Christians or misbehaved against holy and orthodox men. So the emperor Valens, though very angry (περιοργῆς γενόμενος)' concealed his wrath (ἐπέκρυψε τῆς ὀργῆς) toward certain holy men before putting them to death¹⁰²⁴. He lost his *philanthropia* and denied the traditional *parresia* to the monk Isaakios¹⁰²⁵. And

¹⁰²¹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 5.8.23-24; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 202-205; SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 23.21-24; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, p. 338-341; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 92 (where the passage is reported *verbatim*).

¹⁰²² SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 19.1-2; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, pp. 320-321; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 89. On Julian's claims to be philosopher-like, see also SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 1.58-59; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2005, pp. 260-261; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 78.

¹⁰²³ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Interpretatio in Daniele* 1317, 1324, 1369; ed. and tr. HILL 2006b, p. 71; p. 77; p. 127.

¹⁰²⁴ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 16.1; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 66-69; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 104.

¹⁰²⁵ When the monk spoke to him with boldness (ὀργισθεὶς) he commanded him to be arrested; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VI, 40.1; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2005, p. 468; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 376. Theophanes Confessor specified that Isaakios 'grabbed hold of the bit of Valens' horse' before threatening him, and connected

when he got angry with the prefect of the city of Edessa for refusing to expel some orthodox men, he submitted him to the ignominy of a slap made with his hand (τῆ χειρὶ πλῆξαι). The man was greatly outraged (περιυβρισθεὶς), but nevertheless had to reluctantly prepare to obey the emperor's wrath (ὑπουργεῖν τῆ βασιλέως ὀργῆ) so as to avoid the massacre of the population¹⁰²⁶.

The anger could inflame even the soul of 'good emperors', who occasionally lost control of their bodies and their gestures. So the orthodox Valentinian remained characterized by his reputation of being with a hot-blooded temper which ultimately caused his own death during a reception¹⁰²⁷. Theophanes will later connect his rage with an over-gesturing: it was 'from the extension of his arms and from the clapping of his hands (ἐκ δὲ διαστάσεως καὶ τοῦ κρότου τῶν χειρῶν)', he specified, that 'he burst a vein and lost a great deal of blood and so died'¹⁰²⁸. The anger could be even included among the imperial virtues: Philostorgius, who gave a highly critique description of the emperor Arcadius, described how this emperor lost his temper (ὀργῆ ἀνήφθη) in front of the misbehaviour of the patrician Eutropius. 'At last' admitted the author, 'in his anger (τοῖς θυμοῖς) and in the severity of the language (τῆ ... ἐμβριθεία τῶν λόγων) to which it prompted him, Arcadius was an emperor (βασιλεὺς ἦν)¹⁰²⁹.

The problem of the imperial anger came to play a central role especially during the rule of Arcadius' father, the orthodox and 'sacred' emperor Theodosius¹⁰³⁰. He was a man who easily lost his temper: he was 'incensed and enraged (κινηθεὶς δὲ πρὸς ὀργὴν ὁ βασιλεὺς)' when a 'simple and unworldly' old priest dared to pat his son with familiarity (τῷ δακτύλῳ σάϊων) and to call him 'dear child'¹⁰³¹. What characterized the episode is anyway the fact that Theodosius is immediately brought back to reason by the theological arguments of the priest. The latter explained through the traditional *parresia*

the emperor's anger with the fury with whom 'Ahab once threatened Micah'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5870, AD 377/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 65; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 100.

¹⁰²⁶ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 18.2-3; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 72-73; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, pp. 104-105. The massacre will be prevented by the pious action of a woman who pushed the prefect to take a firm position against the massacre and to control the imperial wrath; *ibidem*.

¹⁰²⁷ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 31.3-6; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 128-129; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 114. SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VI, 6.2; VI, 36.4, ed. HANSEN (1995) 2006 p. 272; p. 440; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 349; p. 372. Both Socrates of Constantinople and Sozomen tried to partially justify the anger of Valentinian (otherwise a 'good (ἀγαθὸν) man and capable of holding the reins of the empire') with the undignified appearance of the ambassadors (in this case Sarmatians).

¹⁰²⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5867, AD 374/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 61-62; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 96.

¹⁰²⁹ PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, XI, 6; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, p. 520; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 147-148.

¹⁰³⁰ The sacral character of the imperial monarchy is often stressed for example in the Theodosian code, where, as well summarized by Mathews, the State banquets in the Sacred Palace are 'divine feasts', imperial constitutions are 'Celestial Statutes', and is stated the privilege, restricted to a few, of adoring the 'Sacred Purple', 'of touching Our Purple', of 'adoring Our Serenity'; THEODOSIAN CODE VI, quot. in MATHEWS 1963, p. 57.

¹⁰³¹ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII, 6.4-5; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 92; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 379. According to Theodoret, the problem was the fact that the priest did not kiss Arcadius and left the emperor's son without honour; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 16.2-3; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, pp. 305-306; tr. GALLICO 2000, pp. 352-353.

the reason for his gesture (a way to remind the emperor that also God can get angry against those who did not honour his Son), and Theodosius recognized the power of those observations. He apologized to the man and increased the measures against the heretics who considered the Son inferior to the Father¹⁰³². When the population of Antioch revolted against the increment of taxes by throwing down the statues of the emperor and the empress in 387, the imperial rage and punishment were astutely prevented thanks to a clever artifice organized by the bishop Flavian: the litanies chosen to be sung at Theodosius' presence expressed the repentance of the citizens and excited his humanity (φιλανθρωπία), subduing his wrath and moving him to tears¹⁰³³. The pagan *Epitome de Caesaribus*, where this emperor was highly praised, reported also that Theodosius 'was, of course, enraged by unbecoming acts (irasci sane rebus indigni), but was quickly placated'. He indeed 'possessed by nature (habituique a natura) what Augustus possessed from a teacher of philosophy'. The reference, specified the same author, was to Plutarch's story of the philosopher Athenodorus who suggested the easily disturbed (*facile commoveri*) Augustus to recite by memory the Greek letters of the alphabet every time he became angry, 'so that passion (concitatio), which is momentary, would, with the mind turning to something else, lessen with the interposition of a little time'¹⁰³⁴. Later in the seventh century, John of Antioch will add that Athenodorus knew well the emperor's choleric and changeable character (ὀξύθυμον καὶ εὐμετάβλητον) and that the emperor, in turn, thanked him for reminding him that he was imperfect (ἀτελής)¹⁰³⁵.

The rage, therefore, began to be felt as an unavoidable expression of the unavoidable human and mortal dimension of the imperial persona. A good emperor is not the one who does not feel passions, but rather the one who recognized their presence and is able to constrain them with a strong mind or at least to mend their repercussions with proper actions. In the famous episode in which Theodosius' wrath led to the massacre of the population of Thessaloniki, Theodoret of Cyrillus introduced the story explaining how Theodosius was a marvellous emperor who partook of the human nature (τῆς ἀνθρωπείας δὴ οὖν φύσεως καὶ ὁ θαυμάσιος οὗτος μετασχὼν βασιλεὺς) and its passions (τῶν παθημάτων). His initial lack of moderation (ἀμετρία), the urge (τὴν ὀρμὴν) of a rightful wrath (τῷ δικαίῳ θυμῷ), and his incapability to restrain the violence (ῥύμην) with the reason (λογισμός) led him to behave like an absolute ruler (οἷα δὲ αὐτόνομός τε καὶ τύραννος) and to put to death

¹⁰³² SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII, 6.6-7; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, pp. 92-94; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 327.

¹⁰³³ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII, 23.2-3; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, pp. 190-192; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, pp. 392-393. Socrates of Constantinople, on the other hand, reported that when Theodosius I proceed against the usurper Maximus, he showed himself publicly neither for nor against (ἐν μὲν τῷ φανερῷ οὐδέτερον ἐδείκνυεν); SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 12.10; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 186-187; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 124.

¹⁰³⁴ EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS, 48.13-15; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 176; tr. BANCHICH 2009; cf. PLUTARCH, *Apophthegmata Romana*, 207, ed. and tr. BABBITT 1949, pp. 232-233.

¹⁰³⁵ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 157.17-22; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 276-277. For other authors who later reported the story, see ROBERTO 2005, n. p. 276.

thousands of citizens. However, the passions inevitably aroused by demons against the soul could be won with a mind (νοῦς) vigilant for the divine things¹⁰³⁶. And Theodosius was brought back to reason by the encounter with Ambrose, who rebuked him and allegedly imposed on him an exemplary punishment in Milan in late 390. Ambrose addressed him with a meaningful speech in which he complained not so much about the killing of the population. Rather, the emperor had to be blamed because his power had blinded his reason (τῷ λογισμῷ) and he had forgotten his human nature (*'the dust from which we are all made and to which we will return'*), becoming a slave and losing his attire¹⁰³⁷. Already Macedonius, in a speech during the above-mentioned Riot of the Statues in 387, had reminded Theodosius that he was not only an emperor, but also a man (οὐ βασιλεὺς εἶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄνθρωπος), and that he had to care not only for the empire but also for his own nature (μὴ τοίνυν μόνην ὄρα τὴν βασιλείαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ φύσιν λογίζου). The emperor was indeed a man who ruled over other men but shared with them the same nature (ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ὢν, ὁμοφυῶν βασιλεύεις) like any other creature made in the image of God¹⁰³⁸. *'(...) you must not be so dazzled by the purple that you remain ignorant of the frailty of the body (σώματος τὴν ἀσθένειαν) which it conceals'* even more clearly cried out Ambrose. *'You rule people of the same nature (ὁμοφυῶν) and subject to the same slavery as you (ὁμοδούλων).'*

Ambrose then declared that the emperor's eyes, feet, hands, and mouth were polluted by the blood that he had criminally shed *'in anger'*, and that he could no longer use them to look, to walk, to pray, or to receive the communion in the Church¹⁰³⁹. Theodosius was denied entry into the Church, and only after proper repentance he was allowed to repair his sin¹⁰⁴⁰. This was achieved, not surprisingly, with a public gesture which expressed the acknowledgement of the human dimension inherent in his person. He prayed (ἰκέτευσεν) the Lord not standing (οὐχ ἑστῶς) and neither kneeling (οὐδὲ τὰ γόνατα κλίνας), but stretching out on the floor (πρηνῆς ἐπὶ τοῦ δαπέδου κείμενος), tearing his hair, crying and uttering the Davidic *'voice'*: *'My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word'* (Psalm 119 (118):25)¹⁰⁴¹. Unlike the emperor Numerian (or Decius), a *'bad emperor'* also prevented to enter into the Church by the bishop of Antioch Babylas but without any hope of being

¹⁰³⁶ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 16.7; 17.2-3; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, pp. 306; tr. GALLICO 2000, pp. 353-354.

¹⁰³⁷ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 18.2; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, p. 307-309; tr. GALLICO 2000, p. 354-355.

¹⁰³⁸ Also in this case, then, those words, reported to the emperor, calmed down his anger; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 20.6-7; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, p. 316; tr. GALLICO 2000, p. 362.

¹⁰³⁹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 17.3-4; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, p. 309; tr. DAGRON (1996) 2003, pp. 105-106 (cf. tr. GALLICO 2000, p. 355).

¹⁰⁴⁰ According to Sozomen, the emperor was excommunicated (ἀκοινωνητον) and did not wear the imperial ornament *'according to the usage of mourners'* during the entire time of the penance (μετάνοιαν); SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII, 25.7; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 200; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 394.

¹⁰⁴¹ THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 18.19; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, p. 312; tr. GALLICO 2000, p. 358. See also DAGRON (1996) 2003, pp. 105-106.

redeemed with proper repentance¹⁰⁴², Theodosius managed, therefore, to repay for his sin with a public gesture taken from the biblical repertoire. By creating a visual and audible connection with David, he justified his rage and made clear that his mortal nature and God himself forced him into error. In the end, he even strengthened his position: ‘the sin is only a pretext for repentance’ recognized indeed also Dagron, ‘just as the repentance is constitutive of royal legitimacy’¹⁰⁴³. The emperor employed public gestures of prayer and penance also on the battlefield. Here, he could still use the traditional rhetorical gesture of the *adlocutio*: also Philostorgius, like Ammianus, described the gesture of Valentinian who, just after his proclamation in Nicaea, silenced the army with his right hand (τῆ χειρὶ μὲν σιγᾶν αὐτοῦς ἐπιτρέπει) and then spoke ‘with a calm and regal air (ἀτρέμα δὲ καὶ βασιλικῶ)’¹⁰⁴⁴. But mostly, Christian emperors are described when they used their body to publicly show their special connection with God and legitimate authority. We have seen how Constantine bent his body during the battle to ask for God’s help. Theodosius prostrated on the ground to ask for divine help against the usurper Eugenius (394) supported by Arbogast. According to Orosius, on the eve of the battle Theodosius fastened (*expers cibi ac somni*) and then prayed with the body prostrated on the ground and the mind fixed on the sky (*corpore humi fusus, mente caelo fixus orabat*). He spent the night in prayer and cried many tears, the price requested by the divine intervention, and the day after he confidently (*fiducialiter*) gave the signal for the battle with the sign of the cross (*signum crucis signum proelio dedit*), bound to win (*victor futurus*)¹⁰⁴⁵. A big and ineffable wind blew in the enemies’ faces¹⁰⁴⁶, Eugenius was killed, and Arbogast killed himself with his own hand¹⁰⁴⁷. Socrates also reported that Theodosius, this time when the battle seemed to advantage Eugenius, thrown himself on the ground (χαμαὶ ῥίψας ἑαυτὸν) and called upon God to help him, which caused his commander to be suddenly inspired with an extraordinary ardour and the rising of a violent wind against the enemy: it was at this point, concluded Socrates, that the prayer of the emperor was effective

¹⁰⁴² The emperor accused instead the holy man of ‘arrogance (τῆς τόλμης)’ and then ordered him ‘to sacrifice to the demons, since only that rite of expiation would lead to dismissal of the charge’. The order was refused by Babylas who will gain in this way ‘the crown of the martyrdom’; PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 8; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, p. 394; tr. AMIDON 2007, pp. 98-99.

¹⁰⁴³ DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 117.

¹⁰⁴⁴ PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VIII, 8; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, p. 440; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 115. See above, p. 123.

¹⁰⁴⁵ OROSIUS, *Historiarum adversus paganos*, VII, 35, 14-15, ed. and tr. LIPPOLD and CHIARINI (1976) 1993, vol. II, pp. 362-363.

¹⁰⁴⁶ OROSIUS, *Historiarum adversus paganos*, VII, 35, 17, ed. and tr. LIPPOLD and CHIARINI (1976) 1993, vol. II, pp. 362-363.

¹⁰⁴⁷ OROSIUS, *Historiarum adversus paganos*, VII, 35, 19, ed. and tr. LIPPOLD and CHIARINI (1976) 1993, vol. II, pp. 364-365.

(τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσεν ἢ τοῦ βασιλέως εὐχῆ)¹⁰⁴⁸. Theodosius indeed was like David, taking refuge in God because he knew that God is the arbiter of wars and that he can won them by prayer¹⁰⁴⁹.

Away from battlefield Arcadius, a ruler who acquired the reputation of being a friend of God (θεοφιλοῦς), prevented a disaster thanks to the prayers performed during a visit to the chapel of St Acacius in Constantinople. Since all those who lived in the vicinity ran to the house of prayer to see the emperor and rushed to occupy the access roads, from which they thought they could better see the emperor's face, they left emptied an immense building that collapsed soon afterwards: cries of admiration followed, as the emperor's prayer had saved so many people from death¹⁰⁵⁰. It seems, therefore, that gestures performed by 'good' emperors were felt as having an effective power, like those performed by saints and holy men. Theodosius II especially is described by Socrates and Sozomen as an emperor blessed by God. He was equipped with a supernatural aid similar to that granted to the righteous of the past¹⁰⁵¹. When a violent snowfall hit the circus filled with spectators, he clearly showed (δῆλῆν καθίστησι) his feelings toward the divinity by interrupting the show and starting a prayer together with the spectators. The crowd began to pray with great joy and in concert they raised hymns to God. So, commented Socrates, the whole city became a church (ἐκκλησία), while the emperor himself walked in the midst of the hymns in the *schema* of a private citizen (ἐν ἰδιωτικῷ σχήματι πορευόμενος) until the sky returned clear¹⁰⁵².

Such a supernatural force of the imperial gesture could be achieved, once again, only by a body characterized by a superior condition, both innate as well as gained with proper training. Sozomen was well accustomed to the monastic environment of Palestine (where he gained his education before coming to Constantinople) and spent many words to describe Theodosius II as an almost saintly figure.

¹⁰⁴⁸ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 25.12-14; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 248-251; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, pp. 135-136. In a similar manner is recounted the episode by Sozomen; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII, 24.4; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 194; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 393. For the way in which especially Rufinus and Theodoret reported the episode as an example of victory of the Christianity over the paganism, see ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 285-288.

¹⁰⁴⁹ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 22.19; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2007, pp. 86-89; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 165.

¹⁰⁵⁰ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 23.1-6; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, pp. 352-353; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 153. 'The crowd, who were saved' reported also later Theophanes, 'ascribed their safety to the emperor's prayer'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5899, AD 406/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 79-80; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 123. The emperor's sister, Pulcheria, is also said to attract God's favour 'on account of her conduct, so that He heard her prayer readily, and frequently directed beforehand the things which ought to be done'; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IX, 1.12; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, pp. 376-378; tr. HARTRANFT 1998, p. 419

¹⁰⁵¹ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 42.4; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2007, pp. 146-147; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 176.

¹⁰⁵² SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 22.15-18; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2007, pp. 86-87; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 165. See also a similar behaviour after the defeat of the usurper John, when the emperor and the spectators left the Hippodrome and proceeded in procession to the church, singing with one voice praises of thanksgiving to God; SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 23.12; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2007, pp. 92-93; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 166.

He praised him for being ‘*not only autocrator of men, but also of the passions of soul and body*’¹⁰⁵³: ‘*thou art wont to vanquish (κρατεῖν) thirst, stifling heat, and cold by thy daily exercise (ἀσκήσσει), so that thou seemest to have self-control (ἐγκράτειαν) as a second nature*’¹⁰⁵⁴. Socrates agreed that he was resilient (καρτεπός), so much that he bravely endured frost, great heat, and frequent fasting, and this because he was anxious to be perfectly Christian¹⁰⁵⁵. Theodosius II also mastered the traditional friendly attitude toward his subjects: he was ‘*humane and gentle (φιλόανθρωπος καὶ πρᾶος)*’ with everybody, this time in order to ‘*imitate (μιμούμενος) the Heavenly King who is thy pattern (σὸν προστάτην)*’¹⁰⁵⁶. And he greatly honoured members of the church and hermits¹⁰⁵⁷. Thanks to his training, and thanks to an education in theological matters which also included the reading of the Holy Scripture and conversations with bishops, he surpassed everybody in clemency (ἀνεξίκακον) and humanity (φιλόανθρωπον), and managed thus to practise philosophy by acts, dominating anger, grief, and pleasure¹⁰⁵⁸.

Synesius of Cyrene also recognized the fact that the king was ultimately a man and thus made of a confused and dissonant mass of different faculties. He urged Arcadius to be a king of himself and to establish a monarchy over his soul (μοναρχίαν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ), defeating the mob-rule and the democracy of the passions with his reason and domesticating the irrational parts inherent into his human soul. This divine calm should extend to his outward appearance: he had to show a divine composure (μέχρι προσώπου γαλήνην ἔνθεον) and offer the sight (θέαμα) of an imperturbable attitude (ἐν αἰδοῦς ἀκύμονι διαθέσει). This in turn will inspire awe in friends and fear in the enemies¹⁰⁵⁹. The ideal king has thus to accept his nature as a man, govern it, and then show his acquired condition under the sight of his people. He should not confine himself in the palace among bodily

¹⁰⁵³ SOZOMEN, *Address to the Emperor Theodosius*, 11; ed. BIDEZ 1983, pp. 96-98; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 237. In the same manner, Sozomen praises those who at his period had embraced monasticism for ‘*they manfully subjugate the passions of the soul, yielding neither to the necessities of nature, nor succumbing to the weakness of the body*’; SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 12.3; ed. BIDEZ 1983, p. 164; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 248.

¹⁰⁵⁴ SOZOMEN, *Address to the Emperor Theodosius*, 12; ed. BIDEZ 1983, p. 98; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 237.

¹⁰⁵⁵ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 22.3; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2007, pp. 82-83; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, pp. 164-165. He even clothed himself with the cloak of the bishop of Hebron, who had died at Constantinople: although it was very dirty, he wore it because he believed he was receiving something of the sanctity of the dead; SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 22.14; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2007, pp. 86-87; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 165.

¹⁰⁵⁶ SOZOMEN, *Address to the Emperor Theodosius*, 9; ed. BIDEZ 1983, p. 96; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 237.

¹⁰⁵⁷ He even embraced the hermit Abram and considered his rough ‘sisara’ more honourable than his purple vest; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Religiosa*, XVII, 9; ed. CANIVET and LEROY-MOLINGHEN 1977-1979, vol. II, pp. 46-47; tr. GALLICO 1995, pp. 206-207. The empress also touched the saint’s hand and knee, imploring (ικέτευον) in this way a man who did not even know Greek; *ibidem*.

¹⁰⁵⁸ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 22.6-8; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2007, pp. 84-85; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, pp. 164-165. All those qualities were missing in Julian who, as we have already seen, could not control his anger in front of the Antiocheans; *ibidem*.

¹⁰⁵⁹ SYNESIUS OF CYRENE, *De Regno*, 10; ed. and tr. GARYZA 1989, pp. 401-403. Synesius’ words reflected the new trend in the exercise of the power, for which emperors after Theodosius (and until Heraclius) closed themselves in the palace of Constantinople. For the reason of this choice, see MEIER 2019, pp. 290-292.

pleasures, living like a marine mollusc. He has to become an accustomed sight (σύνηθες γενόμενοι) without being worried to be assimilated with the mortals (μὴ ἐξανθρωπισθεῖτε): ‘until you will disdain the human limits’, declared Synesius to Arcadius, ‘you will never reach the human perfection (ἕως οὖν ἀναξιούτε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, οὐδὲ τῆς ἀνθρώπου τυγχάνετε τελειότητος)’.

The king has also to be aware of the danger of being overwhelmed by the exaggerated luxury and pomp, which would only conceal his real body. Mere appearance (φαντασία) and honesty (ἀλήθεια) do not stay together¹⁰⁶⁰, and majesty distances itself from the truth as much as it draws near the appearance (ἐπέδωκεν εἰς σχῆμα). Precious devices and theatrical manners had to leave space to the simplicity (λιτότητα / εὐτελεία) which only allows to see the naked essence and the true beauty of a king, without any appearance and exaggeration (ἀφείξ τὸ φαινόμενόν τε καὶ ἐπιποίητον). The emperors of the past were good emperors thanks to their soul, and not to their pomp (οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς σκευῆς), and they were like the other mortal beings in their appearance (τὰ δὲ ἐκτὸς ὅμοιοι τοῖς ἀγελαίοις ἐφαίνοντο) – like the emperor Carinus, who was not even ashamed of his bald head¹⁰⁶¹.

The imperial education remained therefore a serious matter. Again, a good appearance was not enough to ensure the imperial power, as experienced by the pagan patrician Rufinus when he tried to manoeuvre against his protégé Arcadius after the death of Theodosius. Philostorgius, a Christian who wrote by a Eunomian point of view critique toward the Theodosian dynasty, described Rufinus as ‘*tall and manly*’, with an intelligence (σύνεσιν) made visible (ἐδήλουν) ‘*by the movement of his eyes and his readiness of speech*’. Arcadius on the other hand, ‘*was short, slight of build, weakly, and dark in complexion. And his dullness of mind (τὴν ψυχῆς νοθείαν) was evident (διήγγελον) in his speech and the way his eyes looked (...). This is what fooled Rufinus, who taught that the sight alone (ἐξ αὐτῆς μόνης τῆς ὄψεως) would make the army glad to choose him as emperor and to get rid of Arcadius*’. However, Rufinus was ultimately a greedy minister who greatly misbehaved against his subjects, and the army, in the end, arouse against him and slew him¹⁰⁶². Still, a princely education could be ruined by the lack of a strong soul: in an anecdote assigned by Blockley to Malchus of Philadelphia, the son of the emperor Zeno was told by his father ‘*to exercise in order to increase his stature*’ in the desire of making him his successor. Yet, the boy fell in the hands of greedy imperial officials who noticed his inclination toward drunkenness and distracted him with ‘*extraordinary perversions*’. In the end ‘*he became accustomed to consider as good a life dedicated to empty pleasures and displayed in his expression (διὰ τῶν προσώπων ἀπεμφαίνων) the arrogant pretensions of his expectation of the throne, he began to strut (ἀκροβατεῖν), to raise his neck high (μετέωρον τὸν ἀρχένα ἄρειν) and, to speak briefly, to treat all men as his servants. But the Ruler of all, observing his wickedness, which*

¹⁰⁶⁰ SYNESIUS OF CYRENE, *De Regno*, 14; ed. and tr. GARYZA 1989, pp. 410-411.

¹⁰⁶¹ SYNESIUS OF CYRENE, *De Regno*, 15-16; ed. and tr. GARYZA 1989, pp. 412-419.

¹⁰⁶² PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, XI, 3; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, pp. 514-516; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 146. For the lack of manner of Rufinus and the symbolic treatment of his amputated head, see above, p. 153.

was both innate and learned (τὴν φυσικὴν καὶ διδακτικὴν κακότητα), decreed that he suffer an untimely death (...)¹⁰⁶³.

Theodosius II, on the other hand, had been properly educated by his sister Pulcheria, who 'devoted great attention to bringing him up as a prince in the best possible way (ὡς ἂν μάλιστα βασιλικῶς ἀναχθείη)¹⁰⁶⁴. The education comprehended not only the traditional disciplines. She taught him also how to build up a good *schema* carefully balanced to express urbanity, authority, and sacredness:

Pulcheria taught (ἐρρυθμίζετο) Theodosius 'to be orderly and princely in his manners (περὶ δὲ τὰς προόδους κόσμιος εἶναι καὶ βασιλικός); she showed him how to gather up his robes (ἐσθῆτά τε ἥ χρῆ περιτέλλειν μανθάνων), and how to take a seat (τρόπῳ τίνι καθῆσθαι), and how to walk (βαδίζειν); she trained him to restrain laughter (γέλωτος κρατεῖν), to assume a mild or a formidable aspect as the occasion might require (καὶ πρᾶος καὶ φοβερὸς ἐν καιρῷ εἶναι), and to inquire with urbanity (ἀρμοδίως) into the cases of those who came before him with petitions. But she strove chiefly, to lead him into piety (εὐσέβειαν), and to pray continuously; she taught him to frequent the church regularly, (...), and she inspired him with reverence for priests and other good men'¹⁰⁶⁵.

Pulcheria therefore 'gave to her brother Theodosius a royal training (βασιλικῶς ἐξεπαίδευσεν)', summarized later Theophanes, 'above all in piety towards God, but also in character (ἦθος), speech (λόγον), gait (βάδισμα), laughter (γέλωτα), dress (στολήν), deportment (καθέδραν), and behaviour (στάσιν)¹⁰⁶⁶. In short, she showed him 'how to look like a king (σχῆμα ... βασιλικῶς)', added the passage included in the Suida¹⁰⁶⁷. The imperial *schema* finally resulted therefore into a synthesis of pagan and Christian features: the Roman classical education, formally developed toward the steadiness, was fully integrated in the behaviour required from a Christian emperor, who had to express his *eusebeia* without which 'armies, a powerful empire, and every other resource, are of no avail'¹⁰⁶⁸. Theodosius II learnt well the lesson: on the battlefield, he 'publicly returned thanks to God' for the death of Alavicus, a commander who had conspired against him, descending from horseback¹⁰⁶⁹. This symbolic gesture allowed him to convey to onlookers his 'mastery of a contemporary ideal' and to triumph 'in his personal, ethical conduct as much as in his military practice'¹⁰⁷⁰.

¹⁰⁶³ SUIDAE LEXICON, ed. ADLER 1935, Z, 84; MALCHUS OF PHILDELPHIA, *Byzantiaká*, fr. 8; tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 414-415. On Malchus of Philadelphia, an author who worked at end of the fifth century, see BLOCKLEY 1981, pp. 71-85.

¹⁰⁶⁴ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IX, 1.6; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 374; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 419.

¹⁰⁶⁵ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IX, 1.7-8; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 374; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 419.

¹⁰⁶⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5901, AD 408/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 81; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 125.

¹⁰⁶⁷ SUIDAE LEXICON, ed. ADLER 1935, II, 2145.

¹⁰⁶⁸ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IX, 1.2; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 370; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 419.

¹⁰⁶⁹ SOZOMEN, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IX, 12.5; ed. BIDEZ-HANSEN 2008, p. 430; tr. HARTRANFT 1983, p. 425.

¹⁰⁷⁰ MCCORMICK 1986, pp. 87-88.

Finally, a sacred atmosphere affected not only the battlefield and the palace – which Theodosius II made little different from a house of ascetics with his hymns chanted at dawn in praise of God¹⁰⁷¹– but also the Hippodrome, the pagan environment par excellence¹⁰⁷². This latter continued to be not only an arena for chariot races and theatrical spectacles but also a place full of political power and the very centre of the public life, where the masses could get excited and the crowd could direct his praises, his critiques and his requests to the ruler¹⁰⁷³. From the Kathisma, the imperial tribune built by Constantine ‘just like the one in Rome, for the emperor to watch the races (θεωρίου βασιλικοῦ)’¹⁰⁷⁴ and connected with the palace through a staircase called the Kochlias, the emperor and his court could quickly come to stage and fulfil their duty to preside the games and show themselves to the population¹⁰⁷⁵. Here the emperor performed the ancient gesture of the *mappa* which since the time of the Principate signalled the opening of the consular games and declared the largesse of the patron. Especially after the fourth century it emancipated from its original consular function and became an imperial duty so that the ancient ‘sign of the devil’ made to signal the beginning of the ‘evil spectacles’ was included among the *insignia* and the practices of the Christian authorities¹⁰⁷⁶. It became less a mean to signal the start of the games and more a ‘ständigen Attribut’ of the imperial *schema* which, together with the sceptre, aimed to express the emperor’s power and role as ‘ruler of the circus factions and president of the games’¹⁰⁷⁷. Chrysostom complained about the spectators of Antioch who left the churches to search for the ‘nod of the emperor’ in the Hippodrome¹⁰⁷⁸, and the above-mentioned usurper Procopius performed the gesture of the *mappa* (*‘purpureum pannulum laeva manu gestare’*) in his attempt to ‘theatrically’ act in the ‘role’ of the emperor through a gesture distinctive of the imperial power¹⁰⁷⁹. It can be seen also in a series of diptychs which immortalized the moment in a hierarchical and formal

¹⁰⁷¹ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VII, 22.4; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2007, pp. 82-85; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 165.

¹⁰⁷² The Hippodrome was the setting in which Christian elements had been more slowly absorbed; GRABAR (1936) 1971, pp. 144-162.

¹⁰⁷³ For the nature and the role of the factions, the demes and the people in the circus in Rome and in Constantinople, and the way in which they functioned in relation to the imperial power, see CAMERON 1976.

¹⁰⁷⁴ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 13, 7; ed. THURN 2000, 245.75; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. 173-174; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 332, where the expression is more synthetically translated as ‘kaiserliche Loge’. The passage is quoted almost *verbatim* also by the Chronicon Paschale, and Whitby translated θεωρίου βασιλικοῦ as ‘for imperial viewing’; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 277, AD 328; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 528; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 16. On the importance of the performance set in the Kathisma, see also CAMERON 1985, p. 182.

¹⁰⁷⁵ The imperial presence at the game was felt as an important sign of respect for the population: let us think only to Julian, who arose the anger of the citizens of Antiochia when broke the rules and neglected to preside to the games. See above, p. 120.

¹⁰⁷⁶ For a list of imperial images where the *mappa* appears among the *insignia* reserved to the emperor – starting from the imperial coins of Constantius II and down to the imperial consular diptychs – which states how the process is reflected in the iconography of power, see WESSEL 1978, pp. 408-410.

¹⁰⁷⁷ WESSEL 1978, pp. 408-410.

¹⁰⁷⁸ PASQUATO 1976, pp. 254-265.

¹⁰⁷⁹ See above, p. 138.

manner¹⁰⁸⁰ and in the famous reliefs at the base of the obelisk erected by Theodosius in the Hippodrome¹⁰⁸¹. The reliefs show the emperor sat in the middle of the Kathisma together with his family and the court and testified the changing occurred in the fourth century, from the republican ideal of the emperor as a *'princeps among his fellows'* expressing his *civilitas*, to the image of 'an autocrat favouring his subjects with the sacred presence' and expressing his *philanthropia* and his *elemosyne* 'in terms appropriate to a god graciously granting his worshippers' prayers'¹⁰⁸². If we look specifically to the gestures and the countenance of the figures carved on the obelisks, anyway, we can see not so much a 'drastic change', as sustained by Cameron, but rather a development which took to the extreme consequences the previous rules of etiquette. The emperor's superiority in status with respect to the other participants is undoubtedly expressed by his higher dimensions in the scale, while the frontality and the hieratic style that had gradually flanked the 'illusionistic' style of the Hellenistic tradition conveyed the idea of his self-control over the mortal passions. The hand with the crown and the handkerchief lightly posed in the imperial womb (in contrast with the crowds at his back who hold them high on their heads) declared his power as Kosmokrator and his perennial victory in the context of the cosmic symbolism of the Hippodrome and the chariot races¹⁰⁸³. The physical and actual gesture of support and participation was nevertheless also represented, so that the emperor appears both as a spectator as well as an actor¹⁰⁸⁴. The possibility that images could reliably depict an actual ceremonial moment is stated by Themistius, who claimed to have witnessed the triumph in which Theodosius *'presented the barbarians giving up their weapons voluntarily'* (probably the *calcatio colli* staged in 382 after the peace with the Goths), and declared to have seen *'clearly (εἶδομεν ὕπαρ) and in the flesh (καὶ ἐναργῶς) what we had previously known through pictorial representation (ἃ τέως ἐπὶ τῶν πινάκων γράφοντες ἐγενόμεθα)*'¹⁰⁸⁵. Art and ceremony shared indeed the same attitude toward bodies and gestures, exploited for their communicative and immediate ability to convey a specific meaning or a universal concept. Both the fields were characterized by a formalist trend which tended

¹⁰⁸⁰ HUMPHREY 1986, esp. pp. 153-157.

¹⁰⁸¹ For the role of this monument, still standing in the Sultanahmet Meydani of Istanbul, in the artistic development of the imperial image, see GRABAR (1936) 1971, pp. 65-70.

¹⁰⁸² CAMERON 1985, p. 177.

¹⁰⁸³ VESPIGNANI 2001, pp. 140-141. The cosmic symbolism of the Hippodrome was visually expressed by its architectural elements as well as by the number and the colour of the factions; JOHN ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 53; fr. 58; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 117-119; p. 123 (with previous references from John Malalas, to John the Lydian, the Chronicon Paschale). For the triumphal character of the scene and the way in which the rite attributed to the emperor the victory of the *auriga*, see GRABAR (1936) 1971, p. 65.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Other is the opinion of Grabar, who saw both in the written as well as the visual sources concerning the participation of the emperor at the Hippodrome a moment in which *'l'empereur apparaît avant tout en spectateur – et non en acteur'*; GRABAR (1936) 1971, p. 64.

¹⁰⁸⁵ THEMISTIUS, *Oratio XVI*, 199c; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 244; tr. HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 265. The iconography of submitting barbarians, kneeling under emperor's feet, was often represented on coins; HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, n. 189, p. 265. The realism of the gestures is implied even by Grabar, who related depicted gestures to the *De Ceremoniis*; GRABAR (1936) 1971, pp. 69-70. For the depiction of the *neuma* of the emperor as a command to the *silentarius* in front of him, see GRABAR (1936) 1971, p. 70

to present the body of the emperor in a motionless attitude to express his inner impassibility, and with *insignia* which made immediately recognizable his identity and his status. By this perspective, therefore, his ‘personne physique (...) s’efface devant le porteur auguste du pouvoir supreme’, and the imperial gestures were merely parts of the ‘vision d’un moment symbolique de la liturgie impériale’¹⁰⁸⁶. Standing in the middle of his court, riding his horse in triumph, or enthroned in front of his subject, the emperor took to the extreme the steady and ‘statue-like’ appearance and turned his body to stone¹⁰⁸⁷. The imperial body assumed a more abstract and immaterial ‘icon-like’ look in the plates issued for the *triennalia* of the emperor Theodosius (388 or 393) which best represented the harmonic conjunction reached between pagan and Christian *schemata*. The imperial image maintains here a basic linear and hieratic appearance but also loses the stone weight to float in the air, expressing with an abstract style its ‘other-worldliness’ and its distance from the earthly world¹⁰⁸⁸. The historical quality of the imperial body and its nature as a living organism engaged in practical occupations essential for the ruling is nevertheless not completely concealed. Also in this case it is the detail of gestures which gave the composition a more ‘illusionist mode’ of a narrative prone to reflect the reality¹⁰⁸⁹. The scene of *largitio*, which was performed in the palace during the appointment of a functionary, is captured in the moment in which the emperor, sat on his throne, delivered to the newly appointed official the symbol of his office, the diptych-codicils (τὰ κωδικέλλια), which are received with a covered hand and a bent posture¹⁰⁹⁰. The role of the imperial hand as transmitter of authority is strongly emphasized through a parallelism with the similar Christological iconography of the scene of the *Traditio Legis*, where Christ entrusted St Peter (alone or with the other apostles) with the evangelical message and the office of the Church by giving to him the *volumen* with the Law¹⁰⁹¹. This gesture was also performed by the ecclesiastical authority to appoint the members of the clergy. In this way, religious and imperial iconography mutually shared a *schema* to depict and express the power and the authority of the hands

¹⁰⁸⁶ GRABAR (1936) 1971, p. 10; pp. 18-19. Obelisks, statues and celebrative columns of the fourth and sixth century, recognized also Grabar, revealed ‘le Majesté des empereurs, telle qu’elle se manifestait dans les cérémonies de la cour’; *ibidem*.

¹⁰⁸⁷ BECATTI 1960.

¹⁰⁸⁸ For the connection between religious icons and secular iconography in the period of formation, see HALDON 1990, p. 415; p. 433, with bibliography.

¹⁰⁸⁹ HALDON 1990, p. 424.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Later in the sixth century, Peter the Patrician described in a similar way the appointment of the *komes* of admissionis, the *komes* of the *scholae*, and the *kouropalates*. After that, the functionary thanked the emperor by kissing his feet, then he stood in front of him before leaving; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.*, I, 84 (93); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, pp. 386-387. For other officials the procedure could be slightly different, for example the *augustalio*n received the codicils but did not kiss the feet, while other official received the particular *insigne* symbol of their power – a golden staff (τὸ χρυσοῦν βεργήν) for the *silentiary* or the torque for the *kandidatos*. Other officials like the referendaries received their office only through an instruction given by the *praepositos*; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.*, I, 85-86 (94-95); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, pp. 388-389.

¹⁰⁹¹ Some examples of *Traditio Legis* on fifth century’s sarcophagi in Ravenna included the Onestus’ sarcophagus (Santa Maria in Porto Fuori), the Rinaldus’ Sarcophagus (Ravenna Dom), and the Sarcophagus of the Twelve Apostle (S. Apollinare in Classe).

of their respective leaders: employing this powerful and meaningful visual gesture, Christ gained in authority assuming an 'imperial' posture, while the emperor gained in sacredness, conferring to his *schema* the meaning of a divine appointment and making his earthly court to reflect the divine one. On the right and the left of the enthroned emperor, on a smaller scale, sat then the Theodosius' co-emperors. Valentinian II is characterized by a posture in line with the above-mentioned statue-like representations (even if in a more unworldly and abstract dimension, if compared to the solid physical form employed for example in the column of Arcadius). He holds the long 'Stabszepter' of the ancient ruler (a pole with spherical forms at each end) which also entailed the meaning of a 'Kreuzzepter'¹⁰⁹². On the other side Arcadius, similar to an icon and similar to Christ 'aristocratically' conversing and teaching the apostles as a king-philosopher – still visible in several sarcophagi of the fourth century¹⁰⁹³ – not only raised the hand on his chest as a sign of power (like in the diptych of the consul Felix's of the 428). He also formed with the finger of his right hand the sign of the cross. In this way, he combined the traditional posture of the authority with the powerful gesture of the Christian symbolism which was now fully integrated into his repertory. He thus confers to his hand an even stronger power: it visually expressed and publicly acknowledged not only that the imperial power was given by God, but also that God had conferred to the imperial hand the power to bestow in turn his benediction to the presents. The gesture was therefore the element which expressed the Christian dimension embodied by the imperial *schema*.

In the hands of the Christian writers, the imperial *schema* earns in meaning and content. The kind of body expected now by the Christian emperor is first formulated by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*. Here the visual dimension of the imperial deeds and actions had the lion's share, and Eusebius lively described how gestures had to be ideally used at the service of the new Christian imagery and political theory. The display of respect now reserved to the bishops included the traditional republican friendly attitude and, in more formal occasions, a carefully organized system of signals, while the moment of the banquets became a representation of the heavenly kingdom. The spiritual qualities required from the Christian faith resulted in a humble attitude harmoniously joined to a physically strong body, and powerfully evocative gestures came to be used to point out theological statements and to express the imperial faith. The emperor's hand established especially a durable relation with the symbol of the Cross, both in the form of a material device as well as in the form of a physical posture and a gesture, which also ensured him the God's protection and the victory over his enemies.

¹⁰⁹² WESSEL 1978, pp. 401-402, where the problem is related with the similar *insigne* hold by Constantine in the famous silver *multiplum* of Ticinum (313), differently interpreted as a 'Kreuzzepter' or as the 'kaiserliche Lanze'.

¹⁰⁹³ For a rich repertoire and discussion over the scenes depicted in those sarcophagi, see WILPERT 1929-1936.

What stands out the most is nevertheless the emphasis put on the human and mortal dimension of the imperial being. Constantine's dead body, incorruptible but also deprived of his supernatural soul, was still worthy of veneration and exhibited under the sight of the army, the Senate, and the people. *Tyrannoi*, bad rulers, and 'religious criminals' were struck right in their bodies by physical suffering which made them almost unrecognizable. And as usual, the idea that the imperial body could provide constitutive power and legitimacy to its bearer was developed as a literary weapon, so that emperors were charged with misusing their bodies when they assumed an outward and theatrically appearance not fitted to their social status or their true inner being. Mostly, a significant development took place in the theme of the imperial anger, enriched now by the biblical imagery. The rage, which deeply affected the capacity of the body to move according to rationality, was clearly recognized as an unavoidable presence in the mortal body of emperors, both good and bad. The good ruler was required to accept this element in himself, the only way to control it and, if too late, to mend its consequences with powerful gestures evocative of the biblical imagery and expressive of his mortal nature. The theme of the imperial self-control took on therefore a meaning strictly connected with the mortal dimension of the emperor, subject to passions, while its educational training bestowed his gestures with an almost effective power.

No doubt those descriptions and those statements were highly imbued with a rhetorical dimension. As already shown by Leppin, however, this condition does not detract from texts's value as sources for the representation and interpretation of imperial actions¹⁰⁹⁴. In the case of our topic as well, those descriptions seem further to testify the shaping of a new kind of imperial *habitus*, which developed and enriched with new gestures and a new depth the one assumed in the previous centuries. The human and mortal body of the emperor started to be justified and enhanced by Christian reflections on the relationship between body and soul (which had consequences also in the new kind of education and moral requirements which had to outwardly emerge in the body) and by the exegesis of his gestures based on historical precedents as well as on the Scriptures and on more complex ideas about what is to be considered positive or negative in imperial authority. This *habitus* was proving effective in giving courage to the army, calming an angry population, or even defining relations with the clergy and members of the court. The rhetorical dimension was thus strictly related with the imperial practices, in a mutual relationship between models, actual performances, and behavioural attempts made in this sense by the ruler: Christian authors were interested, like their pagan counterparts, in conveying and instil in the mind of their emperor their own view of the ideal behaviour. But those judgments inevitably had consequences on the imperial practices, since the emperor was in turn learning to exploit those ideas in the practices of the power. From the rhetorical dimension it is possible

¹⁰⁹⁴ LEPPIN 1996, p. 5.

therefore to see how the emperor constituted his body, his gestures and his general public appearance, how he developed his bodily practice in such a way that his 'inside' and his 'outside' were related and reproduced each other, so that to use them to make visible and outward not only his abstract power, but also his inner soul¹⁰⁹⁵. And this in a continuous effort to avoid any obvious regulation or theatricality that could easily be perceived as such by the audience of the power.

A new reflection over the imperial body (which will be developed further in the following centuries), the attribution of new and deeper meaning to specific *schemata*, and the addition of new gestures, however, enriched, also the repertoire of the imperial *schemata* and put new political weapons at disposal of the emperor who had to act different roles and fulfil different expectations, embodying the victorious and strong ruler, the perfect Christian faithful, and the man who was bound by a unique relationship with the god.

2. THE FIFTH-SIXTH CENTURIES

2.1. THE HARMONY BETWEEN PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN SCHEMATA

Authors in the sixth century faced the difficult task to combine the elements of the new and old religion, and to outline the characteristics of a Christian ruler in the context of an educational system and an imagery still informed by pagan classical values. 'The key', recognized Cameron, could 'lay in separation', as when Paul the Silentiary kept separated his classicising amatory epigrams from his Christian production¹⁰⁹⁶. Still, the general situation 'on the threshold of the total ideological victory of Christianity' (the Academy of Athens closed its doors in 529 and the ruling elite was now mainly composed of Christians)¹⁰⁹⁷ allowed mostly a harmonious combination of old and new elements. The compromise was felt less problematic and easier to accept especially in the case of the imperial appearance: the ruler continued indeed to be seen and was expected to show himself as the victorious 'heir of the Caesars' triumphant over barbarians, a sun-like divine apparition rising from the Kathisma (an image, this latter, strengthened especially after Theodosius, when rulers more often settled in the palace rather than at the head of the army). But he continued also to be simultaneously the humble servant of God, the new Moses, and the *imago Christi*.

A good endorsement of this situation was the figure of Justinian. His reign in particular was characterized by complexities and by apparent contradictions, which influenced the artistic and literary production as well. Especially in the early period, this emperor adopted a 'two-faces' policy that

¹⁰⁹⁵ FRANK 1991, pp. 45-46; FEHER 1989, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹⁶ CAMERON 1985, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹⁷ BELL 2009, p. 87.

combined a revival of the ancient past (made of military reconquests and the re-arrangement of the law) and an autocratic, mystical, and religious kind of rule¹⁰⁹⁸. This combination was well expressed in visual terms by the lost equestrian statue of Justinian. The essential features of the statue can still be traced in the detailed description of Procopius at the beginning of the *De Aedificiis*¹⁰⁹⁹ and in the *ekphrasis* of George Pachymeres, who could still see it and describe it in the twelfth century. It was a ‘colossal bronze figure (εἰκὼν)’ that portrayed the emperor riding toward the east (the lively limbs of his horse expressed a strong sense of movement forward)¹¹⁰⁰. It stood out as a ‘very noteworthy sight (θέαμα λόγου πολλοῦ ἄξιον)’ on the summit of a column in one of the most noticeable place of the city, the Augusteion¹¹⁰¹. The aspect of the statue entailed both a pagan *schema* (the costume he wore) as well as a Christian one (the *insigne* in his hand). On one side Justinian is ‘habited like Achilles (ἔσταλται δὲ Ἀχιλλεὺς), that is’, explained Procopius, the *schema* he assumes ‘is known by that name (τὸ σχῆμα καλοῦσιν ὅπερ ἀμπέχεται)’¹¹⁰². The identification with the Homeric heroes of antiquity was usually employed in iconography and in rhetorical works to celebrate the bravery of the emperor¹¹⁰³. Furthermore, Achilles costume embodied the virtue of manhood: a story transmitted in Suida reported that Harmatus, a relative of the emperor Basiliscus known for an affair with the empress Zenonis, was so vain (he ‘thought only of his hair and attending to his body’) and deluded by wealth and honours, that he ‘thought that no one surpassed him in manliness (ἐπ’ἀνδρεία). This obsession so gripped him that, dressed up like Achilles (ὡς σκευὴν ἀναλαμβάνειν Ἀχιλλέως), he would mount a horse and parade about the hippodrome of his house’¹¹⁰⁴. As for Justinian’s statue, the Achillean pagan *schema* consisted of a war-like garment made of half-boots without greaves, a

¹⁰⁹⁸ CAMERON 1985, esp. pp. 19-21. For a summary of Justinian’s program of *renovatio imperii* and the channels of propaganda through which imperial virtues and the osmosis between Roman State and Christian Church were exalted, see CRESCI MARRONE and BARTOLINI 2005, pp. XI-XIV.

¹⁰⁹⁹ According to Cameron, this position, ‘second only to the description of S. Sophia’, was an ‘absolutely deliberate’ choice to emphasize ‘the expression of the imperial theme through warfare’; CAMERON 1985, p. 103.

¹¹⁰⁰ PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 2.5-7; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 34-35; GEORGE PACHYMERES, *Descriptio Augusteonis*; ed. SCHOPENI 1830, pp. 1217-1220; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, pp. 111-113.

¹¹⁰¹ PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 2.4; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 34-35. On the importance of setting the statue of an emperor in a visible and significative location to convey his presence and his ‘public face’ to the citizens of the capital and the provinces, see JAMES 2001, p. 43.

¹¹⁰² PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 2.7; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 34-35. Dewing translated *schema* once again as ‘the costume he wears’, even if he acknowledged the ambiguity of the term which could refer both to the costume as well as to the character. According to him, Procopius’ use of this word ‘might easily have been purely fortuitous’; DEWING 1961, vol. II, p. 396.

¹¹⁰³ GRABAR (1936) 1971, p. 95.

¹¹⁰⁴ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, A, 3970; ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 476-477. His thirst for glory was further aroused by the crowd who ‘cozened him like a boy’ by calling him ‘Pyrrhus’, a title which actually suited more his ‘ruddy complexion’ rather than his ‘manliness (ἀνδρεία)’, since ‘he did not slay heroes like Pyrrhus, but lusted after women (γυναίμανῆς) like Paris’; *ibidem*. The author did not employ here the term *schema* but σκευή (DEWING 1961, vol. II, pp. 397-398, with bibliography), but he still referred to the general apparel assumed (ἀναλαμβάνειν) by Hamartus. See also DOWNEY 1940.

'breastplate in the heroic fashion' and a shiny helmet¹¹⁰⁵. The posture and the gestures, however, were not that of Achilles, since he 'has neither sword nor spear nor any other weapon'¹¹⁰⁶. Rather, he held in his left hand a globe (πόλον), 'by which the sculptor signifies (παραδηλών) that the whole earth and sea are subject to him (δεδούλωται)'. The globe had a cross (σταυρὸς) on the top, 'the emblem by which alone (δι' οὗ δὴ) he has obtained both his Empire and his victory in war'¹¹⁰⁷. And while his head 'gives the impression that it moves up and down (ὡς κατασείοιτο παρεχόμενον)'¹¹⁰⁸, he looks and directs 'his course (τὴν ἠνιόχησιν)' eastwards, against the Persian: 'stretching forth (προτεινόμενος) his right hand toward the rising sun and spreading out his fingers (τοὺς δακτύλους διαπετάσας), he commands (ἐγκελεύεται) the barbarians in that quarter to remain at home and to advance no further'¹¹⁰⁹. The Suida also interpreted the statue's gesture of extending the right hand (τὴν δὲ δεξιὰν χεῖρα ἀνατεταμένην / διὰ τῆς ἀνατάσεως καὶ ἀπόσεως τῶν χειρῶν) toward the East as a warning to the Persian to stay away from the Roman territories¹¹¹⁰.

This is not surprising. Pagans and Christian alike conferred a protective power to the statues of their cities¹¹¹¹, and other statues of Justinian in the Hippodrome entailed the value of good omens of victory against the barbarians¹¹¹². A statue of Justinian's predecessor Justin erected next to the shore was even felt as having the power to 'spread his calm' to the water around the harbour¹¹¹³. Especially their gestures were felt as having an efficacious and almost magical power which could be controlled through a correct understanding of their meaning¹¹¹⁴. Pagan statues, which adorned the public space

¹¹⁰⁵ PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 2.8-10; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 34-35. Later Pachymeres will call 'Achillean' the type of cloak (μανδύαν) or garment (στολήν) which covered part of his body; GEORGE PACHYMERES, *Descriptio Augusteonis*; ed. SCHOPENI 1830, p. 1220; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, p. 113.

¹¹⁰⁶ The Achilles in Zeuxippos' gymnasium (described by Christodorus of Tebes in the fifth century) could be recognized by the shining eyes and by the gesture given to him by the artist (σχῆματι τεχνήεντι) 'of brandishing a spear in his right hand and of holding a shield in his left'; *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA*, II, 291-294; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1950, vol. I, pp. 80-81.

¹¹⁰⁷ PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 2.10-12; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 34-37. The Suida even more clearly explained that the globus (called here σφαῖρα) surmounted by the cross signified the dominion gained by the emperor over the world through the faith in the Cross; *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, I 446.

¹¹⁰⁸ PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 2.8-10; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 34-35. The 'dazzling light' which 'flashes forth' from the helmet is compared by Procopius to Sirius, the star of Autumn; *ibidem*.

¹¹⁰⁹ PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 2.10-12; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 34-37.

¹¹¹⁰ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, I 446. Procopius, intending to signify the enemy as the Persians, described the gesture as turned toward the East. Later sources such as Stephen of Novgorod and the anonym Russian traveller (for whom the Arabs were the enemies) declared that the statue was turned toward south; MAJESKA 1984, pp. 28-29; 134-135.

¹¹¹¹ For the protective power conferred by pagans to their statues, see OLYMPIODORUS, *Historia*, fr. 16 (*Bibl. Cod.* 80, p. 171); fr. 27 (*Bibl. Cod.* 80, p. 177); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 176-177; pp. 190-191. For the way in which also Christians, even the more educated ones, felt statues and images of pagan gods as having effective power, see CLARK 2004, p. 36; SARADI-MENDELOVICI 1990, p. 56; MANGO 1963.

¹¹¹² ANONYMOUS in *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA (Planudean Appendix)*, XVI, 62-63; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1953, vol. V, pp. 192-195.

¹¹¹³ ANONYMOUS in *ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA (Planudean Appendix)*, XVI, 64; ed. and tr. PATON 1948-1953, vol. V, pp. 194-195.

¹¹¹⁴ JAMES 1996; CAMERON and HERRIN 1984, introduction, pp. 31-32.

of the new Rome, were therefore not only ‘defaced and engraved with crosses to ban their power, in a struggle that had increasingly become real, even physical’¹¹¹⁵. Even their limbs were subject to physical modifications conformed to the new religion: when Constantine placed the statue of Rhea in the Augusteion, reported in the fifth century the pagan Zosimus, he had it mutilated ‘*by taking away the lions on each side and changing the arrangement of the hands* (καὶ τὸ σχῆμα τῶν χειρῶν ἐναλλάξας). *For whereas previously she was apparently restraining lions, now she seemed to be praying* (νῦν εἰς εὐχομένης μεταβέβληται σχῆμα; lit. changed its *schema* in that of a prayer one) *and looking to the city as if guarding it*’¹¹¹⁶. Hence, Christians could take over of the supernatural power of pagan statues’ gestures by conferring them the meaning of their new religion.

In the case of Justinian’s statue, the pagan gesture performed with the right hand got its power from the Christian *insigne* held in the left one: the *globus cruciger* provided with the new power of the Christian religion the old gesture of the *adlocutio* or command performed by emperors toward their army and traditionally conferred to the imperial equestrian statue since at least the one of Marcus Aurelius, now at the Palazzo dei Conservatori¹¹¹⁷. Already Marcian, ‘the first true representative of *Dei gratia* rulership’, had chosen to enrich the imperial *schema* on horseback by encircling his head with the nimbus, or halo (an ancient symbol used in Christian art to signal the divinity since at least the end of the third century), so that his raised right hand expressed a salute ‘midway between rhetorical gesture and blessing’¹¹¹⁸. Now, the Christian connotation given to the entire *schema* was more clearly declared. It made even acceptable the idea that the gesture of an imperial statue could be efficacious in keeping the enemies away. Pachymeres will clearly state the boundary expressed by the imperial portrait between the Christian and the pagan element when he explained that Justinian’s posture had nothing to do with a realistic representation of a horseman (*‘the statue’s hands are not occupied with the horse (...) as horsemen do* (ἰππηλάτου τρόπον)). His right hand held upraised ‘*as he were severely threatening his enemy*’, he explained, ‘*is not indicative of folly or senseless rashness*’. Such a ‘*grievous interpretation* (δόξαν)’ is removed by the left hand, which ‘*justifies* (ὑπεραπολογουμένη) *the man sufficiently*’ by holding the orb surmounted by the cross. In this way ‘*he seems to be showing* (δεικνύειν) – *he who has stretched out his other arm in a threatening gesture* (ὁ θατέραν ἐκτετακῶς, καὶ μετ’ἐμβριθοῦς ἀπειλούμενος σχήματος) – *what it is that he trusts in as he is threatening* (ᾧ θαρρῶν ἀπειλεῖται): *for the orb represent* (εἰκονίζειν) *the world and it is by the power of the cross*

¹¹¹⁵ LÖSSL 2010, p. 129. Pagan temples were also desecrated and destroyed while churches were built over them. ‘If early Christian spotted an opportunity to Christianize pagan religion’ indeed ‘they usually seized it’; *ibidem*. On the re-interpretation of antique sculpture parallel to a Christian re-interpretation, see MANGO 1963, esp. pp. 63-64.

¹¹¹⁶ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, II, 31.1-3; ed. PASCHOUD 1971, vol. I, p. 104; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 38.

¹¹¹⁷ For the magical power entailed into the gesture of the raised hand as part of the imagery of the Eastern gods and the *Sol Invictus*, transmitted to the imperial iconography at least since the Principate, see L’ORANGE 1953, pp. 147-153.

¹¹¹⁸ KANTOROWICZ (1944) 1965, p. 49; GRABAR (1936) 1971, *passim* and tav. XXIX, n. 9.

that he, the master of the whole earth, has been emboldened to grasp it'¹¹¹⁹. The Christian *insignia* and ancient Roman *schema* found, therefore, an equilibrium in which the latter did not lose the traditional meaning of strength and command but found also the justification of such a power by declaring the dependence of the imperial victory from the superior authority of God.

In line with Eusebius' imagery, Justinian made clear through his *schema* the relation between imperial power and divine authority. Then, in line with the mutual relationship which already in the fourth century started to bound the figure of Christ with that of the emperor, he started to support his gesture of power with a Christian connotation. Christ also came, in turn, to fully master the power of rhetorical gesture performed by orators and emperors, adapting it to the new message that was to be conveyed to the onlookers.

The gesture of the Word, the Logos, was first of all a gesture of command. It was the gesture through which the world had been created, and as such it could be related to the imperial nod. Already Eusebius underlined this parallelism: he explained that the biblical word 'He spoke, and they came to being; he commanded (ἐνετείλατο), and they were created (Ps 32:9; 148:5)' referred to the fact that God had to be considered 'as an universal ruler who orders things by means of a kingly nod (ὡς ἄν πανηγεμόνα βασιλικῷ νεύματι προστάπτοντα), and the Divine Logos who comes second after him (who is none other than he whom we proclaim) as serving the Father's commands (ἐπιτάξεσιν)'¹¹²⁰. The gesture of the raised hand was also the gesture through which Christ proclaimed and explained the words of the Gospel: as such it came to be identified with the classical rhetorical gesture of the speaking. On the altar's cloth of St Sophia, explained Paul the Silentiary in his *Ekphrasis* written and delivered for the second consecration of the Church in 562/563 and aimed at reaffirming the legitimacy of the emperor and the solidarity between ecclesiastical and lay authorities, the artist depicted a variation of the *Traditio Legis* in which Christ does not, as usual, deliver the *volumen* to all the apostles. Instead, he addressed with this gesture Paul and Peter (who stand on either side holding respectively a book and a golden cross-shaped staff)¹¹²¹: his forearm and his arm were left bare and he 'seems to be stretching out the fingers of the right hand (δᾶκτυλα τείνειν δεξιτερῆς), as if preaching His immortal words (ᾠ

¹¹¹⁹ GEORGE PACHYMERES, *Descriptio Augusteonis*; ed. SCHOPENI 1830, p. 1220; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, p. 113. For the possibility that the orb 'never existed as a real object' see PARANI 2003, p. 34 (with bibliography).

¹¹²⁰ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 2.5; ed. SCHWARTZ 1903, vol. I, p. 12; tr. SCHOTT 2019, p. 43. The explanation is in line with the Arian creed according to whom the Logos is not consubstantial with the Father but second to him and executor of his commands.

¹¹²¹ PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 786-791; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005 p. 82-83; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, p. 89. Paul the Silentiary wrote epigrams and two official *ekphraseis* on the Church of St Sophia: the second was a supplementary description dedicated specifically to the ambo, while the latter were delivered in 562/563 in occasion of its second consecration after the fall of the dome for an earthquake in 558. For chronological problems and a date set to 593, see M. L. FOBELLI, 'L'autore e l'opera' in PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae; Descriptio Ambonis*; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, pp. 9-13. On Paul the Silentiary, his sources, and his political message see BELL 2009, pp. 14-18, pp. 79-91.

τε μῦθον ἀειζώνοτα πιφάσκων), while in His left He holds the book of divine message'¹¹²². The same gesture can be seen in another variation of the *Traditio Legis* known as 'Dominus legem dat' and present in the fourth-fifth centuries iconography, where Christ raises his palm open and gives the *volumen* to Peter¹¹²³. In the scene of the *Majestas Domini*, then, Christ appears in the same position, this time alone, triumphant, and enthroned on the vault of heaven inside the Mandorla¹¹²⁴. He raises the right hand and opened his palm in a gesture between speech and command to proclaim his role as 'King of the King'. In Romanos the Melodist's words, he showed himself as the one who carries the Universe with a nod (τοῦ πάντα φέροντος νεύματι)¹¹²⁵. While indeed his words 'I order, I command, and I say (προστάσσω, ἀθεντῶ καὶ λέγω)' can heal the leper and give the life back to dead, his right hand commands and his nod manifests his will (μόνον νεῦσον (...) μόνον βούλημα δεῖξον)¹¹²⁶. The gesture of the raised right hand will keep those meanings when it will join the blessing gesture in the *schema* of the Kosmokrator, who shaped his hand in the sign of the cross to bless the onlookers under his gaze.

Beyond the iconographic *topoi*, the sixth-century visual imagery connected with the imperial *schema* was established in its main characteristics also on a more practical level. The imperial body, arranged in evocative postures or performing meaningful gestures, came to be largely employed in ceremonies as a powerful political instrument to face delicate moments. The political and social stability was seriously threatened by inner and external problems like factional uprisings, religious struggles, and, especially during the second part of Justinian's reign, famines, earthquakes, and wars¹¹²⁷. The 'need for the mobilisation of public opinion' required therefore an imperial *schema* effective enough to reinforce and even legitimate the authority. Imperial imagery continued to show off the ancient Roman heritage and to include elements from the pagan background. Yet, especially after the 560s, the themes of the imperial visual strategy shifted from the glory to a stronger emphasis on the harmony between emperor and God, the nature of his power bestowed by God, and his role as vice-regent of

¹¹²² PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 772-780; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, p. 82-83; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, p. 89.

¹¹²³ Let's quote for the fifth century, a sarcophagus now in the Archaeological Museum of Ravenna, the mosaic in one of the apses of the church of St Costanza in Rom and, probably, the deteriorated mosaic of the church of St Giovanni in Fonte in Naples.

¹¹²⁴ See for example the Christ's theophanic vision in the fifth century's apse mosaic of the *katholikon* of the Latomous Monastery in Thessaloniki. A similar posture is assumed by Christ in the scene in which he conferred the crown of martyrdom, like in many sarcophagi of the fourth-fifth century and on the apse of St Vitale in Ravenna. In this case the right hand is not open, since it held the symbol of the martyrrium.

¹¹²⁵ ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia*, 24, 1; ed. MAAS and TRYPANIS 1963, p. 181; tr. TROMBI 2007, vol. II, p. 77.

¹¹²⁶ ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia*, 8, 12-13; ed. MAAS and TRYPANIS 1963, p. 61; tr. TROMBI 2007, vol. I, pp. 216-217.

¹¹²⁷ For the catastrophes that afflicted the empire especially in the second part of Justinian's reign and their social and cultural consequences, see MEIER 2019, pp. 953 ff.

Christ on earth¹¹²⁸. Strengthened by the trends and the theological thinking of the previous centuries, therefore, the imperial *schema* went through a process that has been defined as a ‘liturgification of the court ceremonial’ marked by religious aspects¹¹²⁹.

While in the contemporary ecclesiastical context a rational thought was developed around the role of visual elements in the rite to guide the weak human mind toward the divine¹¹³⁰, even the emperors recognized the importance and the efficacy of visual hooks to impress their audience and instil in their minds specific ideological statements. The imperial *schema* was framed now by an impressive setting which underlined gestures and movements: a great effort was made to turn Constantinople not only into an exceptional cultural centre and a ‘leader in style and form’ for the artistic inspiration¹¹³¹. It became also the perfect stage for the imperial performance. At this point, the Christian connotation of the main *loci* of power was fully evident: sacral and otherworldly associations were given to the imperial palace and to the triumphal celebrations for military achievements. Imperial ceremonies became a pervasive element in society, and the main streets and squares of the City staged impressive ‘open-air’ processions in the context of the stationary liturgy which was regularly experienced by the citizens of the capital¹¹³².

Justinian acknowledged especially the remarkable potential of the Hippodrome as the setting in which the imperial body could affect the mind of the population: as soon as he took the power he made ‘*more elevated and brighter*’ the Kathisma¹¹³³. In this way, he could better watch the contests, but he made himself also both more visible and less accessible to the audience¹¹³⁴. From the Kathisma the emperor continued to show himself in the *schema* of the victorious ruler who received the prostration of the barbarians and performed in turn the ceremonial gesture of the *calcatio colli*. This ancient gesture was since time part of the iconographical patterns of Roman emperors and was included in the ceremonial practices of late antiquity since probably the triumph organized in Rome by the emperor Honorius over Priscus Attalus in 416¹¹³⁵. Justinian performed it during the triumph celebrated

¹¹²⁸ CAMERON 1985, p. 11.

¹¹²⁹ HALDON 1990, pp. 283-284, also on the reciprocal influence between State’s and Church’s imagery (a topic which, starting at least from Treitinger and Kitzinger, had been faced by several scholars). See also CAMERON 1976, esp. ch. 9. Most recently, Mischa Meier emphasised the ‘Factor Religion’ in the social and political developments from the mid sixth centuries and defined the process of ‘Liturgisierung’ as a ‘tiefgreifende religiöse Durchdringung aller Lebensbereiche’, which provided stability in this highly critical period. This process included also the efforts of the emperor to enhance the sacrality of his persona questioned by catastrophes and plagues occurred during the second part of his reign; MEIER 2019, pp. 39-41; pp. 966-973.

¹¹³⁰ See above, pp. 103 ff.

¹¹³¹ HALDON 1990, p. 415, with bibliography.

¹¹³² CAMERON (1979) 1981. For the ‘city as a church’, the development of the stationary liturgy, and the impact of the imperial ceremonies on the onlookers, see TAFT 1995b. For the function of Constantinople as the setting for the ‘political theatre’ on grand scale under Justinian, see CROKE 2005.

¹¹³³ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 528; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 43. He also rebuilt the portico of the senators where he distributed rewards to the charioteers; *ibidem*.

¹¹³⁴ CROKE 1995, n. p. 124.

¹¹³⁵ McCORMICK 1986, pp. 57-58. See above, p. 116.

on the vandals of Gelimer in 534, an event which made such a great impression on contemporaries that it was reproduced on the roof of the Chalké (described by Procopius) and then, later, on Justinian's funerary vestment (described by Corippus)¹¹³⁶. According to Procopius, the ceremony was performed at the Hippodrome and Gelimer, stroke by the vision of the enthroned emperor, fully prostrated in front of him (πρηνη̃ πεσόοντα προσκυνεῖν) making obeisance (κατηνάγκασαν)¹¹³⁷. The very moment of the *calcatio colli* is mentioned and described on the other hand by Corippus, who set the episode in the palace. Corippus specified that the Vandals' homage included the bending of the barbarians' necks (*barbaricas flexa cervice*) and the imperial trampling (*calcantem colla tyranni*). Thanks to this act, concluded Corippus, the emperor could also wear his purple thongs, since '*only emperors, under whose feet is the blood of kings, can adopt this attire* (hoc cultu)¹¹³⁸.

A strong religious connotation affected nevertheless also the Hippodrome, especially under the form of biblical associations. Malalas claimed that rulers of the past in some cases connected (and justified) their actions with biblical precedents: on the occasion of the inaugural races, Constantine wore a '*diadem set with pearl and precious stones*' because '*he wished to fulfil the prophetic words which said, 'You placed on his head a crown of precious stone' (Ps (21)20:4)*'¹¹³⁹. In this way, thus, he evoked the image of a faithful ruler protected and blessed by God. And when Eudocia reconstructed the wall of Jerusalem, she declared to have made it to fulfil the words of the prophet David: '*In thy good pleasure (ἐν τῇ εὐδοκίᾳ), O Lord, the walls of Jerusalem shall be built' (Ps 51:18)*'¹¹⁴⁰. In the case of the *calcatio colli*, the gesture was already connected with the Septuaginta (*Is 27:1*) in the image on the Chalkè where Constantine trampled on and pierced his enemies as Christ triumphant over the dragon¹¹⁴¹. In the sixth century, the gesture's strength lied in the association with the Psalm '*You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent' (Ps 90(91):13)*: in the mosaic of the Archbishop's Chapel in Ravenna Christ came to be clearly portrayed as an emperor clad with a military imperial dress stepping on the lion and the snake¹¹⁴².

¹¹³⁶ CAMERON 1976a, pp. 140-142; PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Vandalico*, II, 9.13-14; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. II, pp. 282-283; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 276-289; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, pp. 44-45; p. 92. For other contemporary works of art including the *calcatio colli*, see CAMERON p. 119.

¹¹³⁷ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Vandalico*, II, 9.10-12; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. II, pp. 280-283.

¹¹³⁸ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 111-112; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 51; p. 96.

¹¹³⁹ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 13, 8; ed. THURN 2000, 247.12-13; tr. JEFFREYS et al., 1986, p. 175; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 334; see also (but without the biblical justification) CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 277, AD 330; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 529-530; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, pp. 17-18.

¹¹⁴⁰ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 14, 8; ed. THURN 2000, 278.37-39; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 195; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 368. See also CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 306, AD 444; ed. DINDORF 1832, col. 585; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 75.

¹¹⁴¹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Vita Constantini*, III, 3; ed. WINKELMANN 2013, pp. 352-354; tr. CAMERON and HALL 1999, p. 122.

¹¹⁴² On the iconographical connection between the emperor and Christ trampling the dragon in art, see KANTOROWICZ (1961) 1965, pp. 18-21.

In the Hippodrome, the emperor could build a further visual connection with Constantine himself, a long-standing model of perfection for a Christian ruler, when he celebrated the anniversary day of the City. Malalas reported that in his time it was still organized a ceremony, introduced by Constantine, in which during the chariot races the ruling emperor made obeisance in front of the wooden gilded statue of Constantine, accompanied by a procession of soldiers carrying candles, and with the Tyche of the City in his right hand¹¹⁴³.

Next to the Hippodrome, the church of St Sophia gradually became the perfect stage for the imperial ceremonies. Since its edification under Constantius II in 360, it was equipped with splendid furniture and treasures¹¹⁴⁴. The first Church was destroyed in 404 (during a riot aroused for the banishment of John Chrysostom) and rebuilt by Theodosius II in 415. After its second destruction during the Nika riot of 532, the Church was re-built in 537, only to suffer major damage in the earthquake of 557 and being finally inaugurated in 562. It was in this period, thanks to the unprecedented care of Justinian and then of Justin II, that the Church became the most splendid symbol of the Christian power¹¹⁴⁵. The Church became 'a sight (θεωρίαν) that exceeds all expectation'¹¹⁴⁶: 'For never, Lord', exclaimed Constantinople herself addressing to Justinian, '(...) will you find another more brilliant symbol (σύμβολον ... φάντερον) of your throne'¹¹⁴⁷. The arrangement was designed to suggest an otherworldly and supernatural setting: Justinian and Theodora, declared Roman the Melodist, built the Church with such art as to imitate the heaven and the divine throne (ὡς τὸν οὐρανὸν μιμεῖσθαι,

¹¹⁴³ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 13, 8; ed. THURN 2000, 247; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 175; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 334. See also, with minor differences, CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 277, AD 330; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 529-530; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, pp. 17-18. On the figure of Constantine as imperial model, see MAGDALINO 1994. The *Parastaseis*, whose written source had been probably connected with the source tradition of Malalas and the Chronicon Paschale, also mentioned the ceremony; *PARASTASEIS SYNTOMOI CHRONIKAI*, 5; 38; 56; ed. and tr. CAMERON and HERRIN 1984, pp. 60-61; pp. 102-103; pp. 130-133; WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, n. 56, p. 18.

¹¹⁴⁴ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 285, AD 360; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 544-545; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989 p. 35. The *Chronicon Paschale* likely recorded the generosity displayed by Constantius II at the inauguration of the Church on the ground of an earlier Arian source favourable to the emperor; *ibidem*, p. XVI. Yet, it is noticeable to find such a rich detailed list of gifts to the Church attached to an emperor accused by the contemporaneous Socrates of Constantinople of having halved the provision of food for the City; *ibidem*, n. 110, p. 35.

¹¹⁴⁵ During the earthquake in 557 the dome, the arches and the eastern half dome felt on the ciborium, the altar and the ambo underneath. On the story of the Church and its sources, see FOBELLI 2005. The activities of Justin II, an 'avid builder' who continued to adorned the Church with 'plate and full revenue', are recorded later by Theophanes, likely on the ground of an earlier source; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6058, AD 565/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 241-242; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 355.

¹¹⁴⁶ PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 114-120; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, pp. 41-42; tr. BELL 2009, p. 195.

¹¹⁴⁷ PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 239-242; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, pp. 47-48; tr. BELL 2009, p. 202.

τὸν θεῖον θρόνον)¹¹⁴⁸ so that it was possible for the participants, the ministers, and the emperors themselves, to see (θεάσασθαι) the Church full of the God's glory and grace¹¹⁴⁹.

The emperor began early to exploit this setting. He already occupied a privileged position in the liturgy and was temporarily admitted in the *sancta sanctorum* (θυσιαστηρίου), otherwise reserved exclusively to the members of the clergy, 'whenever he desires to offer his gifts to the Creator, in accordance with a most ancient tradition'¹¹⁵⁰. Now, in the new architecture of the sixth-century Hagia Sophia, he increased his involvement in the rite and even designated a space in the church for himself. While the empress observed the celebration of the rite from the galleries¹¹⁵¹, indeed, the emperor owned a personal space (the *metatorion*, located in the southern aisle of the Church), where he 'seated on his customary throne' and listened to the reading of the sacred books during solemn festivals¹¹⁵². Perfectly integrated into the rite performed in this outstanding setting, the emperor could effectively express the connection between his court and the heavenly one, as well as the boundary with his Old and New Testament models. This was achieved also through the decoration of the Church. On the chancel screen in front of the altar, testified Paul the Silentiary, the audience could see angels who bowed down their necks in front of Christ 'unable to gaze upon the glory of God', prophets, apostles, the Virgin, and, in the middle, the monograms of Justinian and Theodora and a cross¹¹⁵³. On the altar's cloth, next to the above-mentioned *Traditio Legis*, the artist embroidered together the deeds of Christ and the emperor on the hem, while a scene of *dextrarum iunctio* joined the hands of the emperors and those of Christ and the Virgin¹¹⁵⁴. Furthermore, the signs of the cross performed by the emperors and the faithful during the liturgy had a powerful pictorial counterpart in the signs (τύπος) of the crosses numberless repeated on the walls and the roofs of the most significant liturgical spaces.

¹¹⁴⁸ ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia* 54, 23; ed. MAAS and TRYPANIS 1963, p. 470; tr. TROMBI 2007, vol. II, p. 217.

¹¹⁴⁹ ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia* 54, 24; ed. MAAS and TRYPANIS 1963, p. 471; tr. TROMBI 2007, vol. II, p. 217.

¹¹⁵⁰ *CANONS OF THE QUINISEXT COUNCIL IN TRULLO*, 69; ed. OHME 2013, p. 50; tr. NEDUNGATT and FEATHERSTONE 1995, p. 151. The 'ancient tradition' mentioned by the canon harked back at least to the early fifth century, as witnessed by Theodoret of Cyrrhus with reference to the story of Theodosius and Ambrose; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 18.20-25; ed. PARMENTIER 1998, pp. 312-313; tr. GALLICO 2000, pp. 358-359.

¹¹⁵¹ EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 31.15-20; ed. BIDEZ 1898, p. 180; tr. WHITBY 2000, p. 234. The galleries, explained also Evagrius, are located on the right and the left of the Church, and are supported by columns of Thessalian stone and pillars.

¹¹⁵² PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 580-585; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, pp. 70-71; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, p. 85. Other seems to have been the *mutatorion*, a space in the narthex of the Church that worked as a robing room for the emperor and was particularly important especially in the moment in which he had to remove the crown before entering.

¹¹⁵³ PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 693-717; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, pp. 76-79; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, pp. 87-88.

¹¹⁵⁴ PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 796-807; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, pp. 82-85; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, p. 89.

Those crosses were both symbols of protection (ἔρυσίπολιν, i.e. ‘protector of the city’, defined Paul the Silentiary the cross mosaic at the navel)¹¹⁵⁵ as well as the image of God¹¹⁵⁶.

In the Hippodrome, in St Sophia, as well as in the palace and through the streets, the emperor carefully chose and manipulated different *schemata*. The protocols collected by Peter the Patrician under the name of Περὶ πολιτικῆς καταστάσεως testified both the importance given to the topic – ‘that it should have seemed worth writing a special work about imperial ceremonial shows its growing importance’, declared Averil Cameron¹¹⁵⁷ – as well as the prominence given to the correct unfold of ceremonial details. Those included the act of sitting or raising, the kissing of the feet and the *proskynesis* performed or not according to the rank¹¹⁵⁸, the greeting (ἀσπάζεσαι), the reception involving a kiss (δέχεται ... ἀπὸ στόματος), as well as the choice of specific spaces and the hierarchical order of precedence. Those devices continued to visually display the relationship between the emperor and his subjects (or foreign ambassadors). Moreover, the text provided recurrent ‘structural elements’ important to allow the audience to understand and to enjoy the sight of an emperor performing in accordance with what was expected from him.

The instructions were not, however, fixed and immutable. Rather they gave a rich repertoire of basic elements, among whom gestures and postures, that were to inspire the public appearance of both emperors and attendants and left room for improvisations and innovations. Each emperor was allowed, in the limits of what was permissible, ‘to choose, when the time comes (...) the ceremonial which is most orderly and pleasing to him’, recognized already Dagron¹¹⁵⁹. He was not constricted by immovable rules. Actions were variously employed and recombined according to the actual circumstances and the personality of the emperor, in line with the ‘*emperor’s decision* (κατὰ γνώμην τοῦ βασιλέως)’¹¹⁶⁰, ‘*as the emperor thinks fit* (ὡς δόξη τῷ βασιλεῖ)’¹¹⁶¹, ‘*when*’ and ‘*if*’ he wished

¹¹⁵⁵ PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, v. 492; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, pp. 64-65; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, p. 83. See also PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 505-508; ed. and tr. FOBELLI 2005, p. 64-65; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, p. 83.

¹¹⁵⁶ On the motif of the cross as a double meaning theme, iconic and aniconic, which functioned as a *leit-motive* for the entire decorative program of the Church, see FOBELLI 2005b, in part. pp. 189-190.

¹¹⁵⁷ CAMERON 1976a, pp. 13-14.

¹¹⁵⁸ The kissing of the feet during the appointment of a minister was performed by the *komes* and the *kandidatos*, but not by the *augustalios*; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.*, I, 84 (93) – 86 (95); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, pp. 386-393. The *proskynesis* to the ground was performed by foreigner guests like the western and the Persians ambassadors; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 87 (96); 89 (98); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 395; p. 398; p. 403; pp. 406-407.

¹¹⁵⁹ DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 60. For an analysis of the structural permanencies in the coronation protocols and the differences due to the condition in which the power was assumed, see DAGRON (1996) 2003, pp. 59-70. According to Mathews, on the other hand, it is difficult to judge the degree to which the imperial acts (for example the largesse) were due to the emperors’ or to the great officials’ choice, and thus ‘how much power in practice rested with the Emperor and how much with the Minister of the State’; MATHEWS 1963, p. 64.

¹¹⁶⁰ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 88 (97); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 397 (in this case, Leo I).

¹¹⁶¹ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 84 (93); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 387. Or also ‘*if he sees fit*’ (ἐὰν συνίδη); PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 90 (99); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 409.

(ὄτε βούλεται and ἐὰν βούληται)¹¹⁶². The emperor surfaced in this text as the active leader of his own ceremonial performance. He expressed his will with a command (κελεύοντος) given directly or through the ‘*divine approval*’ (διὰ τοῦτο θεία νεύσει ... προστάσσομεν)¹¹⁶³, with a meaningful gesture or with a sentence often uttered through an officer¹¹⁶⁴. And when he thought that it was appropriate, he could even address directly an ambassador with seemingly ‘*spontaneous words*’¹¹⁶⁵. A certain degree of freedom was present even in the most solemn and delicate moment in an emperor’s life, at his public proclamation (ἀναγορεύσει). On this occasion, the emperor had to carefully organize the event and employ all the ‘*weapons*’ at his disposal in order to gain the approval of the senators, the army and the people, who still acted as constitutive of his power. The authority was based indeed, in Max Weber’s words, not only on the tradition and the rational legality of the rules but also on the *charisma* (i.e., the ‘*außeralltägliche*’ quality of the person)¹¹⁶⁶. The protocols of Peter the Patricians, who wrote down ‘*a summary of the proclamations of the (...) emperors, so that each may choose the one more suited and pleasing to him when the time comes*’¹¹⁶⁷, were therefore particularly useful for the purpose. They testified how it was possible to combine different elements to build up a complex *schema*. So when Leo I, after being voted (γινομένου) by the Senate, was proclaimed in the Tribunal of the Campus Martius (457), he employed the ancient military *schema* with the *torques*¹¹⁶⁸. Then, immediately after, he mixed it with the civil *schema*: he changed his apparel behind a testudo formed by the *candidati* and then suddenly appeared to the people wearing the imperial dress and the diadem, while still holding a shield and spear. In this attire, he received the orderly obeisance (κατὰ τάξιν προσεκυνήθη) of the archons and was acclaimed as ‘*powerful and victorious and revered* (καὶ δυνατὸς καὶ νικητῆς καὶ σεβαστὸς)’. The emperor proclaimed (through the mouth of the *libellarios*) to have been chosen by God and by the soldiers and to be, among

¹¹⁶² PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 90 (99); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 408.

¹¹⁶³ Those are words employed in the speech of Leo I toward Heliokrates, who arrived at Constantinople asking for the confirmation of the western emperor Anthemios by presenting the laureate image of his ruler; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 87 (96); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 396.

¹¹⁶⁴ For example, when the emperor decided that he wanted to receive the Persian ambassador, he commanded the *magistros*, who in turn sent a message to the ambassador and informed him with the words: ‘*The ruler has commanded* (ἐκέλευσέν σε ὁ δεσπότης) *you to go in*’; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 89 (98); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 403.

¹¹⁶⁵ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 89 (98); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 406.

¹¹⁶⁶ Those concepts of Max Weber had been applied to the society of the sixth century by J. J. van Ginkel in his work on John of Ephesus to explain the exchange of ‘*charismatic authority*’ between the clerical and episcopal hierarchy (which was gradually ‘*institutionalized*’ after Constantine) and the emperor (who took over the charism of Christ and his disciples so that his power was accepted as derived directly from God); van GINKEL 1995, p. 103-105.

¹¹⁶⁷ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 91 (100); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 417.

¹¹⁶⁸ Leo’s proclamation involved two *torques*, one on the head and one in his right hand; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 91 (100); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 411. The gradual process through which the traditional military ceremony, staged on the battlefield and then at the Hebdomon in front of the army and the senators and through the bestowal of the *insignia*, became a fully religious one, involving the patriarch and an ecclesiastical setting, is well testified by Malalas and by the chronologically organized *Chronicon Paschale*.

other things, a *'strong power ruling'* as well as *'a fellow soldier in the toil* (ἔξουσιασὴν ἄρχοντα τῶν κόπων συστρατιώτην)¹¹⁶⁹. After the acclamation in the Tribunal, the ceremony continued in the City. Leo visited several significant places, and every time he had to go inside a church he removed the crown in the *mutatorion*, put it on the altar as a valuable offering with the help of the *praipositos*, and then put it back on his head on the way out. Only at the last stage in the Church of St Sophia the crown was put it back on his head by the 'bishop' (i.e. the patriarch), before going to the palace. For the first time, therefore, an ecclesiastical authority was involved in the ceremony (even if in a marginal position and with a gesture which at this point did not have any constitutional power)¹¹⁷⁰.

At the end of the fifth–sixth century, the place in which proclamations were arranged was established in the Hippodrome¹¹⁷¹. This was the best stage for a newly appointed ruler to show his *schema* and to receive the welcome of the population after the election. To make a successful performance in this place was central (we have seen how already under Valens the failure encountered by the usurper Procopius in this setting made him a tyrant rather than an accepted authority), and the rulers hurried in showing off themselves properly from the Kathisma. When the emperor Zeno defeated the usurper Basiliscus and returned victoriously to the palace, recounted for example Malalas¹¹⁷², he went straight to the Hippodrome where he *'put up the flag for the chariot-races* (παρασχῶν τὸ βῆλον τοῦ ἵππικοῦ) *and immediately came to preside* (εὐθέως ἐλθὼν ἐθεώρησε). Here he was received *'by the whole city'* and, without leaving his position but *'while he was watching'*, he sent his officials to take the imperial *schema* of his predecessor (in this case the term clearly referred to the imperial clothes and *insignia*)¹¹⁷³. Presiding the games and displaying himself with the proper attire, the emperor

¹¹⁶⁹ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.*, I, 91 (100); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, pp. 411-412.

¹¹⁷⁰ The potentially exceptional situation was not felt by the contemporaneous Malalas, who briefly mentioned that Leo was crowned by the Senate, and neither later by the *Chronicon Paschale*, where it is stated only the proclamation of Leo by the army (ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐξερκέτου); JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 14, 35; ed. THURN 2000, 292; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 202; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 309, AD 457; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 592; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 84. Only later Theophanes Confessor, who wrote in a period in which the patriarch played a defined and central role in the coronation, specified that Leo was crowned by the patriarch Anatolius; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5950, AD 457/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 110; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 170. See also OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, p. 53.

¹¹⁷¹ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.*, I, 91 (100); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 417.

¹¹⁷² For the time of Zeno until Justinian's reign, that is for his lifetime, Malalas claimed to rely on oral and direct sources of information, making the 15th to the 18th chapters of his Chronography a precious source reflecting the author's personal experiences; JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. XXI-XXIII.

¹¹⁷³ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 15, 5; ed. THURN 2000, 303; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 210 cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 391, where the translation 'kam alsbald als Zuschauer' stresses the sense of 'watching' entailed in the expression ἐθεώρησε. The word θεωρῶ indeed expressed the imperial presidency over the hippodrome games without losing its basic meaning 'to watch'. It is thus a case of a word which entailed both a general and a restricted meaning; JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. XXV. Recounting the same episode on the ground of Malalas, the Chronicon Paschale meaningfully substitute the general verb ἐρχομαι (to come) with ἀνέρχομαι (to go up, to mount) emphasizing thus the act of raising up on the tribune; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 314, AD 478; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 601; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 93. According to Theophanes, Zeno had been previously crowned in the Kathisma by his son, the emperor Leo II; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5966, AD 473/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 120; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 186.

legitimated his authority and distanced himself from the *tyrannos*, with whom the boundary was often too thin.

A complex assortment of *schemata* staged in the Hippodrome was used especially during the troubled proclamations in which the emperor in charge had died before appointing a successor¹¹⁷⁴. In this case, it was even more important to use clear and efficacious ‘visual tactics’ to stress the newly appointed emperor’s Christian faith and divine support. So, when the emperor Zeno died in 491 without an heir, the population and the soldiers gathered at the Hippodrome to call for a new emperor. The archons sent Zeno’s wife, Ariadne, to make a speech from the Kathisma (once again through the *libellarios* standing on the steps in front of the throne, behind the chancel barrier). The empress assured those present that she had already ordered the archons and the senate to choose a good ruler with a decision ‘untainted’, ‘pleasing to God the ruler, with the concurrent support of the most noble armies’, and away from self-interest or personal sympathies. Her command, she assured, had been sealed with the gesture of raising the Gospels and in the presence of the patriarch¹¹⁷⁵. The image of the gesture she had performed, the *insignia* she assumed, and the good order of the court around here, were all highly evocative means that made the audience ready to accept the emperor-to-be. After some disputes, the archons granted the authority to the empress and she chose the silentary Anastasius. He was brought to the palace, made an oath to avoid grudge and to administer the state ‘with a strict conscience (μετὰ ὀρθοῦ συνειδότος)’ standing in the middle of the portico¹¹⁷⁶, and then went also to the Hippodrome. Here he chose to appear through a sequence of two different *schemata*: at first, he dressed the *divitision* in a private room and then went out and was raised up on the shield, torque on the head. In this way, he repeated in the restricted space of the Kathisma what had been previously performed in the Tribunal of the Campus Martius¹¹⁷⁷. He returned back in the private hall, received from the patriarch the chlamys and the crown blessed by the *Kyrie Eleison* and returned with this attire back to

¹¹⁷⁴ For the problem of imperial succession in Byzantium, with the battle between heritages and lack of theory, and its effect on the practices developed in those occasions to overcome the ‘dilemma’, see DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 5.

¹¹⁷⁵ Her choice, she declared through the *libellarios*, was made ‘with the holy Gospel set before us’ and ‘with the holy Scriptures set before us’; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 92 (101); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, pp. 418-420. The empress assumed here the posture and the language (and thus also the authority) of the emperor *autokrator*; DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 67.

¹¹⁷⁶ PETER THE PATRICIAN in *De Cer.* 92 (101); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 422. Theophanes Confessor, who held a negative stance toward the Monophysite emperor, recounted that Anastasius was required to sign a written declaration of orthodox faith by the patriarch Euphemius, who foresaw his wicked and heretic nature and his unworthiness as a ruler, and under the pressure of Ariadne and the Senate. This reference must have been anyway influenced by the custom spread at his time during the Iconomachy; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AD 5983, AD 490/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 136; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 208.

¹¹⁷⁷ ‘In this condensed and more static, but perhaps more intense ceremonial, the Campus Martius of Hebdomon was reduced to the tiny perimeter of the imperial box and the space in front of it (the *stama*), and the *adventus* was no more than an appearance without the risk of popular demonstrations’; DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 67.

the Kathisma. The crowd greeted and hailed him, underlining each changing of *schema* with acclamations¹¹⁷⁸.

Even more troubled (and thus also dynamic) was the proclamation of Justin I after the death of Anastasius in 518. In this case, there ‘*was neither the augusta nor an emperor to invest* (τοῦ χειροτονοῦντος)’ the new emperor, and the situation led to ‘*some lack of order* (ἀταξία τις)’¹¹⁷⁹. A struggle arose between the potential competitors supported by different rival parties at court. John, a tribune and friend of Justin, was initially proclaimed by the *excubitores* (i.e. the palace guards) and raised on the shield. However, the traditional military *schema* at this point was not enough, and the Blues expressed their dissatisfaction with the choice by pelting him with stones. Patricius, a *stratelates* (i.e. a *magister militum*) was proclaimed then by the *scholarioi* (i.e. the elite soldiers) and raised up on the middle couch of the Hall of the Nineteen Couches. Also in this case the attempt failed, this time because the *excubitores* were dissatisfied and pulled him down. The situation is finally saved when Justin, at the time commander of the *excubitores*, was chosen and urged by his men ‘*to go for the apparel* (ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ σχῆμα)’. Some *scholarioi* were dissatisfied (one of them punched him and split his lip), but the unanimous opinion of senators, soldiers and *demes* prevailed. The *koubikoularioi*, who were in charge of the ceremonial items and had previously refused the other candidates, sent him the apparel (τὸ σχῆμα ἔπεμψαν)¹¹⁸⁰. Justin was carried up to the Hippodrome, rose to the Kathisma with the patriarch and other archons, and he played once again with the repertoire of apparels at his disposal to have his legitimation confirmed by the people: he was publicly raised on the shield and received the *torques* from the *kampidouktor*; then he changed behind the testudo formed by the soldiers and re-appeared with a spear, a shield, and a crown put on his head by the patriarch¹¹⁸¹. In all the cases reported by Peter the Patrician, therefore, the different *schemata* (the military, the civil, and, gradually, also the religious one) were joining together to express and make clear the new emperor’s qualities and ability to fulfil the different roles expected from his position.

Once on the throne, the emperor continued to use a highly minded selection of public gestures and apparels to maintain and reinforce his ruling position. In a society where emperors were seen as responsible not only for heavy taxation, politico-religious controversies, and military defeats, but also

¹¹⁷⁸ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 92 (101); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, pp. 423-425.

¹¹⁷⁹ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 88 (97); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 397. See also WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, n. 327 p. 104. On the decisive role of the *excubitores* in supporting or opposing a candidate, see CAMERON 1976a, p. 138.

¹¹⁸⁰ PETER THE PATRICIAN in *De Cer.*, I, 93, ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, pp. 427-428. ‘*As each of the nominations was made*’, recorded Peter, the *excubitores* ‘*knocked at the ivory doors seeking the emperor’s apparel* (ζητοῦντες ... τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ βασιλέως) *from the koubikoularioi, but when they heard the names of those proposed they did not hand it over*’. Also in this case the word referred to the actual *insignia* of power which constituted the imperial *schema*.

¹¹⁸¹ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 93; ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 429.

for natural calamities like famine, plague, and earthquakes (seen as punishments sent by God to discipline a sinner emperor and his State)¹¹⁸², the population often vented their anger against the imperial person. The city was increasingly populous and crowded and the interaction between interest groups and factions, which since time could shape the imperial destiny¹¹⁸³, passed more and more through violent physical acts and factional uprisings. They openly threatened the authority by hitting the imperial body and its representations¹¹⁸⁴ and had the power of downsizing the image promoted by the official propaganda of an emperor as a higher being steady in his position¹¹⁸⁵. Fifth-sixth centuries authors pointed out to the emperor the dangerous nature of the crowd: Marcellinus Comes reported how even the pious Theodosius II had to deal with an angered and hungry populace who pelted him with stones during a procession¹¹⁸⁶. A wise emperor had therefore to care for the popular feelings. And in front of a disaster or a misfortune, he had to show off his grief through an afflicted body. The patterns at his disposal included biblical and historical examples: so Joshua tore his dress and threw himself in front of the ark after the defeat of his army against Ai (*Jos* 7:6). And Augustus mourned the defeat of the Roman army beyond the Rhine by making himself ‘*unsightly by his dress, hair, and the remaining symbols of his mourning*’ and by hitting his head ‘*with a powerful blow*’¹¹⁸⁷.

The emperor heavily relied on those kinds of gestures. They showed not only the emperor’s grief but also his humility and his position as a mortal man among his people. The most powerful among those was the act of removing the crown from his head. The gesture could indeed entail the meaning of losing, willing or not, the imperial power: the image of Alexander who lost his diadem in the swamp of Babylon as a bad omen of the forthcoming loss of his life and of the throne, was still present in the mind of the audience¹¹⁸⁸. In the ‘safe’ frame of a pre-organized imperial ceremony, however, the act

¹¹⁸² For the divine explanation given to those kinds of phenomena by Cosmas Indicopleuste and Malalas, see CHAMPION 2006, pp. 384-385; p. 390.

¹¹⁸³ HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 39.

¹¹⁸⁴ For example, the statues of Anastasius and Ariadne were ‘*bound with ropes and dragged through the city*’ during a strife in 493; MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 493.1; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995 p. 30. They suffered every kind of violent acts (παῖν εἶδος ὕβρεως), remembered later also John of Antiochia, and it was like the people were mistreating the emperors themselves; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 308.13-15; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 528-529.

¹¹⁸⁵ The traditional view who looked at the factions after the early Empire as powerful spokesmen of the people even able to make and unmake emperors had been replaced with a more complex point of view by Alan Cameron; CAMERON 1976. For the effect of those problems on the work of Paul the Silentiary, who consequently emphasised God’s protection on the emperor, see BELL 2009, pp. 87-88.

¹¹⁸⁶ Marcellinus is also the only source who mentioned two seditions which would occur at the Hippodrome during the reign of Theodosius II (445) and Leo I (473); MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 431.3; 445.2; 473; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, pp. 15-18; p. 26; see CROKE 1995, n. p. 87.

¹¹⁸⁷ *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 1.13; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 134; tr. BANCHICH 2009. Several emperors are recorded in this attitude, from Constantine to Theodosius.

¹¹⁸⁸ The story, based upon Diodorus of Sicily, is still recounted in the seventh century by John of Antioch. The latter located the swamp next to Antiochia and did not include the prophetic meaning, a choice which could suggest that his audience already knew the meaning of the event; JOHN OF ANTIOCHIA, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 77.1-6; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 146-147.

was not felt as having the effect of a bad omen or of a permanent loss of power. Only at the imperial funeral, the master of ceremonies removed permanently the crown from the dead emperor. Before sealing the body in the tomb (ἐν τῷ μνημείῳ), he tied in its place a simple purple band, underlined the gesture with the meaningful words *‘Remove the crown from your head (ἀπόθου τὸ στέμμα ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς σου)’*¹¹⁸⁹, and expressed in this way the idea that the crown and the delegated power received by God *‘was only a loan’*¹¹⁹⁰. In his lifetime, however, the emperor removed his crown and only temporarily renounce his role every time he entered into the sacred space of the Church to express his respect toward the ecclesiastical rank¹¹⁹¹. In public, he removed the crown only when the occasion required an extraordinary gesture. So Julian displayed his force of character (ἰσχυρότερον τῆς φύσεως) and his nobility (χρηστός) during the funeral procession for Constantius II by casting away *‘all the emblems of majesty (βασιλείας σύμβολα) but his cloak’*¹¹⁹². Even Gregory of Nazianzus admitted that Julian assumed on this occasion an appropriate *schema* (μετὰ τοῦ προσήκοντος σχήματος), when he left his head without diadem and lowered his eyes as it was proper for those standing behind an emperor¹¹⁹³. The sight of an emperor turning upside down his traditional image and the contrast derived was powerful especially to calm down the army and the population. Theodosius II, recounted Zosimus, solved a mutiny – so serious that he was forced to barricade himself in the palace and *‘the evil had advanced beyond cure’* – by presenting himself *‘into the middle of the city’* clothed with a *‘short tunic, without cloak or diadem’*. Through this device *‘he managed to check the soldiers’ rage’*¹¹⁹⁴.

In front of the increasing anger and violence of the crowd and the *demi* of the fifth-sixth centuries, therefore, this gesture was employed in at least three different critical situations. Many riots occurred during the much contested reign of Anastasius, the emperor who allegedly showed heretical tendencies toward the Monophysism¹¹⁹⁵. Marcellinus Comes, who strictly adhered to the orthodox position like all the Illyrians, reported how this emperor was punished by God with riots and with

¹¹⁸⁹ CONSTANTINUS PORPHYROGENITUS, *De Ceremoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, I, 60; ed. and tr. MOFFATT and MAXEME TALL 2012, vol. 1, pp. 275-276. The master uttered also the words *‘Go in, emperor (εἰσελθε, βασιλεύ), the Emperor of Emperors and Lord of Lord summons you’ three times’*. In this way, he urged the emperor to leave the earth and join God in heaven. The tenth-century *De Ceremoniis* provided funerary ritual prescriptions which *‘have been observed, more or less unchanged, since at least the sixth century’*; RAPP 2012, p. 274 (with bibliography).

¹¹⁹⁰ DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 82.

¹¹⁹¹ PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 91 (100); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, pp. 412-417; n. 2, p. 412. The emperor took his crown back after the prayers and the participation in the rite. See above, p. 183.

¹¹⁹² LIBANIUS, *Oratio* 18, 120; ed. FÖRSTER pp. 286-287; tr. NORMAN 1969, p. 357. He held the coffin *‘with his hands’* to show that he disdained *‘to bear a grudge against the dead (...)’*; *ibidem*.

¹¹⁹³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 5.17; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 198-199. The nuance of criticism remained in the reference to the fact that Julian was forced to assume this attitude by the army. See also PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, VI, 6; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, p. 364; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 83.

¹¹⁹⁴ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, V, 32.5; ed. PASCHOUD 1986, vol. III.1, p. 48; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 116.

¹¹⁹⁵ On the religious controversies and riots at the time, see OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, pp. 56-57.

serious ceremonial incidents, like when a part of the Hippodrome caught fire and collapsed during an imperial procession¹¹⁹⁶. He described in detail the outburst of factional rage occurred during a theatrical *matinée* in 501/502. The members of the Green factions interrupted the performance, shouted, and pelted with weapons and stones the Prefect of the City Constantius, causing the death of three thousand *'unwary citizens'*, crushed under foot in the stampede¹¹⁹⁷. On this occasion, the emperor did not choose the right attitude: Malalas (and later also John of Antioch) reported that he banned those responsible from the Hippodrome and that he even prohibited the beloved spectacle of mime's dances¹¹⁹⁸. As a consequence, the population rose, gathered at the Hippodrome to ask for the removal of the Prefect, but the angered emperor sent his soldiers against the rioters. The lack of a responsive *schema* toward the claims of the population ultimately caused the fires, destructions, and the death of many citizens. Only in the end the emperor realized that it was not honourable to win over his own subjects and granted them their request¹¹⁹⁹.

On another occasion, briefly reported by Marcellinus and more broadly by Malalas, the severe reaction of the emperor and his refusal to reply to the demands advanced by the audience (this time people asked during the chariot-race the release of some supporters of the Greens arrested for stone-throwing) made the situation even worse. The emperor indeed *'did not yield to them but grew angry'* and ordered his troop to attack the crowd causing *'a great disorder (μεγάλη ἀταξία)'*. This choice caused the emperor to be pelted with stones and the fire of a part of the Hippodrome¹²⁰⁰.

Finally, Anastasius learnt the lesson and chose the right kind of attitude in front of one of the more threatening moments of his reign, the so-called *'Trisagion uprising'* in 512. This was the result of an unsuccessful attempt of the emperor and the Monophysite patriarch Timothy to solve the religious problems by adding to the traditional acclamation *'Holy God, Holy Might One, Holy Immortal One'* sang during the liturgy the *'alien'* formula *'He who was crucified for us'*, in order to emphasise the human

¹¹⁹⁶ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 507.2; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 34. On Marcellinus' dislike for Anastasius and his *'pro Justinianic'* viewpoint, see CROKE 1995, p. XXI.

¹¹⁹⁷ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 501, 1-3; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, pp. 32-33.

¹¹⁹⁸ *EXCERPTA DE INSIDIIS*, ed. DE BOOR 1905, p. 143; JOHN OF ANTIOCHIA, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 309; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 532-533; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 407. The fragment has been transmitted by the *Excerpta de Insidiis* under the name of John of Antioch but has been ascribed to Malalas. Here it is also specified that the riot occurred during the festival of the Brytae, and that as a consequence the emperor deprived the city of its most beautiful dancing spectacle. According to Cameron, the imperial decision was pushed also by the effort to channel the factional violence in the Hippodrome; CAMERON 1976, p. 227; p. 231.

¹¹⁹⁹ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 491.2; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 30; *EXCERPTA DE INSIDIIS*, ed. DE BOOR 1905, p. 143. The same also later in JOHN OF ANTIOCHIA, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 308; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 528-531. For a reconstruction of the event, see CROKE 1995, n. p. 107.

¹²⁰⁰ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 16, 4; ed. THURN 2000, 321-322; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. 221-222; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 409. The same is reported later by the *CHRONICON PASCHALE*, Olymp. 319, AD 498; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 608; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 99. Marcellinus mentioned only that *'a popular uprising broke out in the hippodrome'* and *'the soldiers thwarted it'*; MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 507.1; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 34. For the problem in dating those riots, in 498 (following the *Chronicon Paschale*) or, more probably, in 507, see WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, n. 316, p. 100.

and suffering nature of Christ (whence the name of its adherents as Theopaschites)¹²⁰¹. The Syrian Praetorian Prefect Marinus and the City Prefect Plato uttered this addition from the pulpit of a church in the palace, but the orthodoxes sang loudly the original version and were arrested. An angered mob proceeded against the two men, burning the house of Marinus and killing an eastern monk whom they found there¹²⁰². They gathered then in the forum of Constantine and ‘*while Anastasius was passing in procession*’ they acclaimed another man, called Areobindus¹²⁰³. They even hurled on the ground imperial statues. Anastasius tried initially ‘*to placate and satisfy them*’ by sending two senators, but they were immediately pelted with ‘*a storm of stones*’¹²⁰⁴. Finally, the crowd came into the Hippodrome and assembled in front of the Kathisma, ‘*singing together the hymn of the Trinity in the catholic version, carrying a gospel book and a glittering cross of Christ*’, and asking for the punishment of Marinus and Plato¹²⁰⁵. This time the emperor did not display his anger, neither bring out his soldiers, but rather, according to Marcellinus, he appeared after three days to the people and ‘*with his usual lies and empty words (solitis periuriis simulatisque vocibus), promised that he would do everything and sent them back to their homes without any result*’¹²⁰⁶. More in detail, Malalas stated that the event that attracted the mob to the Hippodrome was not a spontaneous desire to address their request to the emperor, but the fact that the emperor ‘*went up to the kathisma in the hippodrome, without a crown*’. Through this gesture and ‘*through his sacred pronouncement, (he) gained control of the populace of the city, exhorting them to stop murdering and attacking people at random*’¹²⁰⁷. The view of the emperor outside his traditional *schema* was so shocking for the population that ‘*the whole crowd became quiet and begged him to put on his crown. As soon as they became quiet and stopped forming crowds, the emperor ordered that arrests be made (...)*’¹²⁰⁸.

A similar version of the episode is also being found in Evagrius Scholasticus, according to whom the emperor was compelled (πρὸς ἀνάγκης) ‘*to come to the Hippodrome in a pitiful state (οἰκτιζόμενον),*

¹²⁰¹ On the interpretation of the Trisagion as a point of dispute between Monophysites and Chalcedonians and the addition of the clause, see TAFT 1991.

¹²⁰² MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 507.2; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 36; JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 16, 19; ed. THURN 2000, 333; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 228; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 421.

¹²⁰³ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 512.3-4; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 36. Marcellinus was probably a witness of the event; CROKE 1995, n. p. 115. Malalas stated how the claim was expressed through the chant ‘A new emperor for the Roman state’. The crowd went off to the house of Areobindus to force him to take the throne, but Areobindus fled and hid in Perama; JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 16, 19; ed. THURN 2000, 333-334; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 228; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 421.

¹²⁰⁴ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 512.3-4; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 36. Celer and Patricius were, respectively, the *magister officiorum* and the *magister militum* of the city; the orthodoxes even set fire to the house of Pompeius, the emperor’s nephew (although he was Chalcedonian); CROKE 1995, n. p. 116.

¹²⁰⁵ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 512.6; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 36.

¹²⁰⁶ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 512.7; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 36.

¹²⁰⁷ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 16, 19; ed. THURN 2000, 334; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 228; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, pp. 421-422. The passage is quoted in the same terms by the *Chronicon Paschale*; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 321, AD 517; ed. DINDORF, p. 610; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 102; n. 321, p. 102.

¹²⁰⁸ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 16, 19; ed. THURN 2000, 334; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 228; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, pp. 421-422.

without his crown'. He stated that the emperor underlined also in his speech the meaning of his gesture as a way to demonstrate his will to renounce to the power: he proclaimed indeed through the heralds that, '*with regard indeed to the imperial power (...) he would abdicate this most readily*'. Immediately after, however, he added the necessity for the State to be ruled by a single man rather than many, and the populace was so shocked '*on seeing this spectacle*', that it '*turned about, as if from some divine intervention, and begged Anastasius to put the crown on, promising to remain quiet*'¹²⁰⁹. By showing himself in a humble, mortal, and fallible dimension, therefore, the emperor managed to move his audience and obtain its pardon: '*May God be kindly disposed to him for the misdeeds committed by him in any way whatsoever*' declared also John the Lydian, with reference to the high taxation he imposed on the population, '*for, in fact, he was human (ἄνθρωπος ἦν)*'¹²¹⁰.

After Anastasius, Justin and Justinian also skilfully employed the penitential *schema* and the gesture of removing the crown. They publicly display in this way their sorrow and grief in the sight of the population during the many calamities and earthquakes experienced in those years by the empire. So Justin took off his diadem and his purple cloth after the disastrous earthquake in Antioch in 526, and mourned '*in sack-cloth and ashes for many days*'. He continued to refuse crown and *chlamys* also when he came to St Sophia for the Holy Thursday of the Easter Week (he accepted to wear only a plain purple mantle): here he further expressed his grief by weeping in the presence of the Senate, whose members were also wearing a plain purple mantle and wept in turn when they saw him (ἰδόντες αὐτόν)¹²¹¹. Justinian well recognized how in some cases out-of-norm acts could stress more than a majestic appearance the care of the emperor for the State and his humble condition as man among men: famous is the recount of Paul the Silentiary, who described Justinian who, '*in his haste*' after the falling of St Sophia's dome, rushed to the Church without waiting for his escort and without following the

¹²⁰⁹ EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 44.19-31, ed. BIDEZ 1898, p. 146; tr. WHITBY 2000, p. 196. Malalas did not report the speech and recorded instead that the herald merely exhorted the people to stop the random-killing, and then the emperor punished hardly the guilty ones; WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, n. 177 p. 196.

¹²¹⁰ JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De Magistratibus*, III, 47; ed. and tr. BANDY 2013, pp. 234-236, p. 287.

¹²¹¹ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 17, 16; ed. THURN 2000, 349-350; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 241; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 436, where the Slavonic texts (included by Jeffreys in the note) integrates the translation with more details. The recount will be reported in similar words also by Michael the Syrian (in the twelfth century on the ground of John of Ephesus' lost second book) and others; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, IX, 16; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 315; cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AD 6019, AD 526/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 173; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 264. John of Nikiu, in the late seventh century, will add that Justin not only put off his crown and garments, weeping and lamenting, but he also went for a procession '*walking on the ground with bare feet*'; JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 90, 33-34; tr. CHARLES 1916, pp. 136-137.

customary ordered procession¹²¹². He also refused then to wear the diadem *'for 30 days'* after a violent earthquake shook Constantinople for ten days in 557¹²¹³.

Anastasius, Justin and Justinian represented therefore three different emperors who used a similar gesture in the context of three different situations. On the one hand we find Anastasius, an emperor in constant search for a balance in dogmatic and political conflicts necessary to strengthen his authority against the political opponents hidden behind the religious controversies. His gesture represented an attempt to regain control of his action endangered by the radicalisation of the fronts without implying a deviation of his political and religious position¹²¹⁴. On the other hand, the meaning attached to the gesture by Justin and Justinian, performed mainly to show the emperor's haste or grief as a preventive action in a highly dangerous situation for imperial authority such as the aftermath of a catastrophe. However, they seem to share a similar awareness of the fact that this type of demonstrative humility could be a highly effective response to a conflictual and problematic situation because of its exceptional character and its link to the human nature of the imperial persona.

Another efficacious gesture to express grief and humility and respect to God was the act of proceeding on foot, often bare-footed, during the processions. Malalas attributed such a gesture to Theodosius II: after a terrible earthquake in 447, he would have walked bare-footed (*ἀνυπόδητος*) in a procession of prayer (*ἐλιτάνευσεν*), together with the Senate, the people and the clergy for many days¹²¹⁵. The same gesture was attributed in the early sixth century by Theodore Lector (in a passage transmitted by Theophanes Confessor) to the emperor Marcian in the official liturgical commemoration of the event: he also is described as *'used to go out on foot to the litanies in the Campus'* (in this case also *'performing many good works for the needy'*). He even set an example followed in turn by the patriarch Anatolius¹²¹⁶. Already in ancient times processions were performed on foot by consuls and generals. Belisarius famously proceeded on foot from his house to the Hippodrome in the first stage of his

¹²¹² PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 256-264; ed. FOPELLI 2005, p. 50; tr. BELL 2009, pp. 202-203. For the disregard for the ceremonial hinted at by Paul as a way to strengthen the effect of the imperial public appearances, see also WHITBY 1987. Whitby in particular demonstrated how the members of the imperial escort described by Paul are based upon the actual imperial entourage.

¹²¹³ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 18, 124; ed. THURN 2000, 419; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 296; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 519. Later Theophanes Confessor will increase the day of mourning up to 40, and will add that the emperor also *'stopped the customary luncheons in the hall of the Nineteen Couches'*; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6050, AD 557/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 232; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 339.

¹²¹⁴ See MEIER 2009, esp. p. 251; p. 288.

¹²¹⁵ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 14, 22; ed. THURN 2000, 285; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 199; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 374. The gesture will be later understood by the Chronicon Paschale (where it is written that the litany was still celebrated to its days) as a way to express gratitude for *'the forbearance of the beneficent God'* which did not allow anyone to be killed; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 307, AD 450; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 589; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 79-80. For the problem of the date of this earthquake, see *ibidem*, n. 262, p. 80.

¹²¹⁶ The patriarch *'as a result of seeing him (...) no longer performed the litany while being carried in a sedan-chair, as was customary, but on foot'*; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AD 5949, AD 456/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 109; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 169.

triumph for the victorious campaign against the Vandal in 534, to celebrate the return of the 'good old days of ancient lore' in line with the ideological statements supported by Justinian¹²¹⁷. Now the feet were often bare and the humble attitude was deeply embedded with a religious undertone. The shift is well represented in the field of visual art by the controversial ivory of Trier, commonly dated to the sixth century. Here a perfectly ordained cortège of nine men holding incense, headed by an emperor on foot and welcomed on the threshold of a church by an empress, likely represented the translation of the arm of St Stephen in the palace under Theodosius II and Pulcheria¹²¹⁸. Far away from the kind of *adventus* carved, for example, on Galerius' arch in Thessaloniki, the emperor shows his humility by proceeding on foot and by slightly bending his body toward the empress, who in turn raises her right hand toward the procession. The place of honour on the chariot, on the other hand, is left to the reliquary and its bearers (on the left), two religious men marked by bigger proportions and the traditional statue-like appearance¹²¹⁹. The way in which bishops in the sixth century presided the inauguration of a Church is well exhibited by the attitude of the patriarch Menas at the inauguration of St Irene at Sykai (he sat together with Apollinarios of Alexandria on the imperial carriage with the sacred relics on their knees), at the consecration of the Holy Apostles (he sat on a golden carriage and held on his knees the three caskets with the holy relics of the apostles Andrew, Luke, and Timothy), and at the first consecration of the Great Church (he sat on the imperial carriage with the relics of his knee while '*the emperor joining in the procession with the people*'). The same *schema*, holding the Holy Gospel instead of the relics and '*accompanied by the emperor*' (likely once again on foot) was assumed by the patriarch Eutychios for the second consecration of St Sophia¹²²⁰.

¹²¹⁷ McCORMICK 1986, p. 129; PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Vandalico* II, 9.1-3; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. II, pp. 278-279; DEWING 1916, vol. II, n. 2 p. 278. Even if Procopius declared that the triumph was not celebrated 'in the ancient manner' (that is, with the victor reaching the Campidoglio on horse or standing on a chariot), it is likely that the organizers took inspiration from the consular procession, the 'most prestigious ritual then available to the secular elite'; McCORMICK 1986, p. 128. On the reason for which Belisarius was granted with what Procopius considered a unique honour (the triumph was originally reserved to the most successful generals and then, after Augustus, only to the emperors) see McCORMICK 1986, p. 126. The *largitio* performed in the second stage of the ceremony was also a way to celebrate the general's consulship '*in the ancient manner*' and '*after a long interval of disuse*', with the traditional parade of Belisarius (sat on the curule chair), the booty, and the captives in the Hippodrome; PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Vandalico*, II, 9.16; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. II, pp. 282-283.

¹²¹⁸ HOLUM and VIKAN 1979. On the likely dating of the piece to the sixth century, see *ibidem*, p. 115, n. 5. The only written description of the event is the later account reported in THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5920, AD 427/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 86-87; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 135-136.

¹²¹⁹ They reminded the iconography of the eunuch of the queen Candace converted by St. Philip Deacon and that of the deceased proceeding in triumph after death, commonly found in the sarcophagi of the fourth century; WILPERT 1929-1936. For the way in which gestures and postures of the characters functioned here as a mean to focus the attention of the empress as 'the prime instigator or patron of this relic translation' and founder of the church, see HOLUM and VIKAN 1979, pp. 122-123. According to Kalavrezou, the image also visually underlined the connection between the extended arm of the empress receiving the relic and the right arm of the saint; KALAVREZOU 1997, n. 23, p. 58.

¹²²⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6030, AD 537/8; AM 6042, AD 549/50; AM 6044, AD 551/2; AM 6055, AD 562/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 217; p. 227; p. 228; p. 238; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 316; p. 331, p. 333; p. 350 (once again following Theodore Lector).

The emperor could also express his humility and his respect toward God without losing authority by bending his body in front of a saint or of a distinguished member of the clergy. So Justinian welcomed St Sabas by raising from the throne, bending his knee in front of him (προσεκύνησεν) and kissing him on the head¹²²¹. The saint had been previously welcomed with a similar display of respect also by the emperor Anastasius: since he looked *'like a beggar'*, he was initially left outside the Consistory by the *silentarii*. Then the emperor, who *'was a lover of the monks, even though induced by some blackguards to make war on the correct faith'*, managed to see his true worthiness. And when Sabas finally entered into the room *'through the curtains'*, Anastasius stood up from his throne and received him *'with due honor* (μετὰ τῆς πρεπούσης τιμῆς)¹²²². In the following two meetings the saint was even allowed to *'enter the palace freely without being announced'* to speak with the emperor about the disciplinary and dogmatic issues which were troubling the Church at the time¹²²³. The friendly attitude and the respect paid by the emperor to the saint represented an exceptional moment of *'dramatic public confrontation'* in which a figure *'outside the body politic'* deserved a special kind of dispensation from the rules of etiquette¹²²⁴. Those were occasions in which the emperor proved to be occasionally able to *'step away from the curtains'*¹²²⁵.

Other was, on the other side, the familiarity accorded to medics: Marcellinus Comes described in detail how the physician Jacob, despite his being a *'Greek by nationality and pagan in religion'*, was allowed to enter the sacred chamber of Leo I. He could sit in the chair next to the imperial bed *'without any signal from the emperor* (sine ullo Augusto nutu consedit)¹²²⁶ and apply to him his healing hands. And even if the day after he was *'undaunted* (intrepidus)¹²²⁶ and *'seated himself above the royal bedstead'*, he was never arrogant. He acted in this way, explained Jacob himself to the emperor, *'in accordance with the practices of the ancient founders of his discipline'*¹²²⁶. In this case, therefore, the emperor followed the tradition and accorded an intimate physical contact for a mere practical purpose, since the recovery could pass only through the touch of the healer.

¹²²¹ CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita S. Sabae*, 71; ed. SCHWARTZ 1939, 173.19-24; tr. BALDELLI e MORTARI 1990, p. 296.

¹²²² CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita S. Sabae*, 51; ed. SCHWARTZ 1939, p. 142; tr. PRICE 1991, pp. 151-152.

¹²²³ CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita S. Sabae*, 53; ed. SCHWARTZ 1939, p. 145; tr. PRICE 1991, pp. 154-155. The female members of the imperial court are also described as eager to receive the blessing (εὐλογία) and the religious advice of those holy men. Sabas met and blessed Ariadne, wife of Anastasius, as well as the patricians Anicia Juliana and Anastasia. And St Euthymii was welcomed by the empress Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II exiled in Jerusalem, with a *proskynesis* and many display of respect, receiving, in turn, the customary blessing and the advice to return to the orthodox faith; CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS, *Vita Euthymii*, 30; ed. SCHWARTZ 1939, p. 48; tr. PRICE 1991, p. 45.

¹²²⁴ HEATHER and MONCUR 2001, p. 35. See also PAZDERNIK 2009, pp. 76-79.

¹²²⁵ PAZDERNIK 2009, p. 66.

¹²²⁶ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 462; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, pp. 23-24.

2.2. JUSTIN II IN THE PRAISE OF CORIPPUS

Corippus' *In laudem Iustini* is a 'narrative poem' which contains a minute reportage of Justin II's inauguration and coronation, earlier days as ruler, and inauguration as consul. Ceremonial details are here described both on the base of direct observation of the events as well as with a familiarity with the themes of imperial art and symbolism of the imperial ideology¹²²⁷. The text represents, therefore, a unique source for the developments occurred in the use of and the feelings toward gestures and postures adopted in ceremonial occasions, and in the use of those elements to praise a 'good' emperor and his court. Not only the imperial speeches and the prayers uttered by the emperors and the participants but also their gestures and their postures expressed the 'turning point' occurred in those years in the imperial ideology for which the emperor still presented himself as the majestic heir of the Augustus but also and more as the sacred *imago* and *servus Christi*, pious and humble toward God¹²²⁸. From the very beginning the author used a gesture to introduce the basic theme of the divine source of the imperial authority. He shifted the context but not the meaning of the old gesture of the Victory crowning the emperor with laurel – still present on the *ciborium* of the throne in the Consistory¹²²⁹ – when he attributed it to the Virgin who appeared in a dream to the future emperor Justin to reveal him his imminent fate¹²³⁰. She put on him the imperial robe (*Augusto...amictu*) and the crown 'with her right hand', uttering the words 'this clothing becomes to you (*te decet hic habitu*)' and calling him emperor 'to be feared by all and to be loved by all (*terribilis princeps et amabilis omnibus idem*), beloved of great God, divine stock'¹²³¹. The imperial *habitu* is therefore given to the emperor directly by God, the emperor had to be both frightful (*terribilis*) and merciful (*amabilis*), and Justin is the emperor whose nod (*nutu*) and stiff determination (*rigidus vigor*) made people and kingdoms tremble¹²³².

¹²²⁷ For reading Corippus' work favouring an approach 'concerned with *Realien* rather than literary matters' based upon a purely imaginative and rhetorical point of view, see CAMERON 1976a, pp. 11-13.

¹²²⁸ CAMERON (1979) 1981, *passim*. Corippus' work represented a 'more confident kind of Christian poetry, now able to tackle secular themes in a style which can draw upon both classical and Christian sources'; CAMERON 1976a, pp. 10-12.

¹²²⁹ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* III, 201-204; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, pp. 66-67; p. 106.

¹²³⁰ The Virgin appears 'with merciful expression (*aspectu clemens*)', 'happy in her chaste tread (*gressu laeta pudico*)', with the hair veiled and 'with kindly eyes (*oculis benigna*)', all signs (*signa*) which revealed that she was 'the image of holy Piety'; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* I, 34-36; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 37; p. 88. The language here, recognizes Cameron, is taken from the classical imagery of Venus appearing to Aeneas, who also 'walks like a divinity'; CAMERON 1976a, p. 129.

¹²³¹ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 37-42; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 37; p. 88. The author himself beseeched both the emperor as well as the Virgin to stretch their powerful hands toward him (*dextram porrigere*) so to give him protection; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* Prefatio, 37; I, 12-14; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 34; p. 37; p. 85; p. 87.

¹²³² CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 262-263; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 44; p. 92.

Justin used the traditional majestic gesture of command at the funeral of Justinian when he ordered (*imperat*) the bier to be lifted ‘with his imperial nod (*augusti nutu*)’¹²³³. When he wore the chlamys on his shoulder during his robing in the palace, he ‘*outdid the sun*’ as he ‘*stretched out his right hand*’ (*principis exerta vincebat lumina dextra*)¹²³⁴. And he ordered (*iussit*) the people to advance ‘with his imperial nod (*Augusto nutu*)’ when he was fulfilling his consular role by giving pious donations¹²³⁵. On the other hand, Justin also showed his piety (*hic pietatem ostendit natura suam*), that is, a ‘*condition of the flesh (carnis condicio), which none can avoid, which is the same for all men*’. This condition ‘*increased the just grief (dolorem) in his divine mind (divinis animis)*’ caused by the death of his predecessor Justinian. He ‘*rules and grieves*’ (*imperat et dolet*), concluded Corippus, expressing in this way the simultaneous presence in his *schema* of the image of the victorious ruler and that of the humble man whose *pietas* led him to physically express his sorrow through the tears¹²³⁶. ‘I am ‘*a small man (parvus homo), the created image of his great creator*’’, declared Justin himself in his prayer¹²³⁷. The emphasis on the mortal dimension in the imperial persona was once again far from being a real debasement: the physical limbs of Justin were indeed repeatedly defined as sacred in the description of his robing, when they were covered with the *insignia* of power¹²³⁸. The dead body of Justinian was also still felt as characterized by a supernatural condition which allowed him to keep unaltered ‘*the last marks of his life (suprema insignia vitae)*’¹²³⁹ and to show ‘*by clear signs (signis apertis) that he had conquered the world*’. Those signs included a ‘*pious countenance (effigie pia)*’, the diadem and a purple robe, as well as a body that made him look as if he were sleeping¹²⁴⁰.

The emperor had to exhibit with words and postures his humility and his submission to God especially at the moment of his inauguration, when he had to ‘*accept the royal insignia of government (imperii*

¹²³³ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, III, 37-38; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 61; p. 103. For others signs of this type in imperial ceremonial, see TREITINGER (1938) 1956, p. 54; n. 30, p. 54.

¹²³⁴ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 120; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 51; p. 96. For the image of the right hand’s fingers spread like the rays of the sun (τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ δακτύλοις ἀκτινοειδῶς διαστέλλων), see also the later reference in *De Cer.* I, 63; ed. and tr. MOFFATT 2012, p. 283.

¹²³⁵ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, IV, 225-226; tr. CAMERON 1976a, pp. 79-80; p. 114.

¹²³⁶ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 263-270; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 44; p. 92.

¹²³⁷ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 29; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 48; p. 95.

¹²³⁸ The attendants ‘*hasten to apply their hands to their duties (obsequis praeberere manus)*’ carrying the imperial robes, the girdles and the ‘*diadem for the sacred head (capitis diadema sacris)*’. The ‘*royal*’ and ‘*pious*’ imperial limbs were even able to ‘*increase the light*’ (*lumen membris regalibus auxit*); CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 87-91; 100-101; 115; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 50; p. 96. For the ‘*divine foot*’ which ‘*touched the threshold of the imperial palace*’, see CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 197; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 42; p. 91. For the speech of Callinicus uttered ‘*in the divine ears*’ and the senators who kissed the emperor’s ‘*divine feet*’ see CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 156-159; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 41; p. 90.

¹²³⁹ Its colour did not change and shone ‘*with his accustomed brightness (candore nitens)*’; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 236-328; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 43; p. 91. For the light surrounding the emperor see also CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 149; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 41; p. 90.

¹²⁴⁰ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 238-243; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 43; p. 92. Finally, the corpse was ‘*changed by death into an angelic form (in angelicam figuram)*’; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 364-365; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 47; p. 94.

regalia signa)' ¹²⁴¹. Both Justin and his wife Sophia uttered a prayer 'very Christian in language and content'¹²⁴²: Justin proclaimed himself as *servus* of Christ (*tibi servio soli atque meum submitto caput*)¹²⁴³, while Sophia blessed the threshold of the temple of the Virgin and then, standing in front of the holy image, made her supplication '*holding out her hands and with the face cast down*'¹²⁴⁴. The gesture once again did not humiliate her but strengthened her authority by underlining her relationship with God. For his coronation, on the other hand, Justin combined Roman and Christian *schemata*: he was the last emperor crowned with *torques* and raised on the shield, but he was also the first one who fully included in the ceremony the reception of the diadem by the hand of the patriarch¹²⁴⁵. When he appeared in his new status in the palace in front of a small audience of senators, then, he mounted on the throne and made '*the holy sign of the Cross (crucis faciens signum)*' and began his '*pious utterance (ore pio)*' '*with his hand raised (erectaque manu)*'¹²⁴⁶. Joining together the rhetorical and the Christian gesture, he signalled therefore both his 'power and benediction'¹²⁴⁷ while his posture underlined his imperial piety without losing entirely the original connotation of victory and command. Furthermore, this posture connected the imperial visual imagery with the contemporary iconography of God/Christ enthroned in heaven and gesturing toward the onlooker, like in the Diptych of Murano in the Museo Nazionale of Ravenna, or in the upper part of the Barberini ivory in Louvre (both produced in the sixth century)¹²⁴⁸.

The *schema* involving the sign of the cross was also used when Justin appeared on his golden throne in the Kathisma. In line with his senatorial point of view, Corippus seems to suggest here that this appearance was no longer constitutive of his power but it was rather performed as part of a 'subsidiary' ceremony in which the inauguration of the new ruler was already a 'fait accompli'¹²⁴⁹. The emperor

¹²⁴¹ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 4-7; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, pp. 47-48; p. 94.

¹²⁴² CAMERON 1976a, p. 9.

¹²⁴³ '*You alone I serve and to you alone I bend my head*', translated Cameron; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 31-32; and tr. CAMERON 1976a, pp. 48; p. 95. For the importance of the prayer in the inauguration context and the changing of its position to the moment before the robing and the inauguration (unlike the time in which Leo I was crowned at the Hebdomon), see CAMERON 1976a, p. 150.

¹²⁴⁴ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 49-51; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 49; p. 95. The same posture is chosen by Justin and Sophia in the reverse side of the so-called 'Cross of Justin' in Vatican: here the rulers are depicted in two roundels on the left and right arms of the cross, at the side of Christ (above) and the Virgin (under), with the hands open in prayer.

¹²⁴⁵ CAMERON 1976a, p. 150. The view of this dichotomy as the sign of the process of demilitarization and parallel increase of ecclesiastical items over secular ones, a view maintained especially by Treitinger, should not be overstated. However, a definite development did actually occur in the sixth century, and this account 'is particularly noteworthy in that it both shows the first public patriarchal crowning of a new emperor and interprets the shield-raising, part of the 'military' section of the ceremony, in fully religious terms'; CAMERON 1976a, p. 159.

¹²⁴⁶ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 175-178; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 53; p. 97.

¹²⁴⁷ CAMERON 1976a, pp. 167-168, with bibliography.

¹²⁴⁸ For such a connection, see GRABAR (1936) 1971, p. 24ff. In coins too we assist to the innovation for which Justin and Sophia appear wearing their imperial *insignia* and seated frontally on two thrones; CAMERON 1976a, p. 168.

¹²⁴⁹ CAMERON 1976a, p. 5; p. 171.

wanted 'to see the people and to admonish (moneret) the masses'¹²⁵⁰, while the crowd, in turn, wanted to see the emperor: when he appeared 'people lifted their eyes intently to the royal throne (as if they were praying toward a sacral person) for the happy masses longed with all their hearts to see their blessed emperor'¹²⁵¹. The emperor then 'came out amid his own light (cum luce sua), and touched his serene brow, making the sign of the Holy Tree (frontemque serenam armavit sancti facies signacula ligni)'¹²⁵², this time a gesture exclusively religious and pointed toward himself, and saluted the crowd (utque salutato ... vulgo)¹²⁵³. The meaning of this appearance is explained by Corippus in the last lines of the chapter: with this *schema*, and with the following acts of remission of debts and release of prisoners, Justin expressed in front of everybody his piety and his being the *imago Christi*:

*The pious one (...) nodded (adnuit) assent to their grief-stricken prayers, and like a god (more dei) ordered that they should all be released from their charges – for he is a god who with one word seeks to make the evil just and to rescue them from the midst of death (...). Whoever does this is a god. God is in the hearts of our rulers (deus est in corde regentum): whatever orders God gives, these are the ruling principle for our rulers. Christ gave earthly lords power over all: He is omnipotent, and the earthly king is the image of the Omnipotent (Ille est omnipotens, hic omnipotentis imago)'*¹²⁵⁴.

In the while, Justin further expressed the rectitude of his soul and his self-control by assuming, while standing, the form of the initial word of his name (*Sanctum sic iota resurgens*)¹²⁵⁵, that is the Iota in Iustinus. In the same way, he had stood on the shield 'upright like his own letter, which is never swayed from its firm meaning' (stetit, ut sua rectus littera, quae signo stabili non flectitur umquam)¹²⁵⁶.

Finally, Justin received the greeting of the crowd, and 'with modest expression (vultuque modesto) he smiled (risit) (...) preserving his solemnity (censuram servans) and giving joy to people'¹²⁵⁷. The smiling of the emperor was something 'more than a natural reaction': it expressed the virtue of the imperial calm¹²⁵⁸. The imperial firmness had a perfect counterpoint in the movement and the dynamism of the crowd who expressed its will and its judgments in a physical manner. Those present joined together

¹²⁵⁰ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 279-280; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 56; p. 99.

¹²⁵¹ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 296-298; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 56; p. 100. The meaning of prayer entailed into the act of raising the eyes, already present as we have seen since Constantine, it is clearly stated by Corippus immediately after: the suppliants who came in front of Justin to ask for the remission of their debts also put their face on the ground, while 'with eyes raised pray for the life of the emperor'; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 398; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 59; p. 101.

¹²⁵² CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 299-300; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 56; p. 100.

¹²⁵³ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 301; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 56; p. 100.

¹²⁵⁴ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 420-428; CAMERON 1976a, p. 60; p. 102.

¹²⁵⁵ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 353; CAMERON 1976a, p. 47; p. 94.

¹²⁵⁶ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 139-140; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 51; p. 97. For other similar explanations of the letter I in symbolic terms, see *ib.* I, 353; n. p. 148.

¹²⁵⁷ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 304-306; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 56; p. 100.

¹²⁵⁸ CAMERON 1976a, p. 173. Cameron pointed out other examples, like when Justin smiled (and controlled therefore his anger) in front of the arrogant Avars in the third Book, and when Justinian smiled gently at Constantinople (in Paul the Silentiary's *Descriptio S. Sophiae*).

their individual bodies to create a unique organism who moved through a sole and harmonious movement, seemingly spontaneous but ultimately strongly controlled¹²⁵⁹. They applauded and then threw up their right hand *'in time'* and repeatedly, so that they glittered *'all over the circus as dense waves'*, lowering and raising their hands and arms and *'moving forward and backward together'*¹²⁶⁰. Whether those physical movements performed by the crowd in this occasion were actually so controlled or not, this description confirms the use of gestures and voice (acclamations or chants) as the instruments through which the audience, inside or outside the court, could participate in the events and express satisfaction or disagreement toward the choices of the political authority. John the Lydian recounted for example that in ancient times the crowd could assert their right in front of the impunity of a Roman magistrate accused of bribery by jeering (ἀπέσκωπεν) *'not only with words but also with gestures* (οὐ ῥήμασιν ἀλλὰ καὶ σχήμασιν) *aiming at the arousal of laughter* (ἐπὶ τὸ γελοιοῦδες ἔχουσι). They *'used to do this in honor of liberty'*, but the magistrates in the end conferred to those gestures also a legal efficacy, since they *'used to give in* (ἐνεδίδοσαν) *yielding to custom, as if to law* (ὥσανεὶ νόμῳ τῇ συνηθείᾳ παραχωροῦντες)¹²⁶¹. Agathias provided a lively and detailed description of the physical involvement of the audience during the public trial staged around the middle of the sixth century against the murderers of the Lazic king¹²⁶². The meticulously staged spectacle of *'the full majesty of the law and the lofty tones of the forensic eloquence'* stroke *'awe and wonder'* in the natives¹²⁶³, who in turn compensated the inability to understand the words uttered with their bodies and their voice. They enthusiastically showed their support *'by echoing their intonation and imitating their gestures* (συμπεριήγοντο ταῖς μεταβολαῖς τῶν σχημάτων), and changed their mood *'accordingly as they thought they detected a change of tone in the voices of the accusers'*. They could maintain a silent indignation, shout an outcry, or murmur, while the accusers could dissolve a misunderstanding *'by beckoning to them to hold silence* (ταῖς χερσὶ καταπαύοντες (...) καὶ τοίνυν σιγῆς γεγεννημένης)¹²⁶⁴.

¹²⁵⁹ Cameron recognized in this description 'an early stage in the process by which the factions came to take the lead in state ceremonial' and organized the acclamations, and emphasises the peculiar silence of this occasion in a period when factional rioting was common. He also reminded some visual parallels for the gestures described (the reliefs on Porphyrius bases, the Kugelspiel in Berlin, and later the Kiev frescoes); CAMERON 1976a, pp. 173-174.

¹²⁶⁰ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustiniani*, II, 312-320; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 57; p. 100.

¹²⁶¹ JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De mensibus* II, 22-23; ed. and tr. BANDY 2013, p. 134.6-9; p. 173.

¹²⁶² For the possibility to look at this account, heavily built on classical models, as an 'instructive example' of 'a contemporary view of what an ideal trial should be like' in the sixth century, whatever its historical veracity, see KENNEDY 1983, pp. 13-19.

¹²⁶³ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, IV, 1.7-8; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 124; tr. FREND 1975, pp. 101-102. Such *'ostentatious display of the majesty of Roman justice'*, explained Agathias, was an instrument *'to accustom them better to Roman rule but also to dispel any resentment or feeling of grievance that the Colchians* (that is, the Lazi people) *might still harbour in the event'*; AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, IV, 1.4; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 123; tr. FREND 1975, p. 101.

¹²⁶⁴ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, IV, 7.1-2; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 130; tr. FREND 1975, p. 107.

Corippus reports several ways through which the subjects at court could confirm the role of the emperor as representative of God: they could address him as a sacred figure, by uttering unilateral prayers¹²⁶⁵, with the arms outstretched and the eyes raised, by approaching him with covered hands, by burning lights and incense (all acts ascribed to relics, icons, and sacred persons)¹²⁶⁶, or by performing the usual *adoratio / proskynesis*. This latter continued to be performed by the barbarians, like when the Avar ambassadors fully prostrated themselves in front of the theophanic vision of Justin who was suddenly revealed behind the curtains¹²⁶⁷. Even if it seems that Corippus reduced the barbarians to the role of awe-ridden and overwhelmed supplicants who did not share as participants in the diplomatic ceremony¹²⁶⁸, they actively performed a highly physically demanding action. The senators also continued to perform this gesture to show their agreement to the choice of Justin as emperor: they made it before his coronation¹²⁶⁹ and then after his first speech as a visual sign of praise for his words¹²⁷⁰. Other members of the court could plead in this way for the emperor's justice: Agathias recounted the story of the rhetorician Zeno, 'a close acquaintance of the Emperor', who had to 'publicly prostrated himself (προκαλινεῖσθαι ἀναφανδὸν) at the feet of the Emperor' to complain against his wicked neighbour¹²⁷¹. In any case, Corippus confirmed that those who performed the *adoratio* usually knelt and kissed the emperor's foot to signify their approval (*consensuque sui manifestans*) without talking (*tacite*)¹²⁷².

The emperor displayed his power and his piety one last time at the end of the poem when he celebrated his inauguration as consul. During a carefully arranged ceremony he stretched his generous

¹²⁶⁵ 'While we praise them (the rulers) we earn praise from our praises' declared Corippus, 'and enjoy greater good. For divine stock needs no human praise, but it weights the prayers of its servants and honours those who are bound to it by piety'; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 173-178; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 77; p. 113.

¹²⁶⁶ For the growing importance of the icons from the fifth and sixth century and the use of candles and curtains in their worship, see KITZINGER 1954; HALDON 1990, pp. 423-424. For the covered hand as a sign of respect toward Christ, see for example the panel on the nave of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna depicting the Apparition of Christ at Emmaus (beginning of the sixth century) and the apsidal mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna (546-547) and of SS. Cosmas and Damian in Rom (526-530).

¹²⁶⁷ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* III, 254-262; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 68; p. 107. The function of the curtain is later explained as a way to 'marvel the more (ut plus morentur, obumbrant). That which is common is worthless: what is hidden stands out in honour (quidquid latet, extat, honorat). And the more a thing is hidden (quodque magis tegitur), the more valuable it is considered (pretii maioris habetur)'; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 85-87; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 75; p. 112. On the iconographical representations and the archaeological evidence of curtains and their 'revelatory functions', see PARANI 2003, pp. 179-181.

¹²⁶⁸ POHL 2013, p. 69.

¹²⁶⁹ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 156-159; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 41; p. 90.

¹²⁷⁰ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, II, 276-277; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 56; p. 99. For the negative approach to such a gesture performed by senators in Procopius, see after.

¹²⁷¹ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, V, 6.7; V, 7.4; ed. KEYDELL 1967, pp. 170-172; tr. FRENDO 1975, pp. 141-143.

¹²⁷² CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 156-160; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 41; p. 90. The gesture is present also in sixth-century works of art like the portrait of Anicia Giuliana (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Codice Med. Gr. 1, s. 6v) or the 'Communion of the bread and wine' scene in the Codex Purpureus Rossanensis, where the apostles proceed toward Christ with movements carefully articulated in specific intervals following the rules of the *eurhythmia*.

right hand to bestow largess to the senators, officials, and orators, while the recipients of his favour showed, in turn, their good will by making ‘*the folds of their garments ready for the gifts*’ and stretching out their palms to receive them¹²⁷³.

The imperial hand continued thus to be felt as powerful in giving orders and gifts and in transmitting authority. No wonder that Procopius chose to criticize Justin I not only for being ignorant and easy minded (a detail reported also by John the Lydian¹²⁷⁴), but also because his hand was not able to sign documents: when the functionaries needed a ‘*formal ratification by the imperial hand* (μαρτυρίαν τῆς βασιλέως χειρὸς)’, indeed, they ‘*put into the hands*’ of the illiterate emperor a piece of wood carved with the word ‘LEGI’ (‘*I have read*’), and then, ‘*holding the emperor’s hand, traced the pattern of the four letters with the pen*’¹²⁷⁵. Corippus underlined the importance not only of the hand but also of the whole body of Justin II, dressed with the crown and the consular costume (the *trabea*)¹²⁷⁶: during the following procession he preserved his *gravitas*¹²⁷⁷, his aspect (aspectu) that ‘*surpassed gem and gold*’, ‘*his face and his shoulders showing power* (ore umerisque potens), while ‘*his appearance* (incessu) *and his eyes flashed* (oculisque refulsit)¹²⁷⁸, so that he impressed all those present¹²⁷⁹. When he arrived at St Sophia, he assumed then once again the humble and sacred *schema*: he ‘*offered candles and prayed humbly in his heart with a gentle voice*’ to demonstrate that he had been blessed ‘*by the right hand of God, more exalted and more justified* (plus exaltus, plus iustificatus) *for the very reason that he stood before God and confessed his own humility and the true faith which he preserves in piety (...). The Emperor Justin rules in peace with his protector (Christ), Him alone does he worship* (adorat), *certain in his hope*’¹²⁸⁰.

In the context of the formalism and the religious connotations which increasingly marked the life of the secular society in the sixth century, the emperor showed his ability to play with both the Roman and the Christian *schemata*. The pagan background and the secular Roman tradition continued to

¹²⁷³ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 67-73; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 75; p. 111. The expression *manibus favere*, stated Cameron, often referred to the act of weaving and clapping the hands; CAMERON 1976a, p. 196. The senators even performed another *proskynesis*; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 145-146; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 77; p. 113.

¹²⁷⁴ Justin was ‘*a man detached from public affairs* (ἀπράγμων), with ‘*no knowledge* (μηδὲν ἀπλῶς) *except experience in weaponry*’; JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De Magistratibus*, III, 51; ed. and tr. BANDY 2013, p. 240, p. 290. Michael the Syrian (on the ground of John of Ephesus’ lost second book) described him as ‘*an old man, handsome but simple, and illiterate*’, with ‘*no knowledge of the Christian faith*’; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, IX, 12; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 308. On the opposite, Justin II will be ‘*wise and intelligent man, and well read in books*’; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, 6; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 387.

¹²⁷⁵ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, VI, 14-16; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 72; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 30.

¹²⁷⁶ For the imperial consular costume see CAMERON 1976a, p. 199. Corippus ‘*does not mention the consular insignia – the mappa and the sceptre – which are constantly shown on the diptychs and coins*’; *ibidem*.

¹²⁷⁷ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 125-127; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 77; p. 112.

¹²⁷⁸ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 243-246; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 80; p. 115.

¹²⁷⁹ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 250; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 80; p. 115.

¹²⁸⁰ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 317-325; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 82; p. 116.

shape his mind and his way to express the power; be he also exploited the potentialities inherent in the religious and sacred features of the new religion to create an increasingly powerful and complex public image. Furthermore, the imperial court described by Corippus was far from being an immobile or frozen picture. It was a dynamic environment in which physical movements and outward appearances could be chosen and even manipulated in order to transmit ideological statements. The emperor remained always a 'living eikon', a physical and therefore mortal representation of Christ on earth. He acted not only as an immobile 'idea' from which emanated the court: he was an active player who expressed his special role and his relationship with God with the whole body, and used his hand to show his power, his piety, his largesse. He even bestowed the charge to newly appointed ministers with physical gestures¹²⁸¹.

Finally, members of the court could also occasionally be seen as active players of their *schemata*. They could provide, it is true, an image of order merely pleasant to see: when the palace's guards set themselves for the embassy of the Avars, for example, they are described as fulfilling the role of decoration of the palace¹²⁸². Starting at least from the emperor Zeno, reported indeed also Agathias, the *scholarii* were no longer selected for their military value but they fulfilled a '*purely decorative functions as enhancing the pomp of royal progress*'¹²⁸³. The sword-bearer Narses was also compared to a wonderful statue which '*adorned the imperial throne*' holding the *insignia*. His strong body was, indeed, '*like precious agate or the Parian stone shining out in the midst of yellow gold as the hand of the artist shapes it: he was bright with light, as calm in mind, as handsome with his gentle expression, as he protected the back of the emperor and shone in his bright armour*'¹²⁸⁴. Tiberius, the future emperor Tiberius Constantine II who at the time was still the count of the *excubitores*¹²⁸⁵, on his part, '*carried out all his responsibilities (curasque omnes inplebat), fulfilling his duty (et inplens officium) with nod and gesture (nutu monituque frequenter)*'¹²⁸⁶. And the patrician Callinicus restored the silence among the '*great sound of weeping*' of the senators with a highly visual and iconic gesture, '*by putting one finger to his lips (ora premens digito) and signing for silence with his right hand (dextraque silentia fecit)*'¹²⁸⁷. This was probably the gesture that characterized the *silentiarii*, members of 'a

¹²⁸¹ For example, during the appointment of a silentiary, '*the ostiarios hands the golden staff to the ruler*' and then the emperor, in turn, '*hands it to the one being made a silentiary*'; PETER THE PATRICIAN, in *De Cer.* I, 86 (95); ed. and tr. MOFFATT and TALL 2012, p. 389.

¹²⁸² CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* III, 157-164; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 65; p. 105. They were arranged '*in fixed order*' and were distinguished by '*different uniforms, clothing, dress and appearance (ornatu vario cultuque habituque modoque)*'; *ibidem*.

¹²⁸³ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, V, 15.2; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 182; tr. FRENDO 1970, p. 150.

¹²⁸⁴ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 366-373; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 84; p. 117.

¹²⁸⁵ CAMERON 1976a, p. 138. He will be adopted and crowned Caesar by Justin only after, in 574.

¹²⁸⁶ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini* IV, 374-377; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 84; p. 117. The guards who attended the reception of the Avar also '*stood in front of the high entrance*' and '*kept out the unworthy who wanted to enter (...) frightening in their disdain and their gestures (fastu nutuque tremendi)*'; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, III, 207-209; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 67; p. 106.

¹²⁸⁷ CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini*, I, 122-123; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 40; p. 89.

national army corps' which had among other duties the responsibility to secure the silence (and thus, it follows, the order) at the imperial palace¹²⁸⁸.

2.3. SLAPS AND GESTURES IN POLITICAL STRUGGLES AND EMBASSIES

Things did not always go smoothly as depicted by panegyric sources: fifth-sixth centuries sources recorded also an increase in the use of violent and shocking gestures during public struggles. In the fifth century, Zosimus vividly described a dispute at the court of Theodosius in 391 between the officials Rufinus and Promotus. Rufinus was so arrogant, recounted Zosimus, 'that at a public meeting he hurled an insult (θρασύτερόν τι ῥήμα) at Promotus. This was too much for the latter, who struck him in the face with his hand (τῷ προσώπῳ τὴν χεῖρα καὶ ἔπληξεν), whereupon Rufinus went and showed his face to the emperor (τῷ βασιλεῖ τὸ πρόσωπον δείξας)'. Rufinus managed in this way to bring the gesture to his advantage, since Theodosius became angry against Promotus and was convinced by Rufinus to banish him to Thrace – where he was killed in a military ambush¹²⁸⁹. Public slaps or violent actions affected also those who saw them. A particularly lively account of Evagrius Scholasticus described the improper behaviour displayed by Anastasius, the steward (οἰκονομῶν) of the church of Antioch, and Thomas, the Syrian *apocrisarius* charged to collect the annual salary for his monastery: since Thomas, not the most well-educated man, 'was constantly pestering (συχνῶς ἠνώχλει)' Anastasius, this latter lost patience and 'struck him over the head with his hand (τῇ χειρὶ κατὰ κόρρης ῥαπίζει)'. The public gesture greatly vexed those present, who immediately showed their anger¹²⁹⁰. However, a slap could be also an instrument of the providential action of God, as in Procopius' recounts of the fraudulent Priscus. This latter forged documents to falsely accuse some good men in Emesa, but at one point 'some succor happened to arrive from God': in front of Priscus' refusal of presenting a dossier of his accusations, Longinus, an 'energetic' man appointed to arbitrate the matter, struck Priscus 'with all his strength'. Unable to withstand 'a blow by such a strong man', Priscus 'fell on his back', and 'trembling and full of fear' confessed his fraud¹²⁹¹. The patrician Marcian,

¹²⁸⁸ BELL 2009, p. 14. For example, Agathias recorded that Paul the Silentary 'was the foremost of those officials known as 'Silentarii' or ushers, who are entrusted with maintaining silence around the emperor's person (ὅς δὴ παπρῶτα τελῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀμφὶ τὸν βασιλέα σιγῆς ἐπιστάταις); AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, V, 9.7; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 144; tr. FRENDO 1970, p. 175. For the rule in maintaining the silence also at the court of the Turk, see MENANDER PROTECTOR, *Historiae*, fr. 10.3 (*Exc. de Leg. Rom.* 8); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY (1985) 2006, pp. 122-123. Also quoted by CANEPA 2009, p. 33.

¹²⁸⁹ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova* IV, 51.1-2; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.2, p. 320; tr. RIDLEY 1982, pp. 94-95. Zosimus is the only source for such a detail, and could reflect therefore the use of violent gestures at his times.

¹²⁹⁰ EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, 35; ed. BIDEZ 1898, pp. 184-185; tr. WHITBY 2000, pp. 240. After the blow Thomas predicted their future death, declaring 'that neither would receive nor Anastasius give again'; *ibidem*.

¹²⁹¹ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XXVIII, 14-15; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 332; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 125. For the role of the divine Providence in human affairs and the mix between the notions of *tyche* and God in Procopius,

a general and relative of Justin II, suffered an insulting treatment by the hand of the violent Acacius Archelaus, who was sent by the emperor to deprive the brave general 'for no reason' of his command while he was besieging Nisibis. He insulted Marcian 'in the presence of all his soldiers', when 'in hot wrath laid hands upon him and pulled him about, and threw him down, and cut his girdle, scoffing at him, and even, as was said, he struck him on the cheek. And the whole army was indignant, and their hands weakened, and execrating the wickedness which had been done before their eyes, they lowered their standard, and turned it upside down'¹²⁹².

Gestures and attitudes increased their role mostly in the mechanism of embassy. Diplomatic exchanges were especially a privileged locus in which different communicative system (written, oral, but also gestural) meet¹²⁹³ and where everything could work only if the parts knew the 'rules' as a 'ritual community'¹²⁹⁴. Here people from different cultures and with different ideals of behaviour had to meet and establish a dialogue to achieve a political agreement. Ideally, declared Procopius through the words addressed by Totila to Pope Pelagius during the siege of Rome, 'the distinction between honour (τιμὴν) and insult (ὕβριν) to a man clothed with the office of ambassador is not made by a smiling countenance (ὁὐ πρότετι προσώπων) or bombastic utterances on the part of those who receive him, but either by simply speaking the truth (...)'¹²⁹⁵. The actual situation was nevertheless different, and the success or the failure depended often on the rhetorical ability and the craftiness of the parties involved. 'Better to be caught in a lie than to leave without achieving anything', admitted already in the mid-fifth century Viglas, the Roman interpreter sent to Attila's camp described by Priscus of Panion, when he was forced to rely on a string of machinations to be received by the ruler¹²⁹⁶. Roman ambassadors were supposed to be good at facing the adversities of their mission and achieve the hoped results. 'Barbarians', in turn, seem to have not been equally skilful: several texts described how the 'educated' and 'civilized' Romans had to handle those arrogant, uneducated, and savage

see PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, IV, 44-45; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 56; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 22; n. 65, p. 22; CRESCI MARRONE and BARTOLINI 2005, p. XVII.

¹²⁹² JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, VI, 2; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 368-369; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 211. Michael the Syrian, who took John of Ephesus as a source, mentioned in similar terms the event, but concluded that the soldiers fled not because they were indignant, but because they believed to Acacius: when they saw the scene indeed 'they thought that the commander of the army had been relieved and the emperor had died'; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, ch. 8; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 390.

¹²⁹³ CAVALLO 2005.

¹²⁹⁴ This was the case of the fifth-sixth century relationship between the Byzantine and the Sasanian empires (whose ambassadors were trained in performing and reading exactly the gestures performed) but there were also unilateral rituals which did not create a connection between the parts; POHL 2013; CANEPA 2009.

¹²⁹⁵ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Gotico*, III (VII), 16.10-11; ed. and tr. DEWING 1962, vol. IV, p. 282-285. In this way, the ambassador gains honour, but is greatly insulted in the case in which he hears 'only deceitful and insincere phrases'; PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Gotico*, III (VII), 16.11; ed. and tr. DEWING 1962, vol. IV, pp. 282-285.

¹²⁹⁶ PRISCUS OF PANION, *Historia*, fr. 11.2 (*Exc. de Leg. Rom.* 3); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 252-253. On Priscus of Panion, rhetorician and ambassador under Theodosius II and Marcian, and his work, transmitted in fragments, see BLOCKLEY 1981, pp. 48-70.

people¹²⁹⁷. In the sixth century, apart from some few tempered judgments¹²⁹⁸, barbarian rulers, generals, and ambassadors continued to be felt as naïve and even deceiving people unable to speak properly or to behave with the proper *decorum* in public meetings. Beyond the rhetorical nature of those descriptions, it seems that there was a real clash here between the different kinds of behaviour considered acceptable from both the parties.

Barbarian speakers seem to have been keen to use simple ‘emblem gestures’ mimicking the words uttered and visually expressing the ideas they wanted to convey. When the Persian general Nachoragan met the *magister militum* Martin, reported Agathias, he ‘*showed the ring he was wearing* (τὸν δακτύλιον ἐπεδείκνυεν ὃν ἐπεφέρετο)’ to express his self-confidence for a future victory: ‘*for I hold victory in the palm of my hand*’ declared the general, and ‘*I wear her no less securely than I wear this*’. The gesture is blamed as boastful and arrogant by Martin, for whom the victory is conferred only to those ‘*to whom the Architect of the universe nods his approval*’¹²⁹⁹. Menander Protector described the gesture performed by the Turk leader Turxanthus in front of the Roman envoy. He ‘*placed his ten fingers in his mouth*’ to emphasize the treacherous nature of the Romans who ‘*use ten tongues and lie with all of them*’. ‘*As now there are ten fingers in my mouth, so you Romans have used many tongues*’ explained the Turk, blaming the ability of Romans to deceive with their rhetorical skills¹³⁰⁰.

Barbarians were then described as deceiving people who made political encounter fail because of their lack of honesty. Menander Protector described in detail the theatrical *mise-en-scène* staged by Andigan, the envoy of the Persian king. After being verbally defeated in a previous encounter by the Roman ambassador Zacharias over the terms of the peace, Andigan relied on a trick to make Zacharias believe that a Persian army was near and that he was the only one who was restraining it: a courier

¹²⁹⁷ For the development of the *topoi* related to the barbarians, from the more positive Erodotean ethnographic model to the ‘animoso divario’ of the following centuries, when the ‘barbarian’ came to be seen as disruptive of the ecumenical order, see SPADARO 2000. An exception to this negative stance seems to have been Attila in the description of Priscus of Panion, where such characteristics reflected the ruler’s might and did not prevent him to act graciously with those under his protection. Priscus, in particular, was amazed by Attila haughty gait (*superbus incessu*), by his eyes which were casted hither and thither (*huc atque circumferens oculos*) ‘*so that the power of his pride was reflected in the movements of his body* (ut elati potentia ipso quoque motu corporis appareret)’; PRISCUS OF PANION, *Historia*, fr. 11.3 (JORDANES, *Get.* 34); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 280-281.

¹²⁹⁸ Choricus of Gaza, for example, declared that ‘*there is a skill of speech* (τέχνη τοῦ λέγειν) *even among barbarians*’. He found that ‘*education is not the effect of place, but the successful outcome of nature and exercise*’; CHORICIUS OF GAZA, *Declamationes*, 1 (X) 1; ed. FOERSTER-RICHTSTEIG p. 131; tr. by D. A. RUSSELL in PENELLA 2009, p. 61. Beyond the nature of the text produced as a rhetorical exercise, it seems that this sentence reflected the inner belief of the author.

¹²⁹⁹ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, III, 19.4; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 109; tr. FRENDO 1975, p. 89. This gesture had a different meaning from the similar one usually employed later by the emperor to seal an order: for example, when Maurice sent his envoy Theodosius to Chosroes to ask for help against Phocas, he ‘*showed him his ring* (τὸν δακτύλιον)’ and ‘*committed him not to effect his return on any account unless perchance he should again behold the ring*’; THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 9.12; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 301; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 224.

¹³⁰⁰ MENANDER PROTECTOR, *Historiae*, fr. 19.1 (*Exc. de Leg. Rom.* 14); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY (1985) 2006, pp. 174-175.

'put in an appearance, pretending that he had been sent by Tankhosdro', and gave to Andigan a falsified letter in which the Persian general supposedly declared that his army was out of control and eager to attack the Roman territory. 'The letter lied' explained Menander, 'but the lie was given substance by the large amount of dust which was in the messenger's hair and which he had covered himself with as if he had just arrived from his journey. While Andigan was speaking with him he indicated by his expression and other gestures (τῷ ἦθει ὑπεκρίνετο καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ κινήσει τοῦ σώματος ὑπεφράινετο) that he did not want war'. He declared the same to Zacharias, but this latter 'realised that the guile and boasting in his words were a blind for his lies', and that everything was 'nothing other than a fabrication, a charade and a swindle (δόκησις καὶ ἀποσκιάσματα καὶ φενακισμοί)¹³⁰¹. The trick ruined therefore the negotiations, which, up until then, had been made according to the rule of proper behaviour.

The barbarian could even employ the gestures of the oath of the interlocutor's religion in order to trick the other part. Menander Protector reported the story of the treacherous Khagan of the Avar Baian, who secretly wished to break the treaty of peace with the Romans and to take Sirmium by surprise. He began to build a bridge pretending that it was meant to attack the Slavs. Even if he was not believed, he was asked to swear that his intentions were not to attack the Romans, by drawing his sword in the manner of the barbarians. Baian displayed his arrogance by asking to make a further oath in the Roman manner, in order *'to provide a sure and binding guarantee that if one who swore by it broke his oath, he would not escape the wrath of God'*. At this point *'the archbishop of Singidunum, through those who were acting as intermediaries, immediately proffered him the holy books'* and Baian *'most treacherously concealing his intent (ἐπικρυψάμενος τὸν νοῦν), stood up from his throne, pretended to receive the books with great fear and reverence, threw himself on the ground and most fervently swore by the God who had spoken the words on the holy parchment that nothing of what he had said was a lie¹³⁰²*. Since the barbarian is a deceiver, he did not take into account the sanctity of the oath and could always unfollow his words. Procopius reported the story of the senator Areobindus, sent as ambassador to Gontharis, who tried to ensure his safety by making swear a priest on the rite of baptism, and then Gontharis himself in front of the Gospels. This was in vain since the barbarian ruler was ultimately not true to his outward cheerful appearance and the night after he had Aerobindus murdered¹³⁰³. Beyond the imagery of the treacherous barbarian, it seems possible to suppose from those stories an actual employment of ritual gestures of other cultures and religions to strengthen an

¹³⁰¹ MENANDER PROTECTOR, *Historiae*, fr. 26.1 (*Exc. de Leg. Rom.* 19); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY (1985) 2006, pp. 232-235.

¹³⁰² MENANDER PROTECTOR, *Historiae*, fr. 25.1 (*Exc. de Leg. Gent.* 30); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY (1985) 2006, pp. 222-223.

¹³⁰³ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Vandalico*, IV, 26.27-29; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. II, pp. 434-435.

oath and to render it acceptable by both the parties¹³⁰⁴. The same could also be made indeed on the Roman part: the Turk leader Turxanthus asked the Roman ambassador Valentinus to *'follow the custom which prevails amongst us for the dead and slash your faces with daggers'* to honour his father's death, and Valentinus and his companions immediately *'slashed their own cheeks with their own daggers'*¹³⁰⁵.

Mostly, barbarians continued to be described as characterized by an arrogant and violent attitude which clashed with the apparently more controlled and educated one of the 'Roman man'. The description of a barbarian using harsh attitudes and violent gestures and the shock felt by the audience in front of them was not new: already at the end of the fourth century, harsh consequences had the violent gesture performed in front of Valentinian II by the Frank Arbogast. He had long been regarded with suspicion by the emperor because of his *parresia* and his warlike attitude (he was a man with a rude character (τρόπον χαλεπός) and very prone to murder (μιαιφονώτατος))¹³⁰⁶. Zosimus added that when he received a letter from the emperor which removed him from his office (which he had assumed from his troops without the imperial permission), he publicly tore it up (διαρρήξας) and threw it on the floor¹³⁰⁷. The violence of Arbogast's gesture is underlined even more in a passage transmitted by the *Excerpta de Insidiis* under the name of John of Antioch and attributed by Blockley to Eunapius. Here Arbogast is defined as a man flame-like (φλογοειδής) and barbarian in his soul (βάρβαρος τὴν ψυχὴν). He tore the letter apart (διεσπάραξεν) with his claws (τοῖς ὄνυξι) and *'having roared out (λεοντώδει δὲ τῆ φωνῆ) his rage (ὀργισθει) at the Emperor, walked out with drawn sword'*¹³⁰⁸. The action had serious consequences. According to Zosimus, the emperor could not proceed to a direct punishment (a statement which could hide the critical stance of the author, who underlined the imperial weakness): he made obvious (φανερά) to everyone his antipathy (δυσμενείας), which from that time *'was no longer nurtured in secret'*, and then asked for help to Theodosius with a letter in which he explained *'the man's arrogance (ἀλαζονείαν)'*¹³⁰⁹. Arbogast, in the end, killed Valentinian and tried to set up Eugenius as emperor of the West. And when, as we have

¹³⁰⁴ Pohl also recognizes the account of Baian's oath as a rare glimpse in which the texts (normally focused on stressing the savage and unpredictable nature of the barbarians) 'highlight the breach of diplomatic rules or the manipulation of the 'script' by barbarian actors'; POHL 2013, p. 85.

¹³⁰⁵ MENANDER PROTECTOR, *Historiae*, fr. 19.1 (*Exc. de Leg. Rom.* 14); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY (1985) 2006, pp. 176-177. According to Pohl, the Roman envoys became in this way part of the Turkic funerary ritual, 'and thus, if on a different plane, temporarily became part of the ritual community of the host society'; POHL 2013, p. 78.

¹³⁰⁶ SOCRATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 25.3; ed. and tr. HANSEN, PÉRICHON and MARAVAL (1995) 2006, p. 246-247; cf. tr. ZENOS 1983, p. 135; PHILOSTORGIUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, XI, 1; ed. BIDEZ (1913) 2013, p. 508; tr. AMIDON 2007, p. 143.

¹³⁰⁷ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova* IV, 53.3; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.2, p. 322; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 95. In Arbogast's eyes, his office was not given by the emperor, and therefore it could not be taken away by him; *ibidem*.

¹³⁰⁸ EXCERPTA DE INSIDIIS, ed. DE BOOR 1905, p. 118; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 58; ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 84-85; JOHN ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 280; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 470-473.

¹³⁰⁹ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova* IV, 53; ed. PASCHOUD 1979, vol. II.2, p. 322; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 95.

seen, he was defeated by Theodosius, he confirmed the madness of his barbaric nature (τὸ μανικὸν τῆς βαρβάρου φύσεως ἀποδείξας) by throwing himself on the sword¹³¹⁰.

In the sixth century, the tension felt between different attitudes determined the failure of the meeting between the Goth Ragnaris and Narses: according to Agathias the *'spectacle of (ἰδὼν) Ragnaris puffed up with conceit (ἐξ ἀλαζονείαν ἠρμένον), boasting extravagantly, making outrageous demands and generally adopting a high and mighty attitude decided Narses to break off the meeting unconditionally and send him away without further ado'*¹³¹¹. Many occasions of this kind are reported by Menander Protector, who reported how the emperor learned how to handle the situation and occasionally preserve the unwinding of the meeting. So when the Persian envoy Mebod behaved *'more arrogantly than was proper for an envoy'* (he *'did not know what was proper'*), the emperor Justin II managed *'to throw the blame upon the barbarian'* with some harsh sentences. Mebod *'took fright and his panic threw himself face down on the floor and took refuge in denials, claiming that he had said nothing of the sort'*. Justin *'pretended to accept the plea'* and said, *"It seems, then, that our interpreter made a mistranslation. In this way the Emperor, feigning ignorance of the words, pretended that he did not understand what had been said by Mebod, and acted in a gentler manner so that Mebod should not become even bolder and more arrogant learning that the Emperor was aware of the insolence of his words"*¹³¹².

The sources seem to imply therefore that the mechanism of the embassy was characterized by a high degree of dynamism in non-verbal communication. The choice of the right attitude or the right gesture had in the fifth-sixth century a certain weight for the outcome of the political occasion: it was not always easy to overcome the tension felt with other behaviour and other cultures, but on those occasions it was possible to move the body in a freer manner if compared to other official contexts surrounding the emperor.

2.4. THE EMPEROR OUT OF CONTROL, POSSESSED BY DEMONS, AND MAD

Just as the body, the limbs, and the movements of the emperor were major themes praised by his panegyrists, so they could also be the major targets hit by his detractors, eager to present an emperor unfit to rule. Descriptions that overturned the official image of the imperial body were powerful weapons, especially in the hands of those authors who knew the imperial public body well and were

¹³¹⁰ EXCERPTA DE INSIDIIS, ed. DE BOOR 1905, p. 118; EUNAPIUS OF SARDIS, *Historia universalis*, fr. 58; ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, pp. 84-85; JOHN ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 280; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 470-473.

¹³¹¹ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, II, 14.2; ed. KEYDELL 1967, p. 58; tr. FRENO 1975, p. 46.

¹³¹² MENANDER PROTECTOR, *Historiae*, fr. 9.3 (*Exc. de Leg. Gent.* 6); ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY (1985) 2006, pp. 106-111. For the ritual character of a diplomatic encounter, regulated by 'laws of friendship' and a stricter formal code than that made explicit in texts, see POHL 2013.

clever enough to judge it and reverse it for the sake of criticism. This is the case of Procopius, who was well versed in the traditional arguments supportive of the imperial propaganda. In his famous *'Anecdota'* (or Secret History), on the other hand, he expressed the tensions and resentments of the sixth century society divided, among others, by the 'bitter resentments' felt by the traditional aristocratic elite against 'relative upstarts' such Justin, Justinian and their associates, and by the heavy taxes required by the ceremonial and administrative apparatus and by the almost continuous state of war. Whatever the link of a specific opposition group, however, Procopius sided with the educated conservative landowners who looked badly at the fiscal and administrative policy of Justinian, at the power of 'new men' at the service of the emperor, and at the contemporaneous political and legal degradation of the Roman *politeia*¹³¹³.

In this 'scurrilous pamphlet' which so many problems caused to historians of the early 1900s, Procopius managed to deal with his dissent toward Justinian's regime by building up a strong critique directed not at the general principle of Byzantine kingship – he was not a 'philosophic historian' or a 'political theorist' – but at the personalities involved in the political panorama¹³¹⁴. This was achieved through a narrative of Justinian and his entourage made of 'extreme polarities' and caricature-like characters (as much as, in the *Building*, the emperor is described as a 'stereotyped model of Christian ruler')¹³¹⁵ in which bodies, gestures and outward appearances played a role to express the author's point of view. The impact his message could have had on the audience, both on an entertaining as well as on a deeper political level, could be indeed accomplished only by appealing and by leveraging the values and prejudices attached to the body and gestures by the audience, a traditional elite who shared with the author a 'liberal education' still shaped by the imitation of classical authors and the study of rhetoric¹³¹⁶, but also (and very strictly correlated to it) a general opinion on how the body should be presented in public and what kind of *habitus* should be adopted, especially by the emperor and his

¹³¹³ CAMERON 1985, pp. 2-5; pp. 22-23; pp. 225-228; A. KALDELLIS, 'Introduction' in PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. XLVI-XLVIII. It seems that Procopius was not acting as a spokesman for any particular group or social class or even any opposition group, and his *Anecdota* cannot be regarded (as it often had been) as a 'manifesto for senatorial circles hostile to Justinian's fiscal policies'; KALDELLIS 2004, pp. 46-47.

¹³¹⁴ CAMERON 1985, p. 6-7; pp. 63-64. In this way Procopius could 'reconcile the fact of an autocratic and (he believed) evil ruler with that of a beneficent divine plan'. 'He would be satisfied', declared Cameron, 'if only Justinian were better able to control wayward elements, more successful in his wars and less inclined to tax the rich'; CAMERON 1985, p. 63; p. 237.

¹³¹⁵ CAMERON 1985, p. 229. Through a different perspective, Kaldellis stated that the *Anecdota* 'transformed Justinian from a legal abstraction to a human ruler with flaws, personal and political interests, and secrets', since 'the historian was well aware that Justinian was only a man' with contrasting vices; A. KALDELLIS, 'Introduction' in PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. IX; p. XLIV. On the reliability of the text despite its being 'biased and even hyperbolic', see *ibidem*, pp. XLIX-LV.

¹³¹⁶ On Procopius' education and values, see CAMERON 1985, p. 6.

court. Misbehaviour reflected therefore the ideals of a corrupted, tyrannical and repressive regime whose values ‘did not stem from classical culture’¹³¹⁷.

Outward appearance continued to be seen here as detector of social and moral values: when the members of the factions groomed themselves in barbaric hair-style and ‘each wore clothes that were too ostentatious for his class’¹³¹⁸, for example, they revealed the chaos of the social order and the fact ‘that under Justinian everything was wrong’¹³¹⁹. Factions’ wide clothes were furthermore employed to trick the sight, as they made their wearers appear strong and masculine when ‘they waved their arms as they chanted in the theatres or hippodromes or shouted support for their favorites, as was their habit’. Only fools were impressed, since the sleeve ‘hung loose like an immense flap’ on their forearms and the ‘mostly empty tunic reveals how scrawny the body underneath is’¹³²⁰. Physical movements could also reveal a cowardly and unmanly nature, like in the case of Belisarius (described here in striking contrast with the portrait offered in the *Wars*). After his discharge from the command of the Eastern army, Belisarius became a ‘bitter spectacle and incredible sight (μικρὸν θέαμα καὶ ἄπιστος ὄψις)’ since he walked through the streets ‘as a private citizen (ιδιώτης): virtually alone, always gloomy and sullen, in constant terror of a murderer’s knife’¹³²¹. When he returned back at night from the palace he constantly looked over his shoulder for the fear of being followed, and once at home, he sat alone on his bed ‘in this state of terror (...) not even remembering that he had once been a man’, sweating, feeling light-headed (ἰλιγγιῶν), unable to ‘think straight in his panic’, and feeling fears which were servile (ἀνδραποδώδεσι), cowardly (φιλοψύχοις) and totally unmanly (ὄλως ἀνάδροις)¹³²². Even when he received the visit of courtier Quadratus and mistook him for an assassin, Belisarius assumed a totally unresponsive attitude, lying down on his bed and ‘serving himself up to be slaughtered, so completely had his manliness (ἀρρενωπὸν) deserted him’¹³²³. The worst came when he wished ‘to make an immediate declaration (ἐπίδειξις, lit. an exhibition) of gratitude’ to his wicked wife Antonina, who had made him believe that she was responsible for his going back on the imperial good graces: he ‘jumped up from the bed (ἀναστὰς) and fell on his face (ἐπὶ στόμα πίπτει) before his wife’s feet. Placing a hand behind each of her calves, he began to lick the soles of his wife’s feet with

¹³¹⁷ KALDELLIS 2004, p. 4. On the relation between classical style and modes of thought, and the idea (reversed with respect to Cameron) that classical culture ‘gave shape to Procopius’ fundamental objectives, outlook, and modes of expression’, see KALDELLIS 2004, p. 28; pp. 44-45.

¹³¹⁸ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, VII, 8-11; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 78-80; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. 32-33.

¹³¹⁹ CAMERON 1985, p. 144. For the concept of order and disorder which pervaded Procopius’ work and functioned as a demarcation between civilized people and barbarians, see CAMERON 1985, pp. 239-241.

¹³²⁰ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, VII, 12-13; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 80; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 33.

¹³²¹ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, IV, 16; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 46; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 19.

¹³²² PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, IV, 21-22; ed. and tr. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 48-49; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 20.

¹³²³ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, IV, 25; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 48; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 20.

his tongue, one after the other, calling her the Cause of his Life and Salvation, promising that henceforth he would be her devoted slave (ἀνδράποδον) and not her husband"¹³²⁴.

Appealing to the judgments of his audience, Procopius built up therefore his critique by making Belisarius assume attitudes without dignity and worthy of a slave, far away from the *schema* required by his gender and by his social class. The same problem was attributed to the entire court, where patricians and high members of the senatorial order were blamed for giving away not only their political power but also their freedom and their self-respect, by agreeing to assume a pitiable appearance and to perform ceremonial gestures beyond their dignity. The Senate was reduced to a mere image (its members sat indeed ὡσπερ ἐν εἰκόνι) and maintained only the outward form of its ancient privileges, assembling '*for the sake of appearance only* (σχήματος δὲ μόνου, that is, with an empty and purely decorative *schema*)'¹³²⁵. Magistrates were forced to squeeze themselves '*like slaves* (ἀνδραποδώδη) *in attendance*' in front of Theodora's rooms, where they waited for an audience for many days standing '*on the tips of their toes*' and '*trying to keep the face higher than the others*' in order to catch the eyes of the eunuchs at the doors. The few who finally managed to be admitted into Theodora's presence departed from her very quickly '*after doing nothing more than prostrating themselves* (παρασκυνήσαντες)' and, as in the case of the slave-Belisarius and his wife, '*briefly brushing the sole of each of her feet with their lips*'. The ceremonial gesture of obeisance is presented therefore from a perspective opposite to the one assumed by the official propaganda expressed by Corippus and by Procopius himself in the *Buildings*, in which the *adoratio* signified approval and respect toward the sacred dimension of the imperial persona. The very same gesture became here a proof that '*the state was thereby reduced to a slave-pen* (δουλοπρέπειαν)' and that Theodora was a '*teacher in servility* (δουλοδιδάσκαλον)¹³²⁶. Nobody opposed her: the members of the Senate prostrated themselves '*as if she were a goddess*' and people asked her to be called slaves with '*upturned hands as though in prayer*'¹³²⁷. The patricians debased their dignity by fully prostrating on the ground, '*flat on their faces*' and '*stretching their arms and legs out as far as they would go*', and by touching with their lips the feet of the emperors. Procopius further emphasised the controversial nature of this gesture by pointing at the fact that this kind of performance implied a change in the tradition: it was among the '*many innovations in governance* (ἐπὶ τῇ πολιτεία νεοχμωθέντων)' introduced by Justinian which went beyond the *schema* required from a high member of the court, who '*in the past*

¹³²⁴ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, IV, 29-30; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 50; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 20.

¹³²⁵ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XIV, 8; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 170; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 65-66.

¹³²⁶ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XV, 13-16; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 178-180; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 69. In the *De Aedificiis*, on the other hand, we read that in the mosaic decoration of the Chalké the members of Roman Senate celebrated the imperial achievements '*in festal mood*' and '*rejoice and smile as they bestow on the Emperors honour equal to those of God*'; PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 10.18-19; ed. and tr. DEWING 1960, vol. VII, pp. 86-87.

¹³²⁷ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, X, 6-8; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 122; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 69. Procopius used here a religious language to underline the pollution of those acts; KALDELLIS 2010, p. XXXIX.

did obeisance only to the emperor and saluted him *'on his right breast'*, receiving, in turn, a kiss on the head while *'all others bent their right knee'*¹³²⁸. Those statements, had already pointed insightfully out Charles Pazdernik, had surely to be seen as reflecting the undeniable contemporary changes in sixth century ceremonial: the master-slave paradigm in particular seems likely to suggest the new emphasis in the interaction between ruler and ruled, more focused not only on the imperial veneration but also on the imperial mastery, relocated more and more in the palatial space¹³²⁹. But they also testify the importance that values like manhood and respect to the rank still held in the society and even more at the imperial court, as well as the opposite feelings and resistance that a carefully orchestrated gesture could always evoke in the audience, especially when charged with new nuances. Justinian is therefore even paralleled with the figure of Diocletian, who still in the seventh century was described by John of Antioch by quoting Eutropius with the same feeling toward the introduction of the *proskynesis* as an act that revealed the arrogance of the ruler and humiliated the freedom and the dignity of the Roman senatorial class¹³³⁰. Even worse, also Chosroes remained famous for being pleaded in this way by those who wanted to make him a request¹³³¹.

As for the general physical appearance (εἶδος), Justinian is criticized by Procopius not so much for being ugly or unpleasant¹³³², even if his body (σῶμα), *'very appearance (ὄψιν)'*, and *'expression of his face (τὰ τοῦ προσώπου ἅπαντα ἦθη) were perfectly mirrored'* in the statue of the much hated emperor Domitian¹³³³. Rather, the critique was directed especially at the *schema* and *tropos* through which the emperor actively fashioned his public persona. Justinian had assumed the *schema* of an emperor (κεκομισμένος τὸ τῆς βασιλείας σχῆμα) only to use it in an unworthy manner¹³³⁴. He did not possess *'any of the qualities appropriate to the imperial office'* and even *'acted like a barbarian*

¹³²⁸ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XXX, 21-23; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 354; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. 131-132.

¹³²⁹ PAZDERNIK 2009.

¹³³⁰ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 248.8-12; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 428-429. In the ninth century, Theophanes Confessor still reported that Diocletian, exalted by his successes, *'demanded that the Senate make obeisance to him (προσκυνεῖσθαι) and not merely salute him (προσαγορεύεσθαι) as protocol had previously required (κατὰ τὸ πρότερον σχῆμα)'*; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5793, AD 300/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 9; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 12.

¹³³¹ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 22.13-14; II, 5.13-11; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 206-207; pp. 296-299.

¹³³² He was of medium height (μέτριος) in his body (σῶμα), slightly fleshly, with a face (ὄψιν) round, not unshapely (οὐκ ἄμορφος), and with a ruddy complexion (ἐπυρρῖα); PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, VIII, 12; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 94; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 37. Theodora was also *'beautiful of face and otherwise graceful'*, with a swift and intense glance, despite her short stature and her paleness; PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, X, 11; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 124; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 48. Kaldellis interpreted those passage as a reference to the lack of shame of the emperors who did not blush like the tyrants described by Cassius Dio and Tacitus; KALDELLIS 2010, p. XXXVIII.

¹³³³ This was the only statue survived after his *damnatio memoriae* and Procopius claimed to have seen it in Rome; PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, VIII, 13-21; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 94-96; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. 37-38.

¹³³⁴ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XI, 1; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 128; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 50. Kaldellis translated here *schema* as 'aspect'. The sole purpose of Justinian, specified Procopius, was to subvert laws and customs and to give everything a different *schema* (ἕτερον σχῆμα); *ibidem*.

(ἐβαρβάριζεν) *in his manner of speech* (γλωτταν), *schema* (σχῆμα), and *'thinking* (διάνοιαν)¹³³⁵. Unlike his wife, he expressed friendship and made himself accessible not to men of rank but to *'complete nobodies with no prestige'*¹³³⁶. An echo of such allegations was present even in the *De Bello Persico* where the emperor shamefully received the Persian ambassador Isdigousnas with friendliness and great honour *'in a style more splendid than that which befits an ambassador'*, and even allowed the Persian interpreter *'to recline with him on the couch, a thing which had never before happened in all time. For no one ever saw an interpreter become a table-companion of even one of the more humble officials, not to speak of a king'*¹³³⁷. Justinian, continued Procopius in the *Anecdota*, was *'easy to lead around by the nose'*, but he was also, simultaneously, a man *'prone to evil'* and master in deceiving and manipulating his real being. He mingled together *'foolishness* (ἀνοΐας) *and malice* (κακοτροπίας) *in 'an unusual kind of mixture'* (i.e. he was *'fool and villain in one'* (μωροκακοήθη). He *'never spoke the truth'*, and his words and his acts (καὶ λέγων καὶ πράττων) were always *'with treacherous intent* (νῶ δολερῶ)'.¹³³⁸

'But to resume, this Emperor was insincere (εἴρων), *crafty* (δολερὸς), *hypocritical* (κατάπλαστος), *dissembling the anger* (σκότιος ὀργήν), *double-dealing* (διπλοῦς), *clever* (ἄνθρωπος δεινός), *a perfect artist in acting out an opinion which he pretended* (ὑποκρίνασθαι) *to holds, and even able to produce* (ἐκφέρειν) *tears, not from joy or sorrow, but contriving them* (τεχνάζων) *for the occasion according to the need of the moment, always playing false* (ψευδόμενος), *yet not carelessly but adding both his signature and the most terrible oaths to bind his agreements, and that too in dealing with his own subjects'*¹³³⁸.

Through those acrimonious words, Procopius depicted once again the image of an emperor who detached his body from his soul, who skilfully concealed his mind and was unable therefore to properly fulfil his role as a rightful judge. He guaranteed with Christian sacraments the rebel Vitalianus' safety, only to get him killed on the base of pure suspects¹³³⁹. He concealed his anger under an apparently benevolent attitude *'when he was in the presence of those who have offended him'*, and then *'with a gentle visage, a calm brow, and a soft voice he would give order of destruction'*. When someone asked

¹³³⁵ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XIV, 2; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 166; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 68. Both Dewing and Kaldellis translated here the term *schema* as 'dress', even if it is more likely that, once again, the term referred to the general appearance and way of moving rather than to a supposed barbaric dress put on by the emperor.

¹³³⁶ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XV, 12; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 178; tr. KALDELLIS p. 69. With them, he had *'casual discussions'* and *'confer about confidential matters'*, *ibidem*. For the inefficacy of the law system and the *'vulgar mob'* who filled the imperial court (rather than the law courts) and supplicated the emperor *'in a most servile way'*, see also PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XXX, 29-30; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 356-358; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 132.

¹³³⁷ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, II, 28.38-43; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 526-527. Other is the breaking of rules chosen by the emperor in front of the saint, see above, pp. 193-194.

¹³³⁸ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, VIII, 22-24; ed. and tr. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 95-98; cf. tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. 38-39. I followed here Dewing's translation, which seems to underline better the theatrical connotation of the passage. For the resonances with Aristophanes, see KALDELLIS 2010, p. XXXVII.

¹³³⁹ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, VI, 27-28; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 76; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 31.

for forgiveness, then, *“baring his teeth and snarling in anger’ he would seem to be at the point of exploding*¹³⁴⁰. In short, *‘his thoughts (γνώμης) opposed his own words and the impression he wanted to make (ἐβούλετο ἔνδολος)’*¹³⁴¹.

Justinian enjoyed deceit to the point that he married a woman from the theatre who was used to perform several kinds of *schemata* on the stage. In the famous invective against Theodora, Procopius struck the empress by emphasising her past, when she was used to exploit her naked body assuming shameful postures (τοῦ σχήματος ἔχουσα) in the sight of everybody, like a mime or a wrestler¹³⁴². Also later Theodora imported those manners at court: she *‘converted even the most important matters into a farce (ᾧσπερ ἐν σκηνῇ), treating them like one of those stage skits they put on in the theatre (θεάτρῳ ἔργον πεποιήται)’*, and used her performance skills to make fun of an old patrician¹³⁴³. Together with such a wife, Justinian could perform spectacles intended to maliciously deceive the audience. They exacerbated the division between Monophysites and Chalcedonians *‘by pretending (σκηπτομένων) to take opposite paths in the controversies’*. They *‘kept the militants divided’* by setting a scene in which *‘she put on (ἐπλάσσετο) that she supported the Blues with all her might’*, while *‘he, on the other hand, made out (ἐῴκει) that he was offended at all this and even furious but only – so the act went – in secret, as if he were unable to oppose his wife directly. Often they would exchange roles and make as if the balance of power between them was reversed. So he would now demand that the Blues be punished as criminals while she would throw a fake fit and complain, as she put it, because she had to submit unwillingly to her husband’s wishes’*¹³⁴⁴. *‘Both were’*, therefore, *‘extremely adept liars (ψεύδεσθαι)’*¹³⁴⁵. It seems therefore that Procopius testified here the further development in the traditional theme of the imperial court as theater and the emperor as an actor. Not only did he anchored the theme even more closely to the Christian idea that the body of an emperor should necessarily reflect his mind and his soul in order to be considered a ‘good’ ruler and a ‘good judge. He also made clear the awareness that at court one could always have of the strategies employed in the mechanisms of politics.

Not surprisingly, given the link between the act of pretending and the devil, the description of Justinian was then juiced up by Procopius with the memorable image of the emperor as an avenging demon. The image of the Devil sat on a throne like an emperor was a powerful one often used in literature: Anastasius of Sinai reported later a story set in the years of Emperor Maurice, in which a young

¹³⁴⁰ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XIII, 2-3; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 156; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 61. The quote is from Aristophanes; KALDELLIS 2010, n. 110, p. 61.

¹³⁴¹ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XIII, 14; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 160; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 63.

¹³⁴² PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, IX, 20-21; 23; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 108-110; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. 42-43.

¹³⁴³ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XV, 24-35; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 183-185; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. 70-71. According to Webb, Procopius exploited here a long-standing association between theatre and prostitution to present Theodora as a non-persona; WEBB 2008, pp. 4-6.

¹³⁴⁴ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, X, 15-17; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 126; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. 48-49.

¹³⁴⁵ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XV, 20; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 180; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 69.

Christian scribe witnessed the apparition of Satan as an Ethiopian ‘*of enormous size*’ surrounded by his servants and sat ‘*on a high throne with the appearance of a king* (ἐν σχήματι βασιλέως)’, that is, ‘*as king of the demons* (βασιλεὺς τῶν δαιμόνων)’¹³⁴⁶. Justinian and Theodora for their part were demons who ‘*put on a human form* (ἀνθρώπειόν ἡμίσχηοντο σχῆμα) *becoming man-demons* (ἀνθρωποδαίμονες)¹³⁴⁷’ or ‘*anthropomorphic demon* (ἀνθρωπόμορφος)’¹³⁴⁸. Justinian’s real form was revealed to an old monk who came to his presence and then declared to have seen ‘*the Lord of Demons himself facing him, seated on the throne right there in the palace*’¹³⁴⁹. Some other ‘*men whose souls were pure*’ also believed to have seen at night ‘*a strange demonic being* (φάντασμα τι θεάσασθαι δαιμόνιον)’ in place of the emperor. The imperial demonic nature, hidden under the surface, was as always revealed by unrestrained movements (the emperor ‘*suddenly rise up from the imperial throne and roam about the hall*’, unable to remain seated for long), and a formless body: his head suddenly disappeared and his face became ‘*like shapeless flesh* (κρέατι ἀσήμω)’ without eyebrows, eyes or any other features (γνώρισμα)¹³⁵⁰. Cameron contextualized those demonological elements in the literary tradition and mentality of the sixth century, a period in which ‘at any moment it was felt that men could be taken over by demons’ and when the idea of an emperor possessed by or even incarnated in the Devil could be therefore taken seriously¹³⁵¹. But it also seems that this image stemmed from the same accusation against an emperor-actor, who perform and appear different from what he actually was but who could always be unmasked by a carefully analysis of his appearance and gestures.

Procopius, however, also turned upside down the idea claimed by the official imperial ideology of a sacred and supernatural dimension inherent in the imperial body. In the text the idea is still present in the flatteries of the members of the court: they ‘*could easily persuade him* (Justinian) *that he would rise to the heavens and walk on air*’, and Tribonianus even declared to be afraid that Justinian could be ‘*suddenly snatched up to heaven because of his piety* (εὐσεβείας) *without anyone noticing. Such praise, or rather such jokes, he took quite seriously*’¹³⁵². A similar ‘*superbly boastful manner* (ὑπερφουεῖ τινι κόμπῳ)’ was assumed also by the questor Constantine, whose corrupted nature did not refrain him to walk on the air and look down on everyone¹³⁵³. ‘If Christian political theory since Eusebius saw

¹³⁴⁶ ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, Coll. b, Qu. 42 (appendix 18), answers 9-12; ed. RICHARD and MUNITIZ 2006, p. 201; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, pp. 70-71. The lad managed to make disappear the castle and all its deceits by proclaiming himself slave of the Trinity and performing the profession of faith; *ibidem*.

¹³⁴⁷ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XII, 14; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 148; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 58.

¹³⁴⁸ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XVIII, 1; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 210-212; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 80.

¹³⁴⁹ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XII, 26; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 152; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 60. See also PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XXX, 34; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 358; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 132.

¹³⁵⁰ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XII, 20-21; 23; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, pp. 150-153; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 59.

¹³⁵¹ CAMERON 1985, pp. 56-59.

¹³⁵² PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XIII, 11-12; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 160; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 62.

¹³⁵³ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XX, 22; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 242; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 92. Kaldellis on the other side read both the references as connected with Aristophanes and the caricature of Socrates, as a way to

the emperor in a special and supra-human way', thus, 'it could be envisaged that if ever there was a truly 'bad' emperor, he too must be explained in supernatural terms'¹³⁵⁴. Procopius, therefore, turned down the traditional rhetorical elements that underlined Justinian's saintly attitude and closeness to God. Even his habit of no eating and sleeping, highly praised by Corippus as proof of supernatural inner strength and temperance and reported also by John the Lydian and by Procopius himself in the *Buildings*¹³⁵⁵, became further proof of his demonic nature¹³⁵⁶. Even worse, 'through a power that was not human', the emperor could ruin the 'whole of humanity' with earthquakes, plagues, and natural disasters¹³⁵⁷: the recurrent theme of the responsibility attached to the imperial bad behaviour, which could cause God to abandon his people, surfaced here in the accusations moved against Justinian of incarnating not the reign of Christ but that of the Devil. This 'demon (who) held human form (κατὰ τὸν ἐν σώματι γεινόμενον δαίμονα)' used indeed 'his occult power and demonic nature' to cause every kind of evil on mankind. This was possible 'as he was the emperor' and because 'the deity so hated what he was doing that it turned its back on the Roman Empire'¹³⁵⁸. By stating the supernatural power of the emperor and his behaviour, Procopius set a potent example of the harsh consequences which a bad use of such a power could have on the empire as a whole.

Another harsh critique to the imperial *schema*, this time of that of Justinian's successor Justin II, is build up by John of Ephesus, a Syrian Monophysite who lived in Constantinople in the second half of the sixth century and experienced the imperial persecution against his religious faction in 571. Also in this case the author did not question the imperial institution but 'only the individual who embodied it at a certain moment of time': Justin could therefore be described as an emperor who failed to act as God's representative on earth, to show his elevated condition above people, and to fulfil his role as protector

describe Justinian with the head in the clouds because of his religious concerns; KALDELLIS 2010, n. 113, p. 62; n. 22, p. 92.

¹³⁵⁴ CAMERON 1985, p. 57.

¹³⁵⁵ John the Lydian contrasted this imperial habit with the indolence that had weakened the previous emperors; JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De Magistratibus*, II, 15; ed. and tr. BANDY 20113, pp. 177-179. Corippus saw it as an expression of his moderation, his *vigilantia* and his *sapientia*; CORIPPUS, *In laudem Iustini III*, 105 ff; ed. and tr. CAMERON 1976a, p. 64; p. 104). Procopius described in detail this habit as part of the severe discipline followed by Justinian before Easter and as the reason for his knee injury. Also here, anyway, Procopius made clear that Justinian, unlike a saint, 'was chiefly responsible' for his suffering, since this ascetical routine 'was unfit not only for an Emperor, but for any man who was concerned in any way with state affairs'. Only the touch of the body of a saint under the form of a relic (this time, a body that have earned his supernatural power) could finally heal the emperor; PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 7.6-16; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, p. 66-69. See also CAMERON 1985, p. 88. The *topos* of the unsleeping emperor will be applied later by George of Pisidia to Heraclius to declare the restless care of the emperor for the State; GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica*, I.105-110; I.174-176; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 89.

¹³⁵⁶ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XII, 27; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 152; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 60; see also PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XIII, 28-30; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 164; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 64.

¹³⁵⁷ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XII, 17; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 148; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 58.

¹³⁵⁸ PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XVIII, 36-37; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 222; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, p. 85.

of the Church and impartial arbiter for religious matter¹³⁵⁹. Once again, those ideas were conveyed also through a detailed descriptions of the gestures performed by the emperor at court, which in this case are uncontrolled and dominated by rage, human passions, and even madness.

Full of anger, Justin threatened the bishops of Antioch¹³⁶⁰. He struck *'with his hands in a fury'* the Monophysite Andrew, *koubikoularius* and *sacellarius* of the Augusta¹³⁶¹, and then lost his control when the church of Alexandria was struggling to appoint a new bishop. Such a mental condition continued to be seen as preventing even the best man to behave rationally: *'those who are hurried away by passion, and dragged along by the fury of an angry zeal'* commented John, *'can neither discern nor judge what is fitting, nor thereby regulate their conduct. And so also neither can those who are intoxicated with heat, and agitated with wrath and the spirit of opposition, either purpose or execute anything whatsoever in a firm and steadfast manner'*¹³⁶². The frequent misbehaviour against the high-ranking officials, the impious acts against the Monophysites (pious and 'orthodox' by John's point of view), as well as a tight financial program and an over-ambitious building program, caused ultimately Justin II to be hated by God, who *'delivered up his kingdom to others, while he was yet alive, and saw it with his own eyes'*¹³⁶³. Justin II was punished with the usual physical pain upon the unjust ruler's body which had sinned: *'Just are thy judgments, O God'* confessed Justin himself the day of his abdication, when he was suffering in the hands of unskilful physicians for an infection of the bladder, *'for all the sins and wickedness which I committed with my body are openly requited in Thy anger upon the members whereby I wrought them'*¹³⁶⁴. Mostly, however, Justin lost his throne because he was allegedly hit by a serious mental illness which started after the news of the fall of Dara fortress in 573 and led him to sign an armistice with the Persians¹³⁶⁵.

The deterioration of Justin's health after the unfortunate event is recorded by different sources: according to the contemporaneous Evagrius Scholasticus, Justin was unable to manly bear the news

¹³⁵⁹ Van GINKEL 1995, p. 109.

¹³⁶⁰ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, I, 27; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 46; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 26.

¹³⁶¹ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, II, 9; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 101; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 48. Andrew refused to take communion with the emperor and to humble himself, and showed no fear in front of the fearful threats of the emperor; *ibidem*.

¹³⁶² JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, IV, 12; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 268; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 145. The sentence is quoted also by MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, 12; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 398.

¹³⁶³ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 4; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 170; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 92.

¹³⁶⁴ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 6; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 177-178; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 96. See also van GINKEL 1995, pp. 107-108. Similar statements are attributed by Michael the Syrian (who took John of Ephesus as a source) to the patriarch John Scholasticus, the 'new Abimelech' who also wronged against the Monophysites and was *'punished by ailment of the bowels and boils'*. *'(...) you cannot cure my maladies'*, declared John in front of the physicians, *'They are inflicted upon me by the just sentence of heaven'*; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, ch. 9; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 393. Michael summarized John's description of Justin II and declared that everything was due to God, who *'sent upon him indignation, and wrath and tribulation (Rm 2:8)'*; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, 9; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 394.

¹³⁶⁵ Dara was one of the most important fortifications in Mesopotamia; CAMERON 1976b, p. 161.

and ‘fell into mental disorder and madness (φρενίτιδα νόσον καὶ μανίαν)’, so bad that he was no more able to continue the military campaign¹³⁶⁶. And even Gregory of Tours, for whom Justin was a very despicable man (‘*vir in omni avaritia deditus, contemptor pauperorum, senatorum spoliatur*’), reported that he renounced to the throne because he lost his reason (‘*ex sensu effectus*’) and became mad and insane (‘*amisso sensu, amens effectus*’)¹³⁶⁷, maintaining his madness (*amentiam*) until his death¹³⁶⁸. John of Ephesus went into great detail about Justin’s passionate temperament and madness: an emphasis on the emperor’s disease and lack of physical self-control meant indeed to present him as unfit to rule, since his mind and his body were not sound enough to act as a representative of God on earth. This idea had been already exploited against the emperor Zeno, who went down to history as a ruler unable to provide a good example for his subject and to restrain himself, as a dissolute glutton, as a drunkard, and even as a man affected by epilepsy¹³⁶⁹. The emperor’s illness was still seen as a consequence of his mortal nature and as a serious problem for the State’s health: in the dialogue *On the Political Science*, the author declared that an emperor ‘*is, being a man, subject by nature to two maladies: old age and illness. And whichever of them he suffers from, the state will necessarily also suffer along with him*’. The author quoted also Seneca, who declared ‘*Nero is of sound mind – the state is of sound mind; he is out of his mind – and the state with him*’, and Livy, for whom ‘*when those in power grow old, the state grows old with them; when they are ill, the state is ill too and matches them in thinking well or badly*’¹³⁷⁰. Furthermore, the imperial mental illness could also be promptly turned into an occasion to present the crazy emperor as a man controlled by a demon in line with the traditional connection between lunatics and possessed people. Biblical and historical precedents of

¹³⁶⁶ EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 11.1-5; ed. BIDEZ 1898, p. 207; tr. WHITBY 2000, p. 270. The emperor’s reputation as a mad ruler was hard to die: later Theophylact Simocatta also wrote that Justin was ‘*stricken (καταπλαγείς) by the impact of the disaster*’ and then, shortly afterwards, ‘*by a sickness of derangement (νόσῳ παραφορέας)*’; THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, III, 11.3; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 132; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 88. The same also in THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6066, AD 573/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 247; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 366. . For the emperor ‘*demented*’ and no longer able to undertake a campaign in the East because ‘*immensely grieved*’ after the capture of Dara, see also MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, ch. 9; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 393.

¹³⁶⁷ GREGORY OF TOURS, *Libri Historiarum X*, IV, 40; V, 19; ed. KRUSCH and LEVISON 1951, pp. 171-172; p. 225; tr. OLDONI 1981, vol. I, p. 367; p. 471.

¹³⁶⁸ GREGORY OF TOURS, *Libri Historiarum X*, V, 30; ed. KRUSCH and LEVISON 1951, p. 235; tr. OLDONI 1981, vol. I, p. 493. The connection between the mental illness and the divine punishment is added later in the eighth century by Paul the Deacon, for whom Justin was punished by God (‘*iusto Dei iudicio*’) and lost the reason (‘*amisso rationis intellectu*’) because he moved his heart away from the divine precepts; PAUL THE DEACON, *Historia Longobardorum*, III, 11; ed. SCHWARTZ 2009, p. 194; tr. CAPO 1992, p. 137.

¹³⁶⁹ EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 1.11-16; ed. BIDEZ 1898, p. 99; tr. WHITBY 2000, pp. 130-131. For a list of the sources which described Zeno in such polemical terms, from Eustathius of Epiphania and Evagrius (in the context of the reaction of the circle of the extreme Chalcedonians against Zeno’s *Henoticon*), to Malcus of Philadelphia and John the Lydian, down to Theophanes, George Cedrenus, John Zonaras, Nikephoros Callistus, see CONRAD 2000, n. 26, p. 67.

¹³⁷⁰ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.160-161; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 43; tr. BELL 2009, p. 178; cf. n. 146-147, p. 178. For Nero’s ‘*sinister insanity (μανία)*’ see also EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 25.2; ed. SCHWARTZ 1903, vol. I, p. 174; tr. SCHOTT 2019, p. 114.

bad emperors punished by God with the loss of their minds and with demonic possession were still vivid in the mind of the audience: in the early seventh century, John of Antioch still included in his narrative the story of Saul, who could not sleep or calm down because he was possessed by a demon¹³⁷¹. He even enriched his account on Tiberius, otherwise based upon Cassius Dio, with the statement that the emperor's health suddenly degenerated so much that it was believed that he was getting mad (παρὰ φρονεῖν νομισθῆναι) and was possessed by a demon (ὑπό τινος ἐλαύνεσθαι δαίμονίου)¹³⁷².

Justin II's madness and demon-possessed behaviour were captured by John in a series of memorable images which completely overthrew the official propaganda proposed by Corippus and were not short of a degree of humour appealing to the taste for entertainment of the audience. The emperor was chastised by God because he was *'using his royal power for things excessive and alien to all piety'*. Since he wanted to stop this *'wicked course'*, God sent him therefore an *'evil angel'* to rule *'over him cruelly and fearfully'*. This condition *'destroyed his reason, and his mind was agitated and darkened, and his body given over both to secret and open tortures and cruel agonies, so that he even uttered the cries of various animals'* (namely, a dog, a goat, a cat, and a cock). He also bites the head of those men appointed to control him, so that John wittily commented that *'the report got about the city that the king had eaten two of his chamberlains'*¹³⁷³. Those were signs of demonic possession: Michael the Syrian (likely on the ground of John of Ephesus' second lost book) described in similar terms the behaviour of the inhabitants of Amid, who at the time of Justinian (around 560) were *'seized by a violent scourge of rage, dementia and madness'*. Among other things, they also started biting each other and vocalizing like dogs, sheep, and cocks, and when they were taken to church, *'they foamed with rage'* and declared to be *'many thousands'* and that they would have destroyed the city if it was not for the saints who protected it¹³⁷⁴. The madness of Justin, caused by the *'working of the prince of darkness'* or by an *'evil spirit'*, *'filled him with agitation and terror'* and forced him to make many other things *'contrary to human reason'*: he rushed *'in furious haste from place to place'*, crawled under the bed (especially at the words *'The Bogle – 'En Harith bar Gabhala'* in Brooks' translation – *is coming to*

¹³⁷¹ He was soothed only by the music performed by David (1Kings 18.9-10; 1Sam 14-23); JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 31; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 70-71.

¹³⁷² JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 159.1; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, p. 279. John of Nikiu also reported that the impious Diocletian *'feel sick of a grievous bodily disease and lost his mind'* in the midst of his persecutions against Christians (JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 77, 17; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 59), and that the usurper Maximin was even *'possessed by a demon who infuriated him'* and pushed him to revolt against the authority; JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 77, 84-89; tr. CHARLES 1916, pp. 66-67.

¹³⁷³ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 2; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 166-168; tr. BROOKS 1952, pp. 88-90.

¹³⁷⁴ Men and women alike also uttered obscene words, *'climbed walls, suspended their heads downward and cried like children'*, and even stopped those who wanted to pray in the church by jumping on them. *'Such madness'* concluded the author, *'lasted for one year'*; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, IX, 32; tr. MOOSA 2014, pp. 366-367.

you'), tried to throw himself down from the window (so that the members of the court had to tie him up 'in spite of their respect for him as king'). He 'screamed and howled, and uttered words without meaning'¹³⁷⁵. This state of mind could occasionally be devised by some amusements like when the members of the court made him sit on a little wagon with a throne and drew him 'backwards and forwards for a long time' until he calmed down 'in delight and admiration at their speed'. Music also helped to make him quiet, so that an organ played constantly day and night near the imperial chamber. More serious were on the other hand the 'strange actions' performed in public and in the ceremonial settings. Justin violently overthrew the social rules and the respect toward the religious authority during a visit of the patriarch. This latter made his customary obeisance but then, 'seeing that the king was agitated, he signed him with the sign of the cross': like the monk in front of Justinian, therefore, the patriarch sensed the demonic presence and performed the traditional gesture felt as having the power of pushing the demons away from possessed people. Justin for his part understood the meaning of the gesture: perhaps because he felt insulted, or because he was pushed by the devil inside him, or also maybe to unveil the evil nature which according to John was shared by the Chalcedonian patriarch, Justin 'raised his hand, and struck him so heavy a blow on the head, that the patriarch reeled and fell on his back a good distance from him' exclaiming 'An evil end be thine: go and sign thyself, that thy own devils may get out of thee'. The patriarch was raised by those present, 'but it was some time before he returned to his senses, being stunned by the severity of the blow'. And when he had to return to Justin's presence (since 'it was impossible for the patriarch not to pay the customary visits to the palace'), he entered 'cautiously, and on his guard'. The emperor struck him anyway, this time not with violence but with mockery: he busted out laughing when he saw him, and then 'jumping up, laid hands upon him, and took from his shoulder his mitre (the *pallium*, translated more properly by Brooks)', using it as a cover for his head 'like a woman's hood'. 'How well it becomes you now, my lord patriarch', declared Justin, 'only you should put on some gold lace, like the ribbons (κροσσία) which ladies wear upon their heads'¹³⁷⁶. In one gesture, therefore, Justin hit both the sacred dignity as well as the gender of the patriarch.

John of Ephesus described at least two other characters punished by God with insanity and demonic possession because of their unfaithful acts. Anastasius, Justin's questor and evil advisor, persecutor of

¹³⁷⁵ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 2; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 168; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 90. Moosa, who translated the same quotation in the later Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, explained that Jabala was the king of al-Hira, a tribe of Arabs; MOOSA 2014, n. 1488, p. 394. An example of the meaningless words of Justin is recorded later by John: he stood at the window and, 'overlooking the seashore, he began to cry like those who go about hawing crockery, 'Who'll buy my pans?''; JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 3; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 170; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 91.

¹³⁷⁶ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 3; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 170; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 91.

the 'orthodox' Monophysites, *'falsely and deceitfully'* professed to be Christian¹³⁷⁷ and was struck by the divine punishment *'before the whole church, when it was crowded with people on the day of the adoration of the holy cross of our Saviour'*. Anastasius lined up with the Senate and the people in front of the Cross but, since he was not sincere, he was not able to perform the adoration and *'a demon entered into him (...) lifted him up, and threw him on the ground'*. He then lost the control over his body: *'he began to foam, and was torn by the devil, and deprived of his senses (agitari, in Brooks' translation), and screamed so long, that at length the patriarch (John Scholasticus) gave orders for them to lift him up, and carry him through the throng, and place him in an inner apartment of the church'*. As for the multitude, they continued to cry the Kyri Eleison, *'being in wonder at the revelation of his fraud, and at the chastisement which the Lord of the Cross had inflicted upon him, before the eyes of so many people. And terror fell on many deceiver and hypocrites'*¹³⁷⁸. A similar imagery is employed then to describe what happened to the Chalcedonian patriarch Eutychius, deposed by Justinian and then appointed once again by the Caesar Tiberius in 577, after the death of John Scholasticus¹³⁷⁹. The mind of this man, declared John, was *'puffed up with arrogance and vanity'* after Tiberius *'firmly established'* him in his patriarchal seat and honoured him with many praises¹³⁸⁰. Shortly after, therefore, *'an evil spirit vexed and troubled him, so that on two several occasions (that is, in the church of the Virgin in Chalcostrateia and then in the palace), as he was standing at the altar in the great church, it tore him in the presence of the whole congregation'*. Also in this case Eutychius' friends tried to cover what was happening: they hastily put him into a litter, covered him with a veil, and carried him out of the church, trying to explain the fact by the fasting and vigils which would have stirred the patriarch's humour up. Those present were once again not easily deceived: *'Does humour tear a person, and convulse him, and make him foam, and roll upon the ground?'* questioned many people. *'And besides, all his acts soon made it plain to everybody that his mind was troubled and darkened by an evil spirit; for his words often were quite beside the purpose, and he would break out*

¹³⁷⁷ John's hostility toward Anastasius, main responsible for the persecutions against the Monophysites together with the patriarch John Scholasticus, is 'personally motivated, since he himself was tortured by them'; van GINKEL 1995, p. 119.

¹³⁷⁸ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, II, 29; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 140-141; tr. BROOKS 1952, pp. 69-70. Michael the Syrian recounted the madness of both Anastasius and the emperor Justin in a less detailed manner; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, ch. 9; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 394.

¹³⁷⁹ John also condemned the fact that Eutychius' ordination was not performed 'in accordance with the canonical regulation', since he regained the patriarchal throne without proceeding with a legal inquiry and without annulling the act of excommunication issued against him; van GINKEL, 1995, p. 116.

¹³⁸⁰ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 18; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 197; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 107. He was so elated *'as not to know his position'* and began to *'say things superfluous and unmeaning, which led to his being talked about and ridiculed as wanting in good sense'*; *ibidem*. He even taught his religious views through a treatise that he distributed *'among the ladies of the court'*, so that people began *'to regard him as a simpleton, who was out of his mind'*; JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 17; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 195-196; tr. BROOKS 1952, pp. 105-106.

*into unseemly fits of laughter, and other similar follies*¹³⁸¹. As for the emperor, the *'bitter humiliation and trial'* which continued for five years¹³⁸² was experienced by his subjects as something even more shameful: the rumours about Justin's disgraceful behaviour were largely spread in and outside the palace, and this was *'openly spoken of without fear by everyone in the city'* and *'subject of conversation'*¹³⁸³. The population looked at the madness of their ruler as the result of the intervention of the devil *'to whom he was given up and which were the common talk of every city and village, and house and street, and tavern, within and without Constantinople: and even upon the way all men talked of them with much wonder and astonishment'*¹³⁸⁴.

John mentions also rare moments in which the emperor was clear-headed: on those occasions, the court hastened to stage a decent show in front of the population. Even if he could be *'taken to the entertainments of the Hippodrome in the morning, and sometimes he was sufficiently well to give audience, and receive the salutations of the senate'*, however, he was no longer able to properly and autonomously perform the important ceremony of the *largitio*, *'for which purpose they put money into his hand, which he scattered, with the help of his attendants, who guided his arms'*¹³⁸⁵. The power, felt as inherent into the imperial body and limbs, had become therefore too weak, and Justin had to be flanked by a co-ruler, the Caesar Tiberius.

Procopius and John of Ephesus presented two different forms of criticism addressed to the imperial body, which provided different kinds of information. Procopius build up his descriptions mainly on two levels. On one side he recognized, underlined, and unveiled the theatrical aspect of the Justinian's court and the ceremonial skills of the emperor: like Ammianus before him, he made clear his awareness toward the recent developments in the imperial ceremonial and unveiled the tricks maliciously exploited by the emperors, who used their acting talent to deceive their audience and achieve their purposes. Beyond the veil of criticism, anyway, the emperor appears here as also capable of using and adapting his appearance according to the need of the moment (displaying certain feelings or breaking the rules of etiquette). The developments occurred in the performance of the *proskynesis* imposed on the members of the court, for which it seems that the blame falls upon those latter who

¹³⁸¹ JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 17; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 196-197; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 106.

¹³⁸² JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 4; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 170; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 92. This period was not directly experienced by John, but was based *'upon the authority of others'* who *'bear witness to the truth and exactness of our details'*; *ibidem*.

¹³⁸³ JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 2; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 168-169; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 90.

¹³⁸⁴ JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 3; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 91-92; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 92.

¹³⁸⁵ JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 6; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 176; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 95.

accepted it rather than upon the emperor, are disclosed as an innovation aimed to redefine hierarchical relationships and boundaries between the ruler and his subjects who had to be put under control. On the other hand, Procopius ignored the above-mentioned efforts made by Justinian to follow the sixth-century trends and to appeal emotionally to the audience by presenting himself as a humble and mortal being. The author rather chose to overturn the image of the emperor as a divine-like being and imago-Christi: because of his misbehaviour and of his acting skills, Justinian ended up embodying the equally supernatural nature of the prince of the demons.

The imperial ability to juggle expectations and judgments of the audience without appearing too openly theatrical continued therefore to be at stake at the court of the sixth century. The emperor had his 'weapons' at disposal, but the risk of being criticised by the keener members of the audience, ready to overturn the propaganda and to put his mistakes and slips on paper, was always present.

John of Ephesus also presented a connection between the emperor and the demonic world, in this case based upon real healthy issues affecting the emperor during his rule. For both Procopius and John, the demonic possession of the emperor is revealed at a physical level: but if the artful Justinian lost only temporarily the control of his body (at times he jumped from the throne and relentlessly roamed in the palace at night but returned back to his malicious acting during the day), Justin's condition, on the contrary, was permanent. It made his body so weak and his mind so unstable that he became unable to rely on the ceremonial apparatus. John described Justin not only in the grip of pain (in line with the ecclesiastical tradition which looked at imperial disabilities as a punishment sent by God), but also as completely unable to feign: Justin lost his rationality, his self-control, and all the decency required in the ceremonial context, and was no more able to act his part and fulfil his duties in public. Furthermore, despite the attempts to cover his mortal body through theatrical devices, his illness was made public and shocked the entire city.

Therefore, while Procopius' critique could still be seen as an attempt to remind and promote certain imperial attitudes and values, the madness of Justin II that had forcefully come to the fore in the audience's mind would inevitably be subject to much deeper reflections revolving around the mortal condition of the emperor. Once again, much more efficacious than any effort or trick designed to conceal it, this condition will be embraced and put under control, as we will see, in the speech uttered at the end of his reign. But first, let us see the philosophical and theological reflections over the nature of the ruler widespread in the sixth century which supported those discourses and allowed an author to depict a legitimate emperor, still sat on the throne, in such a human and fragile guise.

2.5. THE EMPEROR'S CONDITION AS *PRIMUS INTER PARES* AND AS HUMAN AND DIVINE BEING: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In the sixth century, political ideas that had originated in the previous centuries were formulated and condensed on a theoretical level¹³⁸⁶. The theme of the double nature, divine and human, present in the imperial being, continued also to be faced and was fully recognized.

The deacon Agapetus mindfully warned Justinian and declared that no one should consider himself superior because of the nobility of his ancestors. All men, whether clothed with purple and fine linen and invested with diadem, or covered with humble rags, have indeed '*clay as forefather of their race*', i.e. are affected by human frailty and transience¹³⁸⁷. Even the emperor should not show off but rather '*reflect on the nature of the flesh and check the swelling of his heart*' so to remember, despite his being a ruler on earth, '*his beginning from the earth, ascending from dust to the throne, and after a period of time descending there*'¹³⁸⁸. Like every other man he had to avoid arrogance, keep his mind '*cleansed of human deceit*', and be aware of '*the worthlessness of his own nature, the shortness and sudden end of earthy life and the filth joined to the flesh*'¹³⁸⁹. At the same time, however, the emperor has not to be seen entirely like other men: Agapetus echoed the contemporary debates on the nature of Christ and the relationship between God and humanity¹³⁹⁰ and declared that the emperor also '*bears in some way the image (τὴν εἰκόνα φέρει) of God*'¹³⁹¹, with a divine nature next to the mortal one:

'In his bodily essence (τῆ μὲν οὐσίᾳ τοῦ σώματος), the emperor is equal (ἴσος) of every man, but in the power of his rank (τῆ ἐξουσίᾳ δὲ τοῦ ἀξιώματος) he is like (ὅμοιός) God over all men. He has no one on earth who is higher than he. Like a man (ὡς θνητὸν), therefore, he must not be puffed up; like God (ὡς θεὸν), he must not be angry. For he is honoured for his divine image (εἰ εἰκόνη θεϊκῆ τετίμηται), he is nevertheless bound to his earthly image (ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰκόνη χοϊκῆ συμπέλεκται) through which he is taught his equality with other men'¹³⁹².

¹³⁸⁶ PERTUSI 1990, pp. 6 ff.

¹³⁸⁷ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 4; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1165; tr. BELL 2009, p. 101. On Agapetus' declaration that an individual count more than his pedigree as a way to recounsel Justinian's position (exposed to the charge of being an *arriviste*) in the eyes of the well-born Constantinopolitan aristocracy, see BELL 2009, p. 43-48; n. 12, p. 101.

¹³⁸⁸ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 71; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1186; tr. BELL 2009, p. 121.

¹³⁸⁹ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 14; ed. PG 86.1, coll. 1168-1169; tr. BELL 2009, p. 104.

¹³⁹⁰ BELL 2009; n. 37, p. 108. Even in the ceremonies where the emperor behaved and presented himself in line with his prototype Christ 'it is hard not to see such a metaphor of the emperor as the 'imitation of God' and his vicegerent on earth as in some sense equating the emperor to Christ'; *ibidem*, p. 8.

¹³⁹¹ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 37; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1176; tr. BELL 2009, p. 112.

¹³⁹² AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 21; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1172; tr. BELL 2009, p. 107; n. 37 pp. 107-108. For the correspondence between this aphorism and fragments collected in *florilegia* attributed to Philo Judaeus that were 'originally the work of Agapetus and that somehow (...) came to be transmitted as belonging to Philo', see HENRY III 1967, pp. 286-287; p. 291.

This chapter, recognized also Bell, ‘encapsulates the two core messages of the work’: in the power of his rank, the emperor is superior to other men, the *primus* among his *pares*, and had to be honoured as equivalent to God. Yet, in the body he is ‘like the rest of us’ and bounded to his human and mortal condition¹³⁹³. It was the emperor’s mortal nature which caused him to fail and to sin – a serious problem since the emperor was also the one charged by God with the economy of the Salvation – and with this awareness he could be hit by critiques and uprisings. On one hand, therefore, he had to face the forces which threatened his power by constantly caring to maintain his authority also through his behaviour and his outward appearance. On the other hand, even in the most critical situation his power could never be questioned in its constitutional character: the emperor remained always the *imago Christi* and the abstract embodiment of the authority given by God.

Those ideas were at stake also during the famous ‘Nika revolt’ in 532, when the members of the Blue and Green factions arose against Justinian and the bad governments of his functionaries John the Cappadocian, Tribonianus, and the city prefect Eudaimon. The details of the event, so violent and destructive that contemporaries even referred to it as due to a supernatural intervention¹³⁹⁴, are reported especially by John Malalas¹³⁹⁵, Procopius¹³⁹⁶, and, later, the *Chronicon Paschale*¹³⁹⁷. Once again the riot broke out when the emperor failed to give a proper response to the request of the population: the ‘last straw’, recounted indeed Malalas, happened when Justinian did not listen to the calls for imperial mercy chanted during the chariot races and refused to spare two members of the factions (one Green, one Blue) condemned to death by Eudaimon. The factions joined together under the cry ‘Nika’ (also the watch-word to prevent infiltration from the *excubitores*) and destroyed many buildings and an entire urban district in the City. The day after, at daybreak, Justinian tried to hold the race and to hang up the ‘customary flag (κρεμασθέντος τοῦ ἐξ ἔθους βήλον)’. But the angered mob did not calm down. At this point, he showed himself a few days later to the crowd carrying (βαστάζων)

¹³⁹³ BELL 2009, n. 37, p. 107.

¹³⁹⁴ Procopius declared that it spread like a ‘disease of the soul’; PROCOPIOUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 24.6; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 220-221. According to Malalas, the violence was ‘caused by some avenging demons’ who ‘prompted evil counsels’; JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia* 18, 71; ed. THURN 2000, 394.26-27; 395.47-48; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. 275-276; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 489.

¹³⁹⁵ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 18, 71; ed. THURN 2000, 394-401; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. 275-281; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, pp. 489-497. Malalas is the basis for Theophanes Confessor’s version of the episode; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AD 6024, AD 531/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 182-186; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 276-280.

¹³⁹⁶ PROCOPIOUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 24; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 219-239. The episode is recorded also in *De Aedificiis* and in the *Secret History*: on the differences and common elements among those three accounts, see CAMERON 1985, pp. 166-168.

¹³⁹⁷ On the importance of the *Chronicon Paschale* (written in 630 ca) in preserving many details of riot, and its relation to Malalas as a source for this episode, see WHITBY 1989, pp. 112-113.

the Holy Gospels and making ‘a proclamation to them on oath’¹³⁹⁸. The *Chronicon Paschale* specified that in the speech the emperor tried to justify his actions by referring to his fallible nature: ‘By this Power (that is, the divine power visually symbolized by the Gospels in his hands) I forgive you this error, and I order that none of you be arrested, – but be peaceful; for there is nothing on your head, but rather on mine. For my sins (ἁμαρτίαι) made me deny to you what you asked of me in the Hippodrome’¹³⁹⁹. Despite the amazement produced in the audience, however, the powerful *schema* did not gain this time the hoped result: ‘many of the people’, it is true, were conquered by the gesture and ‘chanted ‘Augustus Justinian, may you be victorious’’. But others were not convinced and called him foresworn until he left the Hippodrome¹⁴⁰⁰. Even worse, the rioters tried to overthrow the emperor with a new candidate, Anastasius’ nephew Hypatius¹⁴⁰¹. Marcellinus Comes, probably a witness of the event, claimed that this attempted coup d’état was the very reason for the riot and that Hypatius, his brother Pompeius, his cousin Probus and ‘many of the nobility’ pretended loyalty to the emperor but were responsible for enticing ‘a whole crowd of troublemakers’ to pillage the City¹⁴⁰². According to Procopius, who instead placed the senators on the side of the emperor¹⁴⁰³, Hypatius was reluctantly dragged on the steps of Constantine’s column and temporarily crowned with a golden necklace before he was brought on the Kathisma¹⁴⁰⁴. Here, reported the *Chronicon Paschale*, the usurper waited for the purple and the official diadem but since he knew that ‘people are fickle’, he initially searched for a secret agreement with Justinian. Only when he received the report that the emperor had fled the palace he could finally sit with confidence in the imperial box ‘to listen to the people’s acclamations for

¹³⁹⁸ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 18, 71; ed. THURN 2000, 395.50-51; 396.57-59; 397.69-72, 475; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. 276-278; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 489-493.

¹³⁹⁹ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 327, AD 532; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 625; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 121.

¹⁴⁰⁰ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 327, AD 532; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 622-623; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 121. Thanks to this gesture, nevertheless, ‘the populace’s unanimous opposition to him (Justinian) was beginning to falter’; WHITBY 1989, n. 358, p. 121.

¹⁴⁰¹ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 18, 71; ed. THURN 2000, 397.72-73; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 278; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 493.

¹⁴⁰² MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 532; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 44. This was likely the ‘interpretation of the revolt which Justinian and the court wished or feigned to believe – namely that it was not a genuine expression of popular feeling, but merely due to the machinations of Hypatius and his friends’; CROKE 1995, p. 125 (quoting Bury).

¹⁴⁰³ CAMERON 1985, p. 64. For the difficulty in analysing the real sources and reasons of the riot, see also CAMERON 1985, p. 167.

¹⁴⁰⁴ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 24.42; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 232-233. Similar also JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 18, 71; ed. THURN 2000, 397.73 ff.; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, pp. 278-279; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, pp. 493-494. The fact that Hypatius was ‘bedecked with a gold torque at the hands of his criminal companions’, is recorded also by Marcellinus. He did not mention the appearance at the Kathisma but reported only that he and Pompeius (who concealed a breastplate under his clothes), ‘went up to invade the palace’, but were arrested and executed at the command of the emperor; MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 532; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 44.

him and the insulting utterances which they spoke against the emperor Justinian and against the Augusta Theodora'¹⁴⁰⁵.

But Justinian had not run away: according to Procopius, he was barricaded in the palace together with his wife and other members of the court. And since at this point he was out of *schemata* to use, he searched for a way out through a reflection over the nature of the imperial power which would have suggested him the right attitude to assume. Out of the palace, the senator Origen was encouraging the population to act carefully and to give Justinian the time to flee, '*for authority which is ignored always loses its power, since its strength ebbs away with each day*'. He belittled, therefore, the very nature of the imperial power and underlined the idea that it was something given to a man temporarily and with the necessity of continuous support, since it could fade away if the conditions of power failed. Inside the palace, the authority was expressing a very different opinion through the famous words of Theodora who urged the husband and the members of the court to resist: '*For while it is impossible for a man who has seen the light not also to die, for one who has been an emperor it is unendurable to be a fugitive. May I never be separated from this purple, and may not live that day on which those who meet me shall not address me as mistress (...). I approve a certain ancient saying that royalty is a good burial-shroud*'¹⁴⁰⁶. Cameron geared down the importance of those famous words, which had made Theodora 'gone down in history as the brave queen putting backbone into her wavering husband', by pointing at their rhetorical nature, aimed to produce a dramatic effect or to present the image of a woman seemingly acting out of character¹⁴⁰⁷. As well pointed out by Neville, however, when he composed the words of a speech the author had always to make the narrative plausible by fairly reflecting 'the ethics, characters, and decision-making habits of the speakers'¹⁴⁰⁸. In this case, Theodora's words reflected the autocratic point of view for which the emperor assumed with the power a special condition made of privileges and responsibilities in matter of action and behaviour which never faded away and was maintained until death. The latter position prevailed in the end and the emperor turned to his soldiers and to the imperial wrath to gain a bloody victory over the population which further strengthened his power above the senatorial class¹⁴⁰⁹.

¹⁴⁰⁵ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 327, AD 532; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 624-625; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 122-123.

¹⁴⁰⁶ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 24.35-38; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 230-233.

¹⁴⁰⁷ CAMERON 1985, p. 69.

¹⁴⁰⁸ NEVILLE 2018, p. 24. Neville followed the interpretation of the passage for which Theodora's words originated from the story about the cruel Dionysios of Syracuse, who was convinced not to flee a violent rebellion and kill the rioters by the courtier's sentence 'tyranny makes a good burial shroud'. By this point of view, the passage would be interpreted therefore as a subtle allusion to the bloodthirsty and tyrannical (rather than brave and heroic) nature of Theodora and her husband; NEVILLE 2018, pp. 22-23 (with bibliography).

¹⁴⁰⁹ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 24.50-54; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 234-237. After the riot, declared Procopius in the *Anecdota*, the emperors '*confiscated the property of just about all members of the Senate in, so to speak, one fell swoop*'; PROCOPIUS, *Anecdota*, XII, 12; ed. DEWING 1960, vol. VI, p. 146; tr. KALDELLIS 2010, pp. 57-58; CAMERON 1985, p. 64. On the intentionality of the episode, seen not as a 'crisis of power' faced and

Romanos the Melodist re-read the events in religious and moral overtones in a *kontakion* on earthquakes and fires and drew a parallel between the emperor and God who, full of love for the humanity, used the calamities to improve it, get angry (ὀργίζεται), and put his wrath (ὀργήν) on the tip of his sword in his appearance (ἐν σχήματι). As representative of God on earth, the emperor must also show his wrath against the rebels threatening his authority: in the case of the Nika riot he did not assume therefore the role of the punisher but rather that of a faithful God-fearer (θεὸν οἱ δεδιότες). He even made himself a suppliant by begging piety to God, praying, and raising his sight on heaven to obtain God's compassion¹⁴¹⁰.

The elements that surface from the descriptions of the Nika riots testify how ideas and philosophical reflections about the imperial nature could also be involved in the practice of the power, both directly in the performances as well as at an interpretative level. Justinian tried to express through his public appearance his nature as universal and triumphant ruler (holding the *mappa*), as well as a fallible being subordinated to the divine realm (by swearing and declaring his sins over the Gospels). Justinian's *schema* apparently failed on this occasion and did not help the emperor to overcome the threatening moment. Only a new awareness of the nature of his power and the use of violence helped him to regain control of his position. But if we take on the possibility of an imperial involvement in the event¹⁴¹¹, this failure could have been even purposefully enacted, to stage an emperor trying his hardest to avoid the conflict with the visual weapons used and recognized at the time. The words of Origen and Theodora, then, attested the presence at court of different points of view on power, while Romanos' parallelism between divine and imperial wrath justified and gave a *posteriori* sense of the outcome of an episode, which must have been undoubtedly felt as shocking for those who had experienced it. In this way, Justinian managed to get away with his bloody expedient without enduring consequences and with a strengthened image that inspired awe and admiration rather than grudge.

Reflecting over the nature of the imperial person, Agapetus also developed at a theological level the traditional ideas, already present *in nuce* and in philosophical terms in Themistius, regarding the importance of the imperial behaviour and morality and their effect on the empire's well-being. The most important goal of the imperial earthly kingdom is the imitation (μίμησις) and the likeness (ὁμοίωσιν) of the heavenly one: 'use fittingly your kingdom here below so that it may become a ladder for you to the glory above', declared Agapetus¹⁴¹². This path went through the usual fulfilment of the

then solved by the emperor, but rather an act purposely and strategically organised to stabilize his power against the internal enemies, see MEIER 2003.

¹⁴¹⁰ ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia* 54, 19; ed. MAAS and TRYPANIS 1963, p. 469; tr. TROMBI 2007, vol. II, p. 215.

¹⁴¹¹ See above, n. 1409, pp. 227-228.

¹⁴¹² AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 59; ed. PG 86.1 col. 1181; BELL 2009, p. 117.

exceptional responsibility bestowed to the imperial role. *'If the ruler does wrong'*, declared indeed Agapetus, *'then he damages the whole state'*¹⁴¹³. He had, therefore, to excel in his actions: *'men will require good deeds from you in proportion to the magnitude of your power'*¹⁴¹⁴, and *'nothing gives a man a better reputation than to be able to do what he wants, but always to want and to do what benefits mankind'*¹⁴¹⁵. In line with the Pauline metaphor of the Christians as members of the Body of Christ, Agapetus declared thus that the emperor is fitted in the world like the eye is implanted in the body and is *'given by God to collaborate with Him in conferring benefits'*. He has thus to care for all men, who are in turn like his limbs, and act as a model *'so that they make progress in things good, and do not stumble in things evil'*¹⁴¹⁶.

A central feature required from public authorities continued to be, first of all, the exercise of self-control. So, for example, Procopius described the wicked John the Cappadocian as a man *'entirely without the advantages of a liberal education'*¹⁴¹⁷ and *'utterly unable to control himself'* (he got drunk, ate *'until he vomited'* and devoted himself to *'wanton deeds of lust'*)¹⁴¹⁸. According to John the Lydian, *'the loathsomeness of his soul (τὸ βδελυρὸν τῆς ψυχῆς)'* was even revealed by (ἐκκαλύπτων) *'the mere composition of his body (ἐκ μόνης τῆς τοῦ σώματος διασκευῆς)'*, namely a corpulent constitution and excessive and heavy flesh which hung *'as a cloak'*¹⁴¹⁹. As for the emperor, also Agapetus connected the virtue of self-control to his mortal and perishable nature. The emperor had to pursue justice with a steady attitude in reasoning (λογισμὸν) and in thinking (τὸ φρόνημα), always *'unalterably fixed'* against the variability of the human affairs and without being changed by *'the pomp of this earthly dominion'*. He has to act indeed *'as one holding an authority which perishes'*, keeping his mind *'unchanged in changeable affairs'*¹⁴²⁰.

Furthermore, the emperor had to distinguish himself for his *philanthropia*¹⁴²¹. This highly evocative virtue was traditionally expressed in the merciful attitude of the emperor who gained divine forgiveness for his sins by forgiving those who wronged him¹⁴²². The emperor, as a mortal being, could

¹⁴¹³ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 10; ed. PG 86.1 col. 1168; tr. BELL 2009, p. 103.

¹⁴¹⁴ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 53; ed. PG 86.1 col. 1180; tr. BELL 2009, p. 116. *'(...) even a light word of the emperor's carries great force among everyone'*; AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 26; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1172; tr. BELL 2009, p. 108.

¹⁴¹⁵ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 6; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1165; BELL 2009, p. 102.

¹⁴¹⁶ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 46; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1177; tr. BELL 2009, p. 114.

¹⁴¹⁷ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 24.12-13; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 222-223. John indeed had *'learned nothing while attending the elementary school except his letters, and these, too, poorly enough'*; *ibidem*.

¹⁴¹⁸ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Persico*, I, 24.15; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. I, pp. 224-225

¹⁴¹⁹ JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De Magistratibus*, III, 58; ed. and tr. BANDY 2013, p. 252, p. 299.

¹⁴²⁰ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis* ch. 11; ch. 33-34; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1168; col. 1173; BELL 2009, pp. 103-104; p. 110-111. For an interpretation of this stress on the unchangeable nature of the emperor as a reaction to the charges of innovations moved against Justinian by conservative critics, see BELL 2009, n. 22 p. 104.

¹⁴²¹ For the biblical and liturgical reminiscences and the allusions to the patristic writings, which responded to the sensitiveness of an audience used to hearing biblical lections and liturgy, see HENRY III 1967, pp. 296-298.

¹⁴²² AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 64; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1184; tr. BELL 2009, p. 119.

be taken by passions: he is *'friend of men and thus also easy to the wrath* (ἔνδοθεν ὁ δεσπότης φιλάνθρωπος, ἔξωθεν ὀργίλος)' declared Romanos the Melodist¹⁴²³. And the wrath, recognized Agathias through the words of Belisarius, was a powerful but also dangerous instrument which had always to be tempered by judgment and discipline: *'whereas prudence is a pure and unalloyed blessing, anger has its forceful and determined side, which is praiseworthy, but it also has its rash and impetuous side, which is unprofitable and undesirable'*¹⁴²⁴. If he wanted to be defined *'truly as an emperor'*, declared Agapetus, the ruler had to be able *'both to rule and master pleasures'* with temperance (σωφροσύνη) and justice (δικαιοσύνη)¹⁴²⁵. Agapetus regarded indeed *'as equal evils both being enraged by the misdeeds of enemies and being beguiled by the flattery of friends. One must nobly resist both and not depart from impropriety neither taking revenge on the unreasonable enmity of the one, nor rewarding the feigned benevolence of the other'*¹⁴²⁶. In line with those statements also the authors who wanted to praise Justinian referred to his clemency, despite the undeniable harsh reaction after the Nika Riot: even in front of a person who threatened his life, exclaimed for example Paul the Silentary, *'you immediately calm the storms of necessary anger, you immediately assume a merciful serenity (...)'*¹⁴²⁷. Love indeed is higher and more effective than fear, since *'willing subjects'* who are *'ruled by the bonds of goodwill'* are easier to control and firm in obeisance than *'unwilling subject'* who tend to rebel¹⁴²⁸.

Finally, a good ruler had to achieve a middle-way between an attitude *'unapproachable* (ἀπρόσιτος) *to men'* because of the height (τὸ ὕψος) of the *'kingship here below* (τῆς κάτω βασιλείας, that is, the earthly kingdom), and an attitude *'approachable* (εὐπρόσιτος) *to those in need because of the might* (τὸ κράτος) *of the power from above* (τῆς ἄνω ἐξουσίας)¹⁴²⁹. The friendly attitude required from the emperor had to be as usual very different from the one attached to the barbarian rulers who debased themselves with their subjects: so Procopius described the King of the Eruli who despite the title *'had practically no advantage over any private citizen whomsoever. But all claimed the right to sit with him and eat with him, and whoever wished insulted him without restraint; for no men in the world are less bound by convention* (ἀσυνθετώτεροι) *or more unstable* (ἀσταθμητότεροι) *than the Erull'*¹⁴³⁰. On the other side, the same author praised Belisarius – this time described as a man of which

¹⁴²³ ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia*, 54, 5; ed. MAAS and TRYPANIS 1963, p. 464; tr. TROMBI 2007, vol. II, p. 210.

¹⁴²⁴ AGATHIAS, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, V, 18.8; ed. KALDELLIS, p. 187; tr. FRENDO 1970, p. 154.

¹⁴²⁵ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 18; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1169; tr. BELL 2009, p. 106. For the *sophrosyne* as one of the main personal political virtues of the good rule in the Platonic tradition, and the concept of *philanthropia* in the pagan thought, see BELL 2009, p. 38.

¹⁴²⁶ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 31; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1173; BELL 2009, p. 110.

¹⁴²⁷ PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, vv. 941-947; ed. FOBELLI 2005, p. 92; tr. BELL 2009, p. 208.

¹⁴²⁸ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 35; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1176; BELL 2009, p. 111. See also chapters 39-40-46-48-55. See also PAUL THE SILENTIARY, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, v. 956; ed. FOBELLI 2005, p. 92; tr. BELL 2009, p. 209.

¹⁴²⁹ AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 8; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1168; tr. BELL 2009, p. 103.

¹⁴³⁰ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Gotico*, II (VI), 14.39-41; ed. and tr. DEWING 1962, vol. III, pp. 412-413.

'the Byzantines took delight in watching' and about whom none *'could get enough of his sight'* when he walked in procession (πρόοδος) to the market-place with his barbarian escort – for his beautiful body and face (σῶμα καλός ... καὶ εὐπρόσωπος), for his meek conduct (πραῶν), and because *'his attitude (παρεῖχεν) toward those who met him'* was *'so affable (εὐπρόσοδος) that he seemed like a very poor man and one of no repute (ἄνθρωπῳ πένητί τε λίαν καὶ ἀδόξῳ ἐμφορῆς)'*¹⁴³¹.

The debate between the mortal and divine nature of the emperor was, therefore, more openly faced and flanked the old problem of the 'republican' and 'autocratic' attitudes required from the emperor. Those basic elements of the Byzantine kingship were openly discussed also by other contemporary sources. The sixth-century dialogue *On Political Science*, written from a senatorial perspective in line with the platonic tradition and Cicero's political thought, clarified further the ideal of a ruler who acts in imitation of God (λόγον τῆς θεοῦ μιμήσεως) (that is, *'the essence of imperial rule'*)¹⁴³² as well as as a father for his citizens, in harmony with the elite. The author underlined once again the high responsibility connected with the imperial behaviour: in this case, it was the principle of order, earned by the emperor through a process of 'ascent' to the intellectual world of God, which was transferred through a hierarchical emanation (or a 'political illumination') to the higher civic offices (the *optimates*) and all the members of the court¹⁴³³. He then declared that the emperor achieved the well-being of the state and the salvation of his subjects especially by acting like a doctor who cares for human bodies through *'the law (νόμος)'*, that is the proper rules of medicine imposed from outside; through the *'doctrines (δόγματα)'*, that is *'the principles by which a doctor advises himself on what is appropriate'* so that he *'legislate for appropriate behaviour (τὰ πρόποντα) in his soul not through external pressure, but through the persuasion of reason, the shame of conscience, and his nature as a free man'*; and then through the *'habits of actual practice (κατ'ἐνέργειαν ἐπιτήδευμα)'*¹⁴³⁴. The special relationship between the emperor and God did not have to result therefore in an over-mighty rule: he *'is one of the optimates'* who *'stands out (διαφαινόμενος)'* not so much for *'rank, age and dignity'* but more for his political virtue and for his experience in public affairs¹⁴³⁵. And his authority had to be constrained

¹⁴³¹ PROCOPIUS, *De Bello Gotico*, III (VII), 1.5-7; ed. and tr. DEWING 1962, vol. IV, pp. 152-153.

¹⁴³² *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.1; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 16; tr. BELL 2009, p. 145.

¹⁴³³ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.60-61; 5.98; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 27; p. 32; tr. BELL 2009, p. 158; p. 165. See also BELL 2009, p. 61. Since *'good order (εὐταξία) produces peace and tranquillity'* and *'disorder (ἀταξία) implants a war'* indeed, *'an (har)monious order (μόνιον τάξιν)'* is *'truly fitting for a good (emperor)'*; *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.98; 5.115-116; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 32; p. 35; tr. BELL 2009, p. 165; p. 169. John the Lydian also praised Justinian for being *'virtuous and noble'*, a condition which led him to be *'naturally prone to respect those who by descent, manner of life, and generosity emulate him (ζηλοῦντας αὐτὸν) in accordance with their ability'*; JOHN THE LYDIAN, *De Magistratibus*, III, 38; ed. and tr. BANDY 2013, p. 220, p. 273.

¹⁴³⁴ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.13-16; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, pp. 18-19; tr. BELL 2009, pp. 147-148.

¹⁴³⁵ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.40; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 23; tr. BELL 2009, p. 154.

by a necessary *'legitimate proclamation* (τῆς ἐννόμου χάριν ἀναρρήσεως). His power indeed is not only given by God, but is also *'offered by the citizens'*¹⁴³⁶.

The dialogue warned also about the danger of relying on the public opinion: besides those who lived *'according to reason'*, indeed, there are many who are *'led by opinion and make their judgments, with an eye to blame, in accordance with how things turn out'*¹⁴³⁷. The emperor, therefore, need to avoid to take the power through mechanisms of persuasion based on the ability in displaying (ἐπιδεικτικόν) himself according to the will of masses¹⁴³⁸. He must also refrain from ruling through violence or deceitful scheming¹⁴³⁹. The kind of government praised by the author of the Dialogue is thus one which had to be in *'imitation of God amongst men* (τὸ θεοῦ (...) ἐν ἀνθρώποις μίμημα) and in which *'what is given from God to emperors should be embedded in the state amongst men both justly and in public law. What is administered in this way'*, concluded the dialogue, *'will be administered reverently, so far as God is concerned, and fittingly amongst men'*¹⁴⁴⁰. Joining harmoniously the mortal and supernatural nature of the ruler, the republican and the autocratic ideals of the imperial behaviour, thus, the author of the Dialogue presented the imperial power as given by God as well as established among men with justice and according to the law.

'What would such authority be if not that of imperial rule alone and of an emperor who resembled, so far as possible, Heaven with the same name and the same power – if, that is, corruptible can be compared to the incorruptible? But carrying within himself the divine likeness (ὁμοιότητα), and alone standing in a twofold relation (διττὴν ... περικείμενος) to mankind: in one, as a man amongst men (ὡς ἄνθρωπος μετ' ἀνθρώπων); in the other, as an emperor above other men (ὡς βασιλεὺς ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους)? (...) He *'would reasonably seek to rule to the best of his ability like him whose likeness and image he was. If not, he would not truly be emperor, but merely an empty name'*¹⁴⁴¹.

The best visual examples for those ideas are the famous portraits of Justinian and Theodora that shine from the walls of the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna. Under the theophany of Christ – depicted in the apse conch above – the emperors proceed together with the members of their respective court. Their feet intermingle over each other signalling their position both at the same level (as *primi inter pares*) as well as superior to them. They seem to lead mankind in a heavenly procession in front of God, in line with a kind of imagery, proposed by Romanos the Melodist, for whom Justinian and Theodora acted as intercessors for the salvation of their people¹⁴⁴²: the supernatural dimension of their being is

¹⁴³⁶ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.17; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, pp. 19-20; tr. BELL 2009, p. 149.

¹⁴³⁷ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.41; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 23; tr. BELL p. 154.

¹⁴³⁸ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.42-43; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, pp. 24; tr. BELL 2009, pp. 154-155.

¹⁴³⁹ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.46; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 25; tr. BELL 2009, p. 155.

¹⁴⁴⁰ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.45; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 24; tr. BELL 2009, p. 155.

¹⁴⁴¹ *DE SCIENTIA POLITICA DIALOGUS*, 5.122-123; ed. MAZZUCCHI 1982, p. 37; tr. BELL 2009, p. 171.

¹⁴⁴² ROMANOS THE MELODIST, *Kontakia*, 54, 18; ed. MAAS and TRYPANIS 1963, pp. 468-469; tr. TROMBI 2007, vol. II, p. 215.

expressed in this case by the bi-dimensional and abstract rendering of their bodies (in a manner similar to the icons of saints and holy persons) and by the frontal position turned toward the onlookers¹⁴⁴³. Furthermore, their gesture of symbolic sacrifice and offering reflected not so much the actual Eucharistic rite practically performed in the apsidal space, but rather those of the patriarch Abraham and the priest-king Melchisedek in the nearby panels, as well as the Magi's adoration on Theodora's cloth, which prefigures the sacrifice of Christ. Justinian is even approached by those present with the covered hands, a well-known symbolic sign of respect toward the sacred which was also actually performed at court¹⁴⁴⁴. A refined realism characterized, on the other hand, the details of the elaborated costumes and the face's lineaments (some members of the retinue even smile slightly, a facial expression attributed by Procopius to the senators who offered godlike honours to the emperors in the mosaic of the Chalké)¹⁴⁴⁵. Especially the ladies following Theodora display gestures which are neither symbolic and neither of benediction, but expressed in Hellenistic style elegance and fine manners, nobility and wealthy social status, in a way similar to the movements performed by the saints in procession on the fifth century mosaic on the ceiling of the Neonian Baptistery, also in Ravenna¹⁴⁴⁶. Also, an aristocrat attendant of Theodora raises a curtain (likely the *vela* which divided different locations in the Church – to increase the feeling of mystery during the liturgy¹⁴⁴⁷ – and in the palace¹⁴⁴⁸). In the panel of Justinian, a priest gracefully carries an incense burner in his right hand and tends his left hand in a rhetorical-like gesture that comes out from the framework of the picture, like as he was proceeding out from a theatrical stage. On the other side of the image, at the beginning of the procession, another attendant is partially covered by a column, as he was going to enter into the scene from the backstage¹⁴⁴⁹. Those gestures remind those performed by actors who turned toward the audience before going out of the scene, and underline the character of spectacle of the procession perceived by the artist, this time giving a more positive (and even sacral) connotation to the traditional

¹⁴⁴³ HALDON 1990, pp. 406-409.

¹⁴⁴⁴ GRABAR (1936) 1971, pp. 106ff. On the relationship between the scene and the actual ceremonies described in the *De Ceremoniis*, see especially DECKERS 2002. The same gesture is present in the processions of virgins and saints on the aisles of St Apollinare Nuovo, which originally portrayed the members of the Theodorian court and which in 570 had been re-shaped by the bishop Agnellus to fit the reconciliation of the church to the catholic cult. On the history and iconography of the church, see PICCININI 1991.

¹⁴⁴⁵ PROCOPIUS, *De Aedificiis*, I, 10.19; ed. and tr. DEWING 1961, vol. VII, pp. 86-87.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Mathews see the saints' gestures as derived from the iconographical conventions which characterized the philosopher in several third-century sarcophagi; MATHEWS 1963, p. 59.

¹⁴⁴⁷ See especially the church of Achiropoietos at Thessaloniki; KREUTHEIMER (1965) 1986.

¹⁴⁴⁸ The mosaic originally representing the palace of Theodoric, in the southern aisle of St Apollinare Nuovo, clearly represented the use of those curtains hanging on the door of aristocratic residences, while the 'shadows' of the members of the courts in front of them, erased after 570, are still visible by a careful eye; PICCININI 1991.

¹⁴⁴⁹ A similar device is employed in the famous lunette in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, where the rocks and similar columns covered with gems and golden leaf also evoked the idea of an almost 'theatrical' space, on which the Shepard, royally dressed, set himself. According to Kitzinger, the artist employed in this case a late Hellenistic and Roman illusionistic perspective, while in St Vitale the actor moves in a more dematerialized space; KITZINGER 1977.

linking between theatre and power and to the display of authority through graceful but also otherworldly bodies.

In the context of instability which characterized the period between the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century, the emphasis on the presence of a human and therefore mortal, perishable, and fallible dimension in the imperial nature was included in the official speech addressed to the new emperor by his predecessor the day of his proclamation. Writing in the twelfth century on the ground of previous sources, Michael the Syrian reported that already Theodosius II, two days before his death, instructed his successor Marcian to administer the empire ‘*with the fear of God*’¹⁴⁵⁰. Justin II especially uttered a high minded public speech to his successor Tiberius when, no longer able to bear his imperial role whether because of his madness or of a general illness, he adopted him and proclaimed him Caesar. The speech is reported by Evagrius, Theophylact Simocatta, and even by the highly critical version of John of Ephesus, according to whom Justin managed to speak clearly and with rationality thanks to an angel (this time a ‘good angel’) who suggested him the words¹⁴⁵¹. The speech was uttered in a public place (on a *rostrum* according to John)¹⁴⁵² in front of the Senate, the priestly hierarchy, and the patriarch John Scholasticus¹⁴⁵³. Justin conveyed it, claimed Simocatta, ‘*not beautifying the ugliness of the diction, nor making any change to the inelegance of the expression*’ but ‘*nakedly (...) so that the veracity of what follows may appear from the simplicity and authenticity of the nature of the diction*’¹⁴⁵⁴:

‘Behold, God magnifies you (ἀγαθύνων σε); God grants you this apparel (τὸ σχῆμα), not I; honour him, that you may also be honoured by him (...) do not resemble me in hatred, for I have collected paymen as a mortal (ἐγὼ γὰρ ὡς ἄνθρωπος εἰσωδιάσθην) (for indeed I was fallible (πταιστὸς ἐγενόμην)), and I have been paid in accordance with my sins. But I will plead my case at the tribunal of Christ against those who

¹⁴⁵⁰ MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, VIII, 8; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 221.

¹⁴⁵¹ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 5; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 175-176; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 95. The scene, added John of Ephesus, was consecrated also in art with pictures in which an angel stood between Tiberius and Justin ‘*and with his mouth at Justin’s ear*’; *ibidem*. The different recounts had been transcribed and compared by Cameron, who recognized how they differed in details but shared the same tone and feelings: they likely derived directly from a contemporary source, a transcription of the speech which was taken down by many scribes and from which it was produced an abbreviated version; CAMERON 1976b.

¹⁴⁵² JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 5; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 175-176; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 95.

¹⁴⁵³ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, III, 11.7; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 132; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 89.

¹⁴⁵⁴ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, III, 11.5-6; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 132; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 89.

*have done this to me. Do not let this apparel (τὸ σχῆμα) incite you as it did me. Attend thus all men as you do to yourself. Recognize what you were and what you are now (γνώθι τί ἦς καὶ τί εἶ νῦν)*¹⁴⁵⁵.

Justin declared therefore that the imperial *schema* was a condition given by God, charged with great responsibility and a serious danger if not properly used. Evagrius for his part did not employ directly the term *schema* but underlined the illusive and deceptive character of the imperial appearance: ‘*Let not the apparent dignity of the vestment (τῆς ἀμπεχόνης ἢ φαντασίου) mislead you*’ declared Justin to his successor, ‘*nor the illusion of what is visible (τῶν ὁρωμένων ἢ σκηνῆ)*; *seduced by these I did not realize that I had become liable (ὑπόδικος) to the extreme penalties. Rectify my mistakes by leading the state through all prosperity*¹⁴⁵⁶. John of Ephesus stressed also the sinful nature of Justin, who finally repented for the unworthy deeds against the Monophysites: ‘*Beware, lest this apparel (σχῆμα) and royal dress lead thee astray, as it has led me, and fill thee with pride and error and presumption, and bring upon thee the wrath of Heaven, as it has upon me, and thou too be stripped, and fall from thy kingdom as I this day*’¹⁴⁵⁷.

Furthermore, the emperor even expressed the desire to open the gates of the palace and to stage his sufferings (according to John, God continued to inflict him physical punishments until his last days) with a public show in front of the population: ‘*all who wished might enter, and see the king asking for death, and desiring it rather than life, and death denied him*’¹⁴⁵⁸. In other words, thus, Justin publicly declared his desire to be seen as a human and mortal being who had failed to properly fill the *schema* granted by God by staining it with sins.

Tiberius (raised on the throne as Tiberius II) warned, in turn, his successor Maurice with a speech, when he fell sick and ‘*it was necessary*’ also for him ‘*to pass on at last from the present sphere and to yield to the universal law of nature (τῷ κοινῷ ὑπέκειν νόμῳ τῆς φύσεως)*’¹⁴⁵⁹. Tiberius, reported Simocatta, revealed his anxieties for his imminent death and expressed the wish to arrange for his mortal affairs (that is, to confess his sins) before presenting to the Creator the account of his ‘*mortal life (τοὺς λόγους τῆς βιοτῆς)*’¹⁴⁶⁰. He was carried on a litter to the middle of the palace’s courtyard

¹⁴⁵⁵ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, III, 11.8-10; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 132-133; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, pp. 89-90. The same also in THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6070, AD 577/8; ed. DE BOOR 1833, pp. 248-250; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 368-369.

¹⁴⁵⁶ EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 13.13-17; ed. BIDEZ 1898, pp. 208-209; tr. WHITBY 2000, p. 272.

¹⁴⁵⁷ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 5; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 173-174; tr. BROOKS 1952, pp. 93-94. The same in MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, ch. 15; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 407. For the term *schema* in the passage, see BROOKS 1952, n. 6, p. 93.

¹⁴⁵⁸ JOHN OF EPHESUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 6; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, pp. 177-178; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 177; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, 15; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 408.

¹⁴⁵⁹ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 1.1; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 38; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 19.

¹⁴⁶⁰ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 1.5; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 39; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 19.

of Tribunal¹⁴⁶¹. Since he was too weak to speak with his own voice, he spoke to those present (the patriarch and a congregation of priestly and lay high-dignitaries) through a skilled orator (Simocatta called him a 'quaestor'). The latter acted thus as the emperor's 'mouthpiece (βασιλέως δὲ γλωτταν)' and 'ennobled the imperial command in a manner worthy of royal majesty'¹⁴⁶². Once again the speech publicly acknowledged the mortal nature of the emperor and alerted Maurice about 'the awesome duties that underlie the superficial glamour and outward pomp of the imperial throne'¹⁴⁶³. The new emperor received advice about not to get puffed-up by the power like his predecessor: 'today' declared Tiberius through the orator's words, 'my former freedom and impunity (παρρησία καὶ ἄδεια) cause me great fear: for those who possess abundance of power are likely also to be attended by numerous faults (τὰ σφάλματα)'¹⁴⁶⁴. 'Kingship', indeed, 'is an exalted and lofty matter, which elevates on high its riders and puffs him up in his reasoning'. But a good emperor has to rule with reason and with wisdom, seeking the goodwill from his subjects rather than fear, honour instead of flattery. He has to act in a humble manner, living 'like a philosopher' and regarding the purple 'as some cheap rag to dress in, and the crown to be no different at all from the pebbles on the seashores'. After the discourse, then, Tiberius put the crown and the purple cloak on the Caesar¹⁴⁶⁵. The main elements of the events are reported also by Gregory of Tours: Tiberius, when he was on the death-bed ('*Ecce! iam impleto sentio tempus vitae meae*'), entrusted Maurice with the imperial power ('*imperium meum*') and warned him to use it properly and to rule with *aequitate* and *iustitia*¹⁴⁶⁶.

Whether they were actually uttered by the emperors or not, these discourses reflected how strong was felt the union between the divine and human dimensions in the emperor's person and the responsibilities connected with the imperial behaviour. He had to maintain control over the human part of his being to properly rule the State and avoid divine punishment. The imperial life was more and more felt as a transient thing like the light of a candle, the grass and the flowers: 'One day before

¹⁴⁶¹ For another location of the setting of this ceremonial in the Campus Tribunalis at the Hebdomon, see WHITBY and WHITBY 1985, n. 6, p. 19.

¹⁴⁶² THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 1.3; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 39; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 19. According to Theophanes Confessor Tiberius, who was dying because of some spoilt berries, was unable to speak, and announced his successor to the populace 'by means of a prepared statement'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6074, AD 581/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 252; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 373.

¹⁴⁶³ FRENO 1988, p. 153.

¹⁴⁶⁴ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 1.6; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 39-40; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁶⁵ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 1.16-18; I, 1.22; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 41-42; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1985, p. 21. John of Ephesus did not mention the speech of Tiberius, but only mentioned the marriage between Maurice and Tiberius' daughter and the crowing of the Caesar 'on the day before his death'; JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, V, 3; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 350; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 350. Michael the Syrian added that Tiberius 'summoned the senate and asked its members to pray for him. He spoke to them at length' before giving the crown to Maurice; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, 20; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 419.

¹⁴⁶⁶ GREGORY OF TOURS, *Libri Historiarum X*, VI, 30; ed. KRUSCH and LEVISON 1951, pp. 298-299; tr. OLDONI 1981, vol. II, pp. 79-81. The same also in PAUL THE DEACON, *Historia Longobardorum*, III, 15; ed. SCHWARTZ 2009, pp. 198-200; tr. CAPO 1992, p. 145.

the murder of the Emperor Maurice, reminded the seventh century's Life of Theodore of Sykeon, the saint saw the 'sleepless lamp' of the monastery of the Mother of God going out, while any attempt to re-light it with or without prayers failed. The saint recognized the fact as a divine sign given to him and his brothers 'not without cause or to no purpose', and after many prayers its meaning was given thanks to a divine vision. 'Very truly didst thou picture the nature of man (τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσιν), blessed Isaiah', commented bitterly Theodore, 'for 'Every man (πᾶς ... ἄνθρωπος)', it is written, 'is grass (χόρτου) and all the glory of man (πᾶσα δόξα ἀνθρώπου) is as the flower of grass; the grass has withered and its flower has fallen (Is. 40:7)'. The saint announced then the imminent death of Maurice to his brothers and they declared that he was a human being who deserved his fate because of his bad government¹⁴⁶⁷. Maurice, we will see also in the next paragraph, was finally overthrown and murdered together with his numerous family by Phocas. The more positive recount of Simocatta included the image of the dead imperial body as a powerful reminder of the human frailties: thrown into the sea, it was bestowed again on the dry land by the marine current so that 'the royal disaster (συμφορᾶς), or, to put it more appropriately, the calamities (συμπτώματα) of the inhabited world, were exhibited (θεατρίζεται) to the crowds; the shores of Chalcedon were filled with the crowds, who received the narrative of their own folly (ἀνοίας τὴν ἱστορίαν), as they gazed at the sea-waves' naked exhibition (θεατρίζοντα) of the emperor's bodies like depictions of misfortunes (πίνακας δυστυχημάτων τινᾶς)¹⁴⁶⁸. The emperor's death was the very moment in which his mortal nature was dramatically revealed, and now this very moment took the shocking form of the horribly vilified corpse of a murdered Maurice.

Finally, the emperor was constantly reminded of his mortal nature also in the ceremonial context: Leontius of Neapolis reported how at his times (at the beginning of the seventh century), on occasion of the imperial coronation, the builders of the imperial tomb (the μνημοράλιοι) were used to bring to the emperor 'four or five small pieces of marbles of different colour' and ask him to choose the one for his future tomb. Those words, explained Leontius, suggested to him (αἰνισσόμενοι αὐτῷ) 'that, as a corruptible mortal who soon passes away (ὡς ἄνθρωπος ὃν φθαρτὸς καὶ παρερχόμενος), he should take thought for his own soul, and govern his kingdom righteously (εὐσεβῶς)¹⁴⁶⁹. The practice, so praised that even the patriarch John the Almsgiver 'imitated this truly praiseworthy custom and

¹⁴⁶⁷ VITA SANCTI THEODORI SYCEOTAE, 119; ed. FESTUGIÈRE 1970, pp. 95-96; tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, pp. 167-168. The Saint replied to them: 'This man, children, will shortly be removed, and after him worse things shall happen such as this generation does not expect'; *ibidem*.

¹⁴⁶⁸ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 12.1-2; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 306-307; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 228.

¹⁴⁶⁹ LEONTIUS OF NEAPOLIS, *Vita S. Ioannis Eleemosynarii*, 17.4-13; ed. and tr. FESTUGIÈRE 1974, p. 365 (p. 467); tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, pp. 228-229.

*gave orders for a tomb to be built for him*¹⁴⁷⁰, is not attested as such in any other sources¹⁴⁷¹. Later ceremonial protocols attested the employment of another device, this time an *insigne* of power, with the same purpose: the ἀκακία or ἀνεξικακία, a little pouch or a cylinder made of silk and full of dust (or earth), carried by the emperors in procession. According to the *De Ceremoniis*, it was held in the left hand as the symbol ‘of the resurrection of our earthly nature’¹⁴⁷². Dagron on the other side found in a later work of Symeon of Thessaloniki a reference to its meaning as a way ‘to signify the perishable nature of power and the humility which (the emperor) should feel’ since he was moulded from the same clay as other men and would return to the same dust¹⁴⁷³. In the fourteenth century, a further development of the meaning is found in the Pseudo-Kodinos: he declared that the *akakia* pointed out the humility and the mortality of the emperor (τὸ τὸν βασιλέα ταπεινὸν εἶναι ὡς θνητὸν), reminding him not to be puffed up by vanity and to always be aware of the unstable nature of power¹⁴⁷⁴.

We have seen how in the fifth and sixth centuries the *schema* and the *schemata* of the emperor developed and how it actually worked to face contemporaneous practical problems. Pagan features continued to be included in the representation of the power together with the new ones carefully presented and advertised in earlier centuries’ authors. Triumph and humility, republican friendliness and authoritarian distance, self-celebration and self-abasement, sacredness and mortality, joined together and were harmoniously included in the visual imagery of the victorious and faithful ruler, supported by and ruling in connection with God. Not so much difficulties or conflicts seems to have been felt in the process, and the emperor could express the value or the ideological statement more persuasive and useful for the occasion through different *schemata*. They could be used and combined to prove his suitability to fulfil the different roles (military, civil, and sacred) required by his position and to grant him a successful rise to power. They could even enhance his position and help him handle the population in the face of the threats he had to solve during his rule: in the spectacular stages set up in the City, Christian elements gradually strengthened their presence and overcame the pagan ones in the way in which the emperor behaved and displayed himself in public. His official *schema*

¹⁴⁷⁰ LEONTIUS OF NEAPOLIS, *Vita S. Ioannis Eleemosynarii*, 17.14-32; ed. and tr. FESTUGIÈRE 1974, p. 365 (p. 467); tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, p. 229. The tomb was left unfinished until his death, so to gain the help of the zealous Christians who ‘should come in and say to him, ‘Your tomb, master, is still unfinished. Allow us, we pray, to finish it because you do not know at what hour the thief will come’. The Patriarch arranged this to be done in that wise in order to leave a good example to his successors’ *ibidem*.

¹⁴⁷¹ FESTUGIÈRE 1974, n. 19, 228, p. 569.

¹⁴⁷² CONSTANTINUS PORPHYROGENITUS, *De Ceremoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, II, 52; ed. and tr. MOFFATT and MAXEME TALL 2012, vol. 2, p. 766. Furthermore, since it had a scroll-like appearance, it was also considered ‘a symbol of Christ’s teaching and commandments’; PARANI 2003, p. 33.

¹⁴⁷³ *De Sancto Templo* 148; ed. PG 155, col. 356, in DAGRON (1996) 2003, n. 92, p. 36.

¹⁴⁷⁴ PSEUDO-KODINOS, *De Officiis*, IV.51; ed. and tr. VARPEAUX 1966, pp. 200-202. For further examples see also KAZHDAN 1991a. For a mystical-symbolical interpretation, see PERTUSI 1976, pp. 519-521.

increasingly underlined the connection with the biblical history and emphasised the virtue of humility as well as the grief shared by the emperor with his subject: in this way, he cleverly exploited the ceremonial context to impress and overcome the anger of the crowd. The case study of Corippus has especially shown the harmony and the developments that occurred in the image of an emperor to be feared and an emperor to be loved. His Justin II actively revealed through his gestures his authority, his might, as well as his humbleness toward God and his sensitivity toward his fellow human beings. The members of the court also emerged as active performers who employed, in turn, their gestures and their physical attitudes: they could act as decorative bodies expressing the perfect order of the palace, but they could also perform physical movements intended for a practical purpose, for example to restore the silence during a meeting. Other sources on the other hand testified the spread of highly physical and violent gestures, the slaps, in the context of heated debates at court. Physical gestures and postures also increased their role in the mechanism of embassies, where the tension and the clash between different kinds of ideal behaviour of the Romans and their 'barbarians' interlocutors could be presented as having political consequences.

Procopius' and John of Ephesus' lively portraits of, respectively, Justinian and Justin II, have shown on the other hand the attention paid toward gestures and physical behaviour in the field of the imperial criticism, where the propaganda of the imperial body was overthrown. Procopius unveiled a point of view for which specific gestures could be felt as revealing social chaos, a coward and unmanly character, even political weakness and lack of civic dignity. The traditional theme of the theatre applied to the imperial court became a pretext to underline the deceiving, hypocrite, and false character of the emperor who concealed his anger and his real nature of avenging demon. Once again, gestures and physical movements unveiled the truth and its harmful consequences on the empire. John of Ephesus for his part cleverly turned the imperial mental illness of Justin II into a vivid portrait of a mad and demonic ruler unable to control his mind and his body, performing highly physical gestures which revealed his failure to fulfil the role given by God. Moreover, the text gave a hint on how the palace staff reacted to unexpected out-of-norm imperial behaviour, in the desperate attempt to cover them or to justify their existence with the idea of the mortal dimension of the imperial being.

It seems therefore that the increase in the sacred exaltation of the emperor and the ceremonies around him, which characterized especially in the second half of the sixth century as one of the practical effects of the 'liturgisierung' occurred in the Byzantine society¹⁴⁷⁵, was accompanied by a parallel increase in the emphasis on the mortal nature of the emperor. The search for cohesion and stability, indeed, required also the need to feel the gap between the idea of a sacred emperor ruling on an empire and a population cherished by God, and the signs of divine wrath, which included military

¹⁴⁷⁵ MEIER 2019, p. 39-41: pp. 966-973.

defeats, earthquakes, plagues. Humility, mortality, grief, were all values expressed and included in the official *schema*, exploited by the emperor in his public performances. The political philosophy developed in the while underpinned further the situation: the actual imperfection of the imperial body who could sin, could be taken by anger, and could even get sick and be taken by madness, was addressed and investigated by accepting the compresence between a mortal and a divine nature of the authority. The question of this apparent compresence, which continued to be used by authors as a narrative device to praise or to criticise an emperor without questioning the imperial institution, reached its peak in the imperial dismissal speeches and was then dramatically revealed by the sight of the dead corpse of the emperor Maurice. The imperial power had a divine source, but the emperor remained always and ultimately a man and a human being. In line with the ideas that harked back to Gregory of Nyssa, he reflected a microcosm where *noetos* and *aistheros*, mind and matter, intermingled and interpenetrated: his mind was connected with the divine realm of the God who had chosen him and has given him his *schema*. His body, on the other hand, was indeed sacred but also involved in the sins, the fails, and the chaos of the material world.

The analysis had been aimed at offering a more nuanced portrait of the ruler and his audience, so as to reach a more complete understanding of the functioning of gestures and postures in the political scene. We have seen especially their important practical role in political interactions and in the visual representation of power, but also how they were seen and how they could have been underpinned by philosophical reflections, which could impact in turn on the practice of the power. The emphasis not only on the sacredness, but also on the mortality, humility, and subordination to God embodied by the emperor, was not felt as debasing the image of the power. They counteracted the increasing distance between the ruler and his subjects, and contributed to appeal to the audience's emotions by presenting the triumphant ruler not only as subordinated to (and therefore legitimated by) God, but also as a being who shared flaws, passions, and occasional bad behaviour with his subjects. Those different *schemata* equipped fifth and sixth centuries' emperors with new instruments for keeping their position and ruling their subjects: keener observers like Procopius remained nevertheless aware of the theatrical and potentially deceiving nature of the imperial body, while their reversal remained a powerful instrument in the hands of the critique.

3. THE SEVENTH CENTURY

3.1. THE SCHEMA AS INSTRUMENT TO OVERCOME THE INSTABILITY OF SOCIETY

The period from the end of the sixth to the eighth centuries has been a key one for the definition of the process leading from a late antique civilization to 'what we call now Byzantium'¹⁴⁷⁶. Major and relatively rapid geographical and ethnic upheavals occurred in those years. First, Justinian's *renovatio* was followed, as we have already mentioned, by a rapid series of territorial losses and external assaults. The earlier years of the reign of Heraclius were also marked by shocking attacks on the cities of the empire: after initial hesitation, the emperor himself led the army into a victorious campaign against the Sasanian Empire crowned by triumphal entries in Constantinople (628 or 629) and in Jerusalem (630). New and powerful enemies emerged in the while: the Avar and Slav hordes repeatedly besieged Thessaloniki and Constantinople between the end of the sixth and the first half of the seventh centuries, the Bulgars established at the end of the seventh century a state in the Balkans, the Western kingdoms of the Lombards and Franks strengthened their power together with the increasingly independent See of St Peter. The Arab Muslims caused a cataclysm for the equilibrium of the political order of the empire when, between the mid-seventh and the ninth century, they invaded the economically and culturally productive provinces of the Near East and North Africa (Egypt, Palestine, and Syria). Rather than a period of 'decline' or 'collapse', however, those years had to be seen as a period of 'transformation': the administration of the territories underwent an important re-organization and centralisation, and the multiculturalism and openness, which still characterized the early sixth century, was gradually replaced by an 'inward-looking and exclusivist trend toward an uniformity of appearance'¹⁴⁷⁷. The process involved also the 'social relations and the dominant elements of political and popular belief system'¹⁴⁷⁸. The empire became a more compact and ideologically homogeneous entity revolving around the Greek as official language, around the capital, and around a Christian orthodox emperor. Despite the instability of the political situation, this latter managed to keep and even reinforce his position as the source of authority, transmitting status and privileges to the members of his court through an increasingly strict hierarchical system, and became

¹⁴⁷⁶ CAMERON 2014, p. 114. Ostrogorsky first considered the reign of Phocas as the last phase of the late-Roman or early Byzantine times and the reign of Heraclius as the moment of passage to a properly said 'Byzantine' society released from the weight of the previous heritage and fuelled by new sources; OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, p. 73. On the contemporary development of a more defined 'Byzantine style' also in the artistic production, see GRABAR 1936 (1971), pp. 162ff.

¹⁴⁷⁷ HALDON 1990, pp. 1-2; pp. 348ff.

¹⁴⁷⁸ HALDON 1990, p. 1, p. 431; p. 43. For a summary of the changes, adjustments and developments occurred in this period, and their influence on the *mentalité* of the contemporaries, see CAMERON 1992.

the symbol of a common identity which tightened together a social, political, and cultural elite which was now drawn from a wider background¹⁴⁷⁹.

Nevertheless, this dramatically altered world deeply affected the values, the priorities, and the concerns of a society that, as we have seen, was already shaken by the plagues, the catastrophes, and the military defeats of the second half of the sixth centuries. The feeling of instability in the political situation and uncertainty about the future had intensified the eschatological apprehensions of the population, already present in the most sensible authors of the sixth century, and contributed shaping their view of the events¹⁴⁸⁰. The failure of Justinian's *renovatio* and the repeated attacks on the empire, on the other hand, had caused a general demoralisation, military discontent, and an apparent serious loss of prestige of the government¹⁴⁸¹. The situation of the late sixth and seventh centuries led according to Haldon to even 'a manifest collapse of confidence in the traditional symbols of earthly supremacy, in particular the institutions of the imperial establishment'¹⁴⁸².

This situation ended up conferring more power to an audience (army, members of the court, and urban crowds) in front of whom those in authority had to be careful in their performance¹⁴⁸³. The lack of a ceremonial gesture continued to entail serious political consequences: under Maurice, for example, the army disclosed all its political power when the newly appointed general Priscus failed to perform and 'vilified' the ancient custom (ἔθος / νόμον) according to which 'the man who was about to assume the reins of generalship should, when the soldiers came to meet him, dismount from his horse, walk through the middle of the soldiery, and favour the camp with his salutations (τοῖς ἀσπασμοῖς)'. The army 'did not bear the insult (τὴν ὕβριν) with moderation (μετρίως)', and the anger exploded in a riot, further exacerbated by the imperial decision to reduce the customary payment to the soldiers¹⁴⁸⁴. The soldiers continued in turn to use their gestures, their voices, and highly physical acts to express their feelings: during a military assembly summoned by the Byzantine general Commentiolus to decide what to do against the Avars, for example, the multitude gestured (ἐπένευε) and instructed 'by their hand (ταῖς χερσὶ ... ἐκέλευσε)' a veteran to speak out¹⁴⁸⁵. They could express their disagreement

¹⁴⁷⁹ HALDON 1990, pp. 427-435; p. 450.

¹⁴⁸⁰ LAMMA 1978; MAGDALINO 1993; VARGHESE 2006, with bibliography.

¹⁴⁸¹ OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, p. 71.

¹⁴⁸² HALDON 1990, p. 436.

¹⁴⁸³ For the importance of taking into count the popular feeling under Heraclius, see KAEGI 2003, p. 61.

¹⁴⁸⁴ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, III, I.7-12; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 111; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 73. Theophanes later reported the fact on the ground of different sources and presented it as the cause which led the army to raise on the shield another candidate, Germanus. The revolt was calmed down by the emperor only after many efforts and by means of oaths and gifts. Soldiers, commented indeed Theophanes, 'do not take kindly to being insulted in public'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6079, AD 586/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 260; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 382.

¹⁴⁸⁵ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, II, 13.16; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 97; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 62. On the partisan and distorted reading given by Simocatta of the event, full of bias against Commentiolus and Peter, and its political reasons, see the WHITBY and WHITBY 1985, pp. XXIII-XXIV.

disturbing and even causing the failure of a meeting, like when the soldiers interrupted the arrogant speech of a Persian ambassador who was trying to secure a peace treaty at Roman's expenses by *'hissing and creating uproar by shouting'*¹⁴⁸⁶.

Simocatta underlined the power of the audience when he recounted the overthrown of the Persian king Hormisdas by his son Chosroes (II) in 590. Hormisdas is depicted here as an arrogant ruler whose lack of worthiness prevented him to make efficacious use of the ceremonial devices at his disposal: the magnificent attire (ἔσθης) which *'amplified his splendour'* and in front of which *'the eye of the beholder was all but petrified by insatiable amazement'* was indeed actually *'that of a tyrant (τύραννος)'*, that is the attire of someone who ruled only in the semblance of an emperor (ἐν εικόνη βασιλείας)¹⁴⁸⁷. It did not prevent him therefore to be humiliated and shamefully deposed in public at the very moment in which he was sitting on the throne in front of all his court. Bindoes – a man of rank whom Hormisdas had previously put in prison without reason –, together with his brother and a crowd of peasants, entered the royal palace and *'railed and blasphemed against Hormisdas'*, while nobody in the room stopped him to *'spare the royal dignity'* but jeered at him. At this point *'Bindoes grasped Hormisdas by the hand'*, had him arrested by the bodyguard and entrusted with the throne Hormisdas' son Chosroes¹⁴⁸⁸. Shortly after Hormisdas asked then to deliver one last speech in front of his former subjects (satraps, officials, dignitaries and all the bodyguards): he stood in the middle of the palace and accused his *'spectators (ἄνδρες θεαταί)'* of being turned from *'subjects who obeyed in fear'* to *'haughty enemies'*: *'For I see you revelling in these misdeeds'* cried out Hormisdas, *'clapping your two hands (κρατοῦντας τὸ χεῖρε), gnashing your teeth (τοῖς ὀδοῦσι δὲ τετριγόντας), with lying sneers on your faces, immoderate in laughter, unbounded in insults and (...) treating the venerable institution of kingship as an occasion for amusement'*¹⁴⁸⁹. Hormisdas then tried to apply to Chosroes the traditional imagery of the 'bad ruler': he declared that he lacked royal spirit and an authoritative mind because *'his impulses are uncontrolled, his temper is naturally furious, he is suffused with a look of inhumanity, he is unable to respect the practices of forethought, his manner (τὸν τρόπον) is arrogant, his appetite naturally hedonistic'*¹⁴⁹⁰. Bindoes laughed at those words and accused him of keeping the

¹⁴⁸⁶ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 15.11-12; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 69-70; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 42.

¹⁴⁸⁷ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 306, 40; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 522-523. John referred to the six days of the rule of Leontius, the man who in 488 usurped the power of Zeno.

¹⁴⁸⁸ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, IV, 3.7-11; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 153-154; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 106. Theophanes Confessor, who assigned the event to 587/8, later dramatized the event even more by adding the fact that the men assaulted the king *'with much abuse'* and that Bindoes even *'removed the diadem from his head'*; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6080, AD 587/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 264; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 386.

¹⁴⁸⁹ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, IV, 4.1; 4.3; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 155; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 107. Similar also THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6080, AD 587/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 264; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 386.

¹⁴⁹⁰ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, IV, 4.15; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 157; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 109.

language of authority¹⁴⁹¹, while the audience insulted him and went on to pay the royal homage (προσεκυνεῖτο βασιλικώτατα) and to acclaim Chosroes¹⁴⁹².

Especially the urban crowd was increasingly felt as an element of instability and a problematic social force: *'the multitude* (τὸ πλῆθος)*'*, declared indeed Simocatta, *'is naturally easy to influence* (εὐμετάγωγον) *and hard to please* (δυσάρεστον), *and it likes the ceaseless movement of change* (τὸ τῆς μεταβολῆς ἀεικίνητον)¹⁴⁹³. With those words, Simocatta tried to justify the episodes in which the urban mob attacked Maurice. This emperor was particularly unpopular because of the heavy taxation he imposed for the re-organization of the empire, and was therefore accused of being *'very avaricious'*¹⁴⁹⁴. Simocatta, however, was eager to present him in a rather eulogist tone, almost as a saintly-like being, according to his political goal to give legality over Heraclius' coup d'état against Maurice's murder, the emperor Phocas¹⁴⁹⁵. When Maurice was attacked *'by some ignorant gossips from among the multitude'* and was insulted with *'slanderous chants'* (because of the capture of two Roman commanders by the Chagan), Simocatta described him as reacting in the proper manner: *'the insult did not engender wrath in the emperor: for with regard to anger the emperor's soul was barren and held no communion with the flame of wrath'*¹⁴⁹⁶. Maurice was not safe neither in the moment in which he was performing a sacred *schema* in the most flawless way: after a severe shortage of food, he proceeded in procession bare-footed, at night and *'with the whole city'*, but was shamefully pelted with stones¹⁴⁹⁷. Other sources specified that the population also staged a little show involving a bold

¹⁴⁹¹ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, IV, 5.3; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 158; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 109.

¹⁴⁹² THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, IV, 7.1; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 161-162; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 112. Hormisdas will remain in the late seventh century an example of a ruler killed not in prison but *'at the royal hall'* present all the nobles, the generals, and the troops; PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*, 10, 75; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, p. 17.

¹⁴⁹³ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, III, 5.9; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 118; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 78.

¹⁴⁹⁴ JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 95, 1; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 151. John of Ephesus explained Maurice' avarice with the need for money due to the largesse conveyed by his predecessor Tiberius, and reported how he was *'ridiculed and scoffed at by money, and called a close-fisted and miserly fellow'*; JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, V, 20; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 358. This reputation will continue also later in Theophanes Confessor, who described him as affected by the *'disease of avarice* (ἐνόσει ... τὸ φιλόχρυσον); THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6079, AD 586/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 260; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 381; n. 24 p. 384. This was a particularly serious charge: *'avarice gives birth to nothing good'* commented indeed Theophanes, *'but is the mother of all evils. Since the emperor is sick with avarice, he is the cause of the greatest evils to the Romans'*; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6094, AD 601/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 286-287; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 411. For the quote see also MANGO and SCOTT 1997, n. 29, p. 416.

¹⁴⁹⁵ FRENDO 1988. Whitby supposed that the saintly character imposed on the figure of Maurice had to be explained with a hagiographical tradition connected with this emperor (WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. XX), but it is also possible to read it as a development of elements already present in the imperial imagery.

¹⁴⁹⁶ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, II, 17.5-6; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 103-104; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 67.

¹⁴⁹⁷ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 4, 11-12; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 291; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 215. Here, too, Simocatta emphasised the merciful attitude of the emperor: he commanded his guards *'to put on a display* (σχηματίσασθαι) *of a pretended aggression'* and then he *'disciplined the more eminent of the rioters with minor punishment'*; THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 4.13; 5.1-4; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 291-292; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 215-216. The imperial patience is not reported by Theophanes, who

man riding a donkey and dressed with a crown of garlic, 'in imitation (πρὸς μίμησιν)' of the emperor¹⁴⁹⁸. Also in another occasion, then, the mob '*lapses toward tyranny, and spent the night revelling in wickedness and declaiming insulting chants against Maurice*' and against the patriarch. This because, as it is once more reiterated by Simocatta, '*in truth, the multitude is uneducated and is frenzied by changes for the worse, being difficult to correct and utterly uninitiated in expediency*'¹⁴⁹⁹. Pro-Heraclian sources not only presented in positive light Maurice, but also emphasized the unworthy nature of Phocas, who killed Maurice and was overthrown in turn by Heraclius. The terms of the critique are the usual ones, but this time authors decided to place the emphasis on the violence and savagery which seem to have actually characterized his reign¹⁵⁰⁰. Phocas seems to have been skilful in manipulating the crowds through his public appearance. After the *coup d'état* he employed the usual succession of ceremonial acts which included a military *schema*, when he was proclaimed on the shield in the *Tribunal* of the Hebdomon by the factions; then a religious one, when he was crowned by the patriarch Ciriacus in the church of St John at the Hebdomon; and then a triumphal one, when he entered into the City and arrived at the palace passing through the Golden Gate on a chariot among general acclamations¹⁵⁰¹. What stands out the most in the descriptions of this emperor is nevertheless his use of the ceremonial violence, which surfaced in the emphasis on the traditional theme of the emperor easily taken by a fit of uncontrolled anger, unable to control his body and thus unable to properly hold the reins of the empire.

included the episode among the events which led to Maurice's overthrow by God's will; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6079, AD 586/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 259; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 381. On the ceremony of the Hypapante, or Candlemas, see WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, n. 19, p. 215.

¹⁴⁹⁸ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 317; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 546-547. The version reported by Theophanes Confessor specified that the man was '*of similar appearance (προσομοιοῦντα) to Maurice*' and was accompanied by words of derision which referred to the imperial arrogance; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6093, AD 600/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 283; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 408.

¹⁴⁹⁹ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 9.8-9; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 301; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 223. Verbal mockeries had a central role also the day in which Maurice was overthrown by Phocas. On the ground of the assonance between the emperor's name and a famous heresy, '*the assembled masses reviled the emperor, hurling the greatest insults at Maurice and arraying him in the register of the Marcianites*'; THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 9.3; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 300; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 223. According to Theophanes, the crowd cried out '*May the one who loves you be stripped of his skin, Maurice, you Marcianite*'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6094, AD 601/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 288; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 413.

¹⁵⁰⁰ KAEGI 2003, pp. 37-38.

¹⁵⁰¹ The first two moments are recorded by John of Antiochia, who witnessed the events of those years and was in turn employed as a source by later historians; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 318; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 548-549; ROBERTO 2005, p. CLIII. The triumphal entrance and the support of the population are recorded in CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 345, AD 602; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 693; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 142. The involvement of the Green and Blues factions, the raising on the shield, the triumphal entrance and the proclamation in the church are all included in THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 7.7; 9.13-10.8; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 301-303; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 220; pp. 224-225; cf. also THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6094, AD 610/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 287-289; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 412-414. According to the latter, Phocas proceeded in procession and distributed largess also in the second year of his rule, when he assumed the consulship; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6096, AD 603/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 292; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 420.

Simocatta provided other examples of unworthy rulers overwhelmed by burning anger. So the Avar Chagan got furious in front of the rebuke nobly uttered by Commentiolus during a reception at Anchialus in 583: the *'boiling blood'*, recounted Simocatta, *'whipped up great passion (θυμὸν) in the Chagan, his whole face (πρόσωπον) grew crimson with anger (ὑπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς ἐφοινίσσεται), while his eyes gleamed golden-bright with the flame of wrath (τῆ φλογὶ τῆς ἀνίας) and demonstrated through their whole aspect (δι' ὅλου τε τοῦ σχήματος ὑποδηλούντων) that he would not spare the ambassadors. His eyebrows shot up and almost threatened to fly off his forehead'*¹⁵⁰². The Persian king is also *'boasting' (μεγαλαυχῶν), with 'raised eyebrows' (τὰς ὀφρῦς ἀνασπῶν) and with a 'stiff-necked arrogance' (ὑψαυχενιζόμενος)*¹⁵⁰³: in front of a military failure, Hormisdas *'raged (χαλεπαίνων) and glared furiously (κυνοφθαλμιζόμενος), bellowing and gnashing his teeth', and 'distracted with despair like those possessed (τοῖς δαιμονῶσιν εἰκάζετο)*¹⁵⁰⁴.

As for Phocas, his brutality was already revealed when he was a soldier and was sent as emissary of the army to the court of Maurice to solve an issue around the supposed treachery of Commentiolus¹⁵⁰⁵. Phocas arrived at the palace with his brother and attacked the emperor during the *silentium*: we do not know what really happened (John wrote that he *'opposed (ἀντικατέστη)*' Maurice while Theophanes, who seems to understand the incident at a verbal level, wrote that he spoke *'forcefully'* against him), but it was surely a serious matter of etiquette. One of the patricians indeed, as soon as everybody left the room, rushed (*ἐπιδραμών*) against Phocas and pulled on his beard¹⁵⁰⁶. The reference pointed out the beard as a characteristic feature of this emperor¹⁵⁰⁷, but also the usual

¹⁵⁰² THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 6.1; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 50-51; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 28. The lack of control led the Chagan to destroy *'the sanctity of the ambassadors'* by putting them in chain (other Avars smoothened the king anyway and avoided a death penalty *'with powerful arguments'*); THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 6.2-3; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 51; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 28. Pohl looked at the event as an example of clashes between the *'sanctity of the ambassador'* and *'native custom'*, where in the end the former prevailed on the latter; POHL 2013, pp. 78-79.

¹⁵⁰³ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, III, 13.7; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 136; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 92.

¹⁵⁰⁴ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, IV, 1.9; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 150; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 104. For the way in which Theophylact described also Chosroes II as an *'example of invention'*, see WHITBY and WHITBY 1985, p. XXII.

¹⁵⁰⁵ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 1.9; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 284; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 210; cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6092, AD 599/600; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 280; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 404. According to John of Antioch, the issue was a supposed conspiratorial letter sent to Commentiolus by the emperor; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 316; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 546-547.

¹⁵⁰⁶ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 316; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 546-547. The same in Theophanes, who added that the patrician not only pulled his beard but also *'boxed his ears'*; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6092, AD 599/600; ed. DE BOOR 1883, 280; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 404.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Phocas brought back to the fore the beard fashion after its disappearance from the imperial chins of Anastasius, Justinian and Maurice. On the smooth chin of Justinian, see CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 336, AD 566; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 688; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 137; n. 390, p. 137; GEORGE PACHYMERES, *Descriptio Augusteonis*; ed. SCHOPENI 1830, p. 1219; tr. MANGO (1972) 2009, pp. 112-113.

reaction to a major affront¹⁵⁰⁸. Phocas was a good faker and at the moment did not react and just stared (ἐνέβλεψεν) at the *patricius*¹⁵⁰⁹. Only after he had taken the power did he pursue his revenge by summoning and having beheaded the man (*'bring to me my dear friend'* he declared ironically)¹⁵¹⁰. Once on the throne the *'bloodthirsty'* (αἱμοπότης)¹⁵¹¹ Phocas inaugurated a tyrannical reign full of purges and cruelty. George of Pisidia defined him a fierce dragon (βιοφθόρος δράκων), a man who destroyed the State with his drunk rage (μέθη), a wild beast holding the power (τοῦ κρατοῦντος θηρίου τῶν πραγμάτων) and fiercely (ἀγρίως) devouring his subjects¹⁵¹². He mercilessly punished his subjects for the most trivial reasons. According to the *Chronicon Paschale*, he punished a number of officials suspected of plotting against him with tortures and violent deaths: the *illustris* Elpidius for example *'had his tongue cut out and his four extremities removed'*, was paraded through the City, blinded and then burnt¹⁵¹³.

Phocas, despite the promising start, was described also as unable to handle the public image expected from his imperial role and to intervene properly in the ceremonial matter: when a quarrel started between the Green and the Blue factions on the position to take during a triumphal procession for his wife Leontia, he did not intervene personally to solve the conflict but sent at the Hippodrome his wicked friend Alexander. This latter assailed the Demarch of the Blues Cosmas with insults and with an unappropriated physical act (*'he even placed his hands on this man's chest and thrust him aside. Cosmas was knocked over by the push'*), and the Blues got immediately upset: they *'broke out in factional shouts against Alexander'*, saying *'Go back, learn the position (ὑπάγε, μάθε τὴν κατάστασιν). Maurice is not dead'*¹⁵¹⁴. *'You know the truth (μάθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν)'*, added John of

¹⁵⁰⁸ In the tenth-eleventh century, Basil II still jumped from the throne and seized the hair and the beard of the general Kontostephanos when this latter did not humbly endure the imperial reproach after a military defeat; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XVI.12; ed. THURN 1973, 331; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 314.

¹⁵⁰⁹ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 316; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 546-547.

¹⁵¹⁰ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 318; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 548-551.

¹⁵¹¹ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 320; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 550-551.

¹⁵¹² GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Bellum Avaricum*, 50; *Heraclius* II, 6; *In Heraclius ex Africa redeuntem*, I, 35-38; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 178, p. 251; p. 78. Heraclius, on the other hand, was a warrior not fit for the slaughter (τεχνικόν), a creator (τεχνίτην) of Salvation, and a most philanthropic emperor; GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *In Bonum Patricium*, 8-9; *In Heraclius ex Africa redeuntem*, I, 27-29; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 163; p. 78.

¹⁵¹³ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 346, AD 605; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 696; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, pp. 145-146. The plot (described in detail by Theophanes) aimed at killing the emperor right in the Kathisma, during the Hippodrome games and when he was sitting on the throne under everybody's eyes; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6101, AD 608/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 297; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 426. Michael the Syrian, relying on earlier Syriac sources, wrote that Phocas murdered *'the nobles and many others to the point that the number of free and fighting men dwindled immensely'*; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, 25; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 432.

¹⁵¹⁴ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 10.12-13; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 304; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 226. The same story was reported by Theophanes, who underlined the role of the Green factions to bring Phocas on the throne against the Blues faithful to Maurice; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6094, AD 601/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 289; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 414.

Antioch¹⁵¹⁵. With the word *κατάστασις* ('ceremonial' according to Cameron, 'position' for Whitby, 'protocol' for Mango and Scott)¹⁵¹⁶, the mob complained about the ignorance of the bad functionary (and therefore also of the emperor) who did not know how to properly behave in a public ceremonial context. Also when he personally fulfilled his role at the Hippodrome, Phocas was not able to properly reply to the traditional freedom conferred to the audience as regards the theatrical mockery, in front of which the good emperor was requested to show his *moderatio*. Phocas assumed a harsh attitude in front of an innocent show performed at the Hippodrome by the Greens: '*You drank once more in the cup* (πάλιν εἰς τὸν καῦκον ἔπιες), *you loosed once more the reason* (πάλιν τὸν νοῦν ἀπόλεσας)' cried out the Greens, likely referring to the emperor's supposed drunkenness and consequent lack of control. The *tyrannos* reacted by killing many of the perpetrators, and the '*angered Greens*' (θυμωθέντες οἱ Πράσινοι) ended up setting fire to the *pretorium*¹⁵¹⁷.

In the end, Phocas will inevitably meet his disgraceful fate by Heraclius' intervention and by the will of God, who punished him for his unworthy rulership and for his inability in embodying properly the *schema* given to him. The idea of the connection between imperial sin and a bodily punishment sent by God was recognized in the seventh century: Anastasius of Sinai reassured the reader that everything happens according to God's will. So, while wicked emperors like Phocas are sent '*by God's permission or will* (κατὰ Θεοῦ συγχώρησιν ἢ βούλησιν)' as a punishment to sinner people¹⁵¹⁸, God himself sends sickness to kings puffed up by military victories to prevent them imagining themselves as men above human nature (ὑπὲρ τὴν φύσιν) '*with pretensions of divinity*'¹⁵¹⁹. The cruel Phocas will be inevitably punished for his ferocity. The events occurred around his death remain, together with that of Maurice, among the bloodiest pages of Byzantine history: while the fleet and the army of Heraclius

¹⁵¹⁵ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 318; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 548-549. The words were taken so seriously that Phocas was persuaded to finally murder Maurice and his family, who at the time were overthrown but still alive. For the slain of all the members of Maurice' family and Maurice' supporter officials, see also CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 345, AD 602; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 694; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 143; cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6094, AD 601/2; AM 6095, AD 602/3; AM 6099, AD 606/7 ff.; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 286; p. 418; pp. 294-295; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 411, p. 418, p. 423.

¹⁵¹⁶ WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, n. 54, p. 418.

¹⁵¹⁷ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 319; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 550-551. Theophanes, who had well in mind the tortures inflicted to the iconophiles at his times, added that Phocas '*maimed many persons and hung their limbs in the Sphendone, while others he beheaded and others he put in sacks and drowned in the sea*'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6101, AD 608/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 296-297; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 426. For other destructions occurred on this occasion, see CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 345, AD 603; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 695-696; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 145.

¹⁵¹⁸ When an anchorite of Constantinople asked the reason for the existence of a despicable emperor like Phocas, God answered indeed '*Because I have not found anybody worse!*'; ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, question 65, answers 1-2; 4; ed. RICHARD and MUNITIZ 2006, p. 115-117; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, pp. 177-178.

¹⁵¹⁹ ANASTASIUS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, coll. d, question 28, answer 4; ed. RICHARD and MUNITIZ 2006, p. 75; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, p. 125.

were enclosing the city, Phocas was dragged by the beard out of the palace¹⁵²⁰. Once defeated, he was stripped of the imperial vest and conducted with the hands tied behind his back in front of Heraclius, who listened to the *tyrannos'* last arrogant words and kicked him off while on horseback. He was then beheaded and dismembered: his right arm, his hand, and his genitals were displayed on spears through the city and then burned in the Forum of the Ox, together with the bodies of his supporters¹⁵²¹. John of Nikiu lingered on the details of the public shame and punishment inflicted to Phocas: he was not only mutilated but also skinned alive and his ashes were scattered to the winds '*for they were detested by all men*'¹⁵²². The detailed recount of the *Chronicon Paschale* also added that he was previously thrown '*stark naked*' into a skiff and displayed to the ships, and that his mutilated body was dragged along the city on the belly¹⁵²³. The parades of the heads and the limbs of emperor's defeated enemies were at this point a common sight in Byzantium: in the fifth-sixth century this practice was intensified and the emperor carefully displayed and exhibited them to the crowds as a proof of the usurpers' ultimate defeat and as the supreme defiance of their physical body¹⁵²⁴. Brutalities against the enemy's corpse were seen already since archaic Greece as procedures that polluted the body, make it dirty and formless, and destroyed the values it incarnated together with 'all the vital, aesthetic, social and religious qualities' it once bore¹⁵²⁵. But now we assist to an undeniable increase of political violence. Those events connected indeed the punitive power of the emperor and his triumph, providing a 'profound and sinister impact on the collective psychology'¹⁵²⁶. Sixth-century authors have already and not surprisingly lingered on the details of such events and have even attributed this practice to emperors of the past: so Zosimus claimed that Constantine's victory over Maxentius was not believed

¹⁵²⁰ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 321; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 554-555. The gesture was committed by Photius (a man previously damaged by Phocas because of his wife) and was the same one previously suffered by Phocas, as we have seen, when he was emissary under Maurice.

¹⁵²¹ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 321; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 554-555. John reported that Phocas was defeated by the troops of Heraclius supported by the Greens, while according to John of Nikiu he was seized by his senators, the officers and the soldiers. He was brought to the church of St Thomas the Apostle, the same in which Heraclius will receive the imperial crown; JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 101, 9; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 178.

¹⁵²² JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 110, 5-7; tr. CHARLES 1916, pp. 177-178. Here John claimed that Heraclius was immediately and 'against his will' dragged by the population in the church of St Thomas the Apostle where he received the crown (previously seized from Phocas); JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 110, 9; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 178.

¹⁵²³ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 347, AD 610; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 700-701; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, pp. 151-152. In the end, thus, he was '*treated with the same method he had treated others*'; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, 25; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 432. Theophanes, for whom Phocas was the best example of an emperor defeated '*by the grace of Christ*', reported only briefly that Phocas was seized and killed by the demes; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6102, AM 609/10; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 299; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 428.

¹⁵²⁴ McCORMICK 1986, pp. 51-63. For example, the public hand amputation of the usurper John in Aquileia in front of Galla Placidia and Valentinian III, recounted by Philostorgius, was a highly 'stage-managed abuse' organized by 'professionals of theatre'; McCORMICK 1986, pp. 59-60.

¹⁵²⁵ VERNANT 1989, p. 31.

¹⁵²⁶ McCORMICK 1986, p. 63.

in the city until his head was brought in the city upon a spear¹⁵²⁷. Marcellinus Comes wrote that Arcadius fixed the head of Gainas on a pole and paraded it in triumph around Constantinople¹⁵²⁸, and that under Zeno the heads of the rebels Leontius and Illus were brought to Constantinople and left to rot away¹⁵²⁹. The practice of sending to the emperor the head of a defeated rebel was at this point widespread too. Malalas claimed that the head of the Samaritan Justasas, rebel under Zeno, was sent to the emperor still with the crown unrightfully usurped¹⁵³⁰. And a fragment attributed to John of Antioch even added a reference to the fact that Bessus cut off Darius' head and sent it (προσάγει τὴν κεφαλὴν) to Alexander¹⁵³¹. Now, however, the practice invested the imperial body itself, and the impact of the event on the audience was so strong that later Theophanes even attributed the same gesture to Phocas himself, who allegedly paraded the heads of Maurice and his family in the Campus of Tribunal 'until they began to smell'¹⁵³². Never before has the mortal body of an emperor (which had been previously included and emphasised in the official schema as a mean to control it) been so clearly shown to the City. The death of Phocas, as well as that of Maurice, had a great impact on the perception of the imperial body and revealed how it was also susceptible to severe physical violence.

The way in which Heraclius seized the throne, publicly abusing and shaming Phocas, indicates that he was aware of the importance of taking into account, control, and channel the emotion of the crowd. The 'lapse in normal imperial succession due to the violent usurpations', indeed, could easily cause the shock of the population and 'increased the need for compensating legitimation'¹⁵³³. Once again to stage appropriate public actions was therefore crucial in this delicate situation. And Heraclius was depicted as an emperor smart enough to recognize the power inherent in the act of publicly punishing and humiliating his political opponents to strengthen his position in front of his audience and to deflect

¹⁵²⁷ ZOSIMUS, *Historia Nova*, II, 17.1; ed. PASCHOUD 1971, vol. I, pp. 88-89; tr. RIDLEY 1982, p. 3.

¹⁵²⁸ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 401.1; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 8; n. p. 66.

¹⁵²⁹ MARCELLINUS COMES, *Chronicon*, 488.1; ed. and tr. CROKE 1995, p. 29. Other sources stated how those heads were even displayed at St Conon's in Sycae, where they drew a large crowd of onlookers; CROKE 1995, n. p. 106. MCCORMICK 1986, p. 60.

¹⁵³⁰ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 15, 8; ed. THURN 2000, 306.21-23; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 212; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 394.

¹⁵³¹ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 75; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 144-145. For the heads of the Isaurian Longinus and other rebels sent by John the Scythian to Anastasius, who proceeded to parade them on poles and to set them up in Sycae as 'a pleasing sight for the Byzantines in return for the troubles they had suffered from Zeno and the Isaurians', see EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica* III, 35; ed. BIDEZ 1898, p. 135; tr. WHITBY 2000, p. 180. Cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5988, AD 495/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 140; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 215.

¹⁵³² THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6094, AD 601/2; AM 6095, AD 602/3; AM 6099, AD 606/7 ff.; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 286; p. 418; pp. 294-295; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 411, p. 418, p. 423. The information seems to aim at underlining the bloody temperament of the 'rebellious, insolent, and cowardly', 'murderer' Phocas; *ibidem*.

¹⁵³³ KAEGLI 2003, pp. 51-56; p. 62. Collective violence spread indeed among Phocas' supporters all over cities across the East (Constantinople, but also Antioch, Alexandria and other Egyptian cities); *ibidem*.

criticism to an ‘array of scapegoats’¹⁵³⁴. Also later Heraclius resorted to and polished this ‘technique’ to publicly encourage frustration and anger against prominent leaders he wished to ruin like Priscus, the patriarch of Alexandria Cyrus, and even his brother Theodore¹⁵³⁵.

But Heraclius must also have been aware of the change of perspective towards the inviolability of the imperial body and the danger that he himself was running. The situation called for a new ability in the use of the *schema* and for new strategies to captivate his audience in a more positive way, in the effort to ‘keep up with the shift in the people’s world view’ and re-align an element (that is, the idea of a ‘sacred body’) within the symbolic universe of the imperial ideology¹⁵³⁶. If we give credence to Kaegi, it seems that Heraclius was helped in this by his personal background: he had a variety of experiences before he became emperor, which helped him ‘to be flexible in handling different people and problems’, and a handsome physical appearance¹⁵³⁷. Heraclius put a special effort and cared first of all for his military image seriously threatened by the defeats suffered during the first years of his reign by the hand of Persians. When he finally decided to strike back, he put his body on the line and led personally the army after a long period in which the emperors – with the exception of Maurice, who personally led the campaign along the Long Walls in 584 and that against the Avars – had dwelled into the safety of the imperial palace. The decision was not an easy one, and provoked a heated debate at court between those who wanted the emperor to personally join the war, those who considered too dangerous the imperial participation, and those who remained neutral¹⁵³⁸. In the end, Heraclius committed himself to the battlefield: he undertook the military operations, decided the tactics of war¹⁵³⁹, but also made sure that his inner virtues and outward qualities were well-promoted. The panegyrist George of Pisidia accompanied the emperor in the first campaign (622-623) and presented him as a biblical hero and as the lieutenant-general (ὕποστράτηγος) of Christ commanded, protected and inspired by the divinity, in line with the mystical tones applied in those years to the military

¹⁵³⁴ KAEGI 2003, p. 17. On Heraclius’ ‘hypersensitivity’ about any insults against his reputation or his image as a possible way to overcompensate for his irregular accession, but also as a way to stress the divine intervention against those who, with the emperor, insulted God himself, see *ibidem*, p. 147.

¹⁵³⁵ KAEGI 2003, p. 5; p. 56; p. 261; p. 286.

¹⁵³⁶ HALDON 1990, p. 370. Meier looks at the deaths of Phocas and Maurice as a massive counter-reaction against the previous ‘Hypersakralisierung’ of the ruler (that is, the radical claims to religious foundations of his own power). The latter had now proved to be impossible to catch up with in everyday life, losing its ‘Plausibilität’ before the population, so that Heraclius necessarily had to find a new fundamental concept of power (Neuekonzeption von Herrschaft); MEIER 2019, pp. 972-973.

¹⁵³⁷ KAEGI 2003, p. 30-31. Heraclius’ handsome physical appearance and ability in public speaking remain present in Byzantine and Western authors as well; *ibidem*.

¹⁵³⁸ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica* I, 112-125; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, pp. 89-90. Also in the case of Maurice, the imperial decision was opposed by the Senators, the patriarch, and even the empress and his sons; THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*; V, 16.2-4; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 218; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 155; n. 87, p. 155.

¹⁵³⁹ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica* II, 40-43; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, pp. 98-99.

environment¹⁵⁴⁰. His *eusebia* helped him to discipline the army¹⁵⁴¹ and in battle he used ‘*the inspired wisdom* (τήν ἔνθεον φρόνησιν) *of his spiritual movements*’ (τῶν ... ψυχικῶν κινήμάτων)¹⁵⁴² and the superior mind (νοῦς) received from above as an armour¹⁵⁴³. George of Pisidia, however, also praised the emperor’s figure (τῆς εἰκόνοσ), which was in harmony with his perfect nature¹⁵⁴⁴. His mortal body apparently shared with the soldiers the everyday ‘dirty’ and material labour of the battlefield but stood ultimately out for its supernatural and sacred dimension. The emperor worked hard to free a ship stuck in the cliffs, giving the example for those present, and was wounded at the tip of his feet by a rock, causing a rivulet of blood which coloured the earth and produced a stigma of his piety¹⁵⁴⁵. He astonished his soldier by replacing the purple with the armour, the sceptre with the spear, and the crown with the shield, with his beauty hidden by dust-soaked hair, and even sweating into his cuirass¹⁵⁴⁶. He even gained a true and immortal kind of purple by staining it with his blood¹⁵⁴⁷. George of Pisidia masterfully intermingled the mortal dimension of the imperial body with a supernatural one: the emperor could age, his hair could turn white for the concerns and his skin dark for the sun¹⁵⁴⁸. And yet, he did not fear illness or physical efforts, since it was as if he was not made of flesh and blood (ὡς ἄσαρκος). His body was made of bronze and he had an iron-heart¹⁵⁴⁹. With this exceptional body and strength bestowed by God, the emperor acted as a saviour for his own people¹⁵⁵⁰.

Heraclius’s body provided also a powerful visual example for his soldier. Theophanes still reported the story of the astonishing spectacle he offered when he fought in a superhuman manner (ἀγωνιζόμενος ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον) and defeated a giant man of the Persian army on a bridge¹⁵⁵¹. Heraclius instilled a deep religious feeling into the hearts of the soldiers who looked at him¹⁵⁵². And those men mirrored in turn the imperial image becoming perfect in their mind and their customs¹⁵⁵³. The importance of a

¹⁵⁴⁰ For a summary of the events under Heraclius and the sources which gave religious motivation and a mostly biblical perspective to his military campaigns, in a context otherwise dominated by a ‘pagan-like imagery’, see SPAIN ALEXANDER 1977.

¹⁵⁴¹ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica*, II, 210-202; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, pp. 106-107.

¹⁵⁴² GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem*, I, 8-9; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 77.

¹⁵⁴³ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem* I, 11; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 77.

¹⁵⁴⁴ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica* I, 76-77; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, pp. 87-88.

¹⁵⁴⁵ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica*, I, 240-247; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, pp. 95-96.

¹⁵⁴⁶ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica*, III, 93-115; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 120.

¹⁵⁴⁷ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Heraclias*, I, 195-200; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 249.

¹⁵⁴⁸ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Heraclias*, I, 140-145; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 246.

¹⁵⁴⁹ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Heraclias*, I, 172-173; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 248.

¹⁵⁵⁰ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem*, I, 35-38; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 78.

¹⁵⁵¹ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6116, AD 623/24; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 314; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 445. Theophanes constituted an important source for the seventh and eighth centuries, since he ‘had kept close to the wording and the essential information of his sources’. Since he also manipulated his sources to fit his ideological aims and his mentality, it is important nevertheless to be careful about the dates and about the interpretations, the colouring, the adjective and the adverbs he provided to stories; SCOTT 2015, p. 260.

¹⁵⁵² For the eyes of all the soldiers fixed on the emperor, see GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica*, II, 21-23; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 97.

¹⁵⁵³ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio persica*, III, 431ff; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, pp. 134-135.

properly arranged attire on the battlefield, and the religious tone attributed to the military context, is also reported from a more practical point of view in the *Strategikon*¹⁵⁵⁴. The clothing, declared the author, had to be comfortable for the movements but it also helped to ensure a neat appearance¹⁵⁵⁵. The attire helped soldiers to gain confidence and to inspire fear in the enemies, while emperors and generals had always to appear (φαίνεσθαι) ‘*calm and untroubled*’ and properly dressed¹⁵⁵⁶. This was an effective and universal way to instil a sense of authority in an army made up of different ethnic groups¹⁵⁵⁷, and the ‘*soldiers usually estimate (εἰκάζουσιν) their prospect by the appearance (ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως) of the general*’¹⁵⁵⁸. As for the religious and sacred elements in the battlefield, then, they are presented in line with a utilitarian conception for which the outcome of a battle was decided not only by strategies and military skills, but also and mostly by the intervention of God¹⁵⁵⁹. Morning and evening the Trisagion was sung¹⁵⁶⁰, the flag was blessed (τὰ βάνδα ἀγιάζειν)¹⁵⁶¹, and on the very day of the battle prayers substituted shouts and the marching army ‘*led by the priests, the general, and the other officers*’ recited the ‘*Kyrie eleison*’ and the ‘*Nobiscum Deus*’ three times ‘*in hopes of success*’¹⁵⁶². ‘*Before getting into danger*’, indeed, ‘*the general should worship (θεραπευέτω) God. When he does get into danger, then, he can with confidence pray (τὰς ἰκεσίας ποιήσεται) to God as a friend*’¹⁵⁶³.

¹⁵⁵⁴ For the practical purpose of the work, intended for the commander officers, the date of composition (between 575 and 628), and the uncertainty about the identity of the author (traditionally identified in the emperor Maurice), see G. T. DENNIS, ‘Introduction’ in *STRATEGIKON*; tr. DENNIS 1984, pp. XV-XVII.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Tunics and cloaks should be broad and long enough to protect the body while leaving space to use the weapon. The tent had also to combine ‘*practicality and good appearance (καὶ κομπαὶ καὶ χρειώδεις)*’; *STRATEGIKON*, I, 2.59-61; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 82; tr. DENNIS 1984, p. 13. And the pennons, useless in combat, were ‘*valuable for presenting a fine appearance at inspections, sieges, or parades*’; *STRATEGIKON*, II, 10; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 130; tr. DENNIS 1984, p. 30.

¹⁵⁵⁶ *STRATEGIKON*, Preface, 50-56; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 72; tr. DENNIS 1984, p. 9; p. 12. Spies and scouts should be ‘*sober, alert, healthy, and good looking (εὐειδέεις)*’ too, while the captives should be shown to the army only if they appeared ‘*in a miserable shape (...) so that our men may think that all the enemy soldiers are that wretched*’; *STRATEGIKON*, II, 11.5-6; VIIA, 5; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 130; p. 235; tr. DENNIS 1984, p. 30; p. 66.

¹⁵⁵⁷ KAEGI 2003, p. 113.

¹⁵⁵⁸ *STRATEGIKON*, VIII, 2, 90.271-273; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 296; tr. DENNIS 1984, p. 91. A good general had for example to present ‘*a cheerful appearance (ἰλαρὸς)*’ and to avoid ‘*any gloomy look*’, reflecting in this way his equilibrium between indulgence and harshness to maintain order and discipline; *STRATEGIKON*, Preface, 36ff.; VIII, 2, 35.94-97; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 72; p. 284; tr. DENNIS 1984, pp. 9-10; p. 86.

¹⁵⁵⁹ *STRATEGIKON*, Preface; II, 1.8-11; VIIA, 1.1-8; VIIB, 15.6-8; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, pp. 68-72; p. 110; p. 228; p. 258; tr. DENNIS 1984, pp. 9-10; p. 23; p. 64; p. 75.

¹⁵⁶⁰ *STRATEGIKON*, VIIB, 17.1-7; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 262; tr. DENNIS 1984, p. 77.

¹⁵⁶¹ *STRATEGIKON*, VIIA, 1.2-4; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 232; tr. DENNIS 1984, p. 65.

¹⁵⁶² *STRATEGIKON*, II, 18.13-19; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 138; tr. DENNIS 1984, pp. 33-34. Absolute silence was kept when the army get ready for the battle, ‘*for this keep the army in better order, and the commands of the officers are more readily understood*’. Only when the enemy is near, the soldiers could shout and cheer ‘*to unnerve the enemy and stir up our own troops*’; *ibidem*. For the invocation of divine aid against the barbarians, and the army’s liturgical activities from late antiquity to the early medieval Byzantium, see McCORMICK 1986, pp. 244-252.

¹⁵⁶³ *STRATEGIKON*, VIII, 2, 1.2-4; ed. DENNIS and GAMILLSCHEG 1981, p. 278; tr. DENNIS 1984, p. 83. See also WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, n. 8 p. 46.

George of Pisidia seems to suggest that also Heraclius followed the trend: he acted as a priest preparing an altar (τράπεζα)¹⁵⁶⁴. And Theophanes recorded that he consulted the Gospels to take a military decision after a three-day purification (ἀγνίζεσθαι) of the army¹⁵⁶⁵.

Some of the most powerful Christian *insignia* were especially included in the imperial military *schema* and came to take the lion's share. First of all, the *acheiropoieton*, the icon 'not made by human hands', bearing the image of Christ¹⁵⁶⁶. This object had already been used by Philippicus, general under Maurice: before the battle he 'displayed the image of God Incarnate (θεανδρικὸν ἐπεφέρετο εἴκασμα)', 'stripped this of its sacred covering and paraded through the ranks, thereby inspiring the army with a greater and irresistible courage'¹⁵⁶⁷. This action contributed to 'arouse the enthusiasm of the indolent and slothful'¹⁵⁶⁸ and propitiated the Divinity to gain victory¹⁵⁶⁹. The way in which Heraclius employed this *insigne* seems on the other hand slight different: he exploited its persuasive power to raise emotions, to instil discipline and courage, and as an instrument to bring God on his side¹⁵⁷⁰. But he also used it as a symbol to point out the sacred character of his persona and to strength his public image in front of his army¹⁵⁷¹. He held the *acheropoieta* image (τοῦ θεογράφου τύπον) in his hands when he uttered a speech in front of the troops, declaring that it was for the help of whom is depicted that he was going to win the war¹⁵⁷². He also used it during the triumphal entry at the end of the war¹⁵⁷³. Sacred objects also bestowed a comforting feeling of stability and tradition and were used in urban ceremonies to offer a psychological relief for a population greatly grieved by shocking episodes like the taken of the Holy Cross by the Persians. New religious ceremonies involving relics related to

¹⁵⁶⁴ GIORGIO DI PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica* II, 38-41; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 98. Pertusi translated here 'mensa sacra', but the term is ambiguous and could refer also to the table used for the supplies, the drinking and the weapons.

¹⁵⁶⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6114, AD 621/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 308; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 440. On the practice of 'lachmeterion' (that is, to open the Bible at random and to take the first words as an omen for future actions), see ANASTASIOS OF SINAI, *Erotapokriseis*, question 57, answers 1-2; ed. RICHARD and MUNITIZ 2006, pp. 108-109; tr. MUNITIZ 2011, pp. 170-171.

¹⁵⁶⁶ For the problem over the identification of this object, likely the Camuliana taken to Constantinople in 574, see WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, n. 8 p. 46; PERTUSI 1959, pp. 142-143.

¹⁵⁶⁷ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, II, 3.4; 3.6; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 73-74; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 46.

¹⁵⁶⁸ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, II, 3.6-7; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 74; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 46.

¹⁵⁶⁹ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, II, 3.9; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 74; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 46-47. Theophanes, who wrote in a time in which icons had gain much power, added that the image even gave to the soldiers 'a share of divine power'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6078, AD 585; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 255; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 378. The last sentence, noticed Mango, seems an addiction to Theophylact; MANGO and SCOTT 1997, n. 5, p. 379.

¹⁵⁷⁰ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica* I, 139-153; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 91. See also THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6113, AD 620/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 303; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 436.

¹⁵⁷¹ GRABAR (1936) 1971, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵⁷² GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica* II, 76-87; II, 88-104, ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, pp. 101-102.

¹⁵⁷³ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Heraclius* I, 215-218, ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 250.

the Crucifixion (like the Sponge and the Lance) were introduced to restore the popular mood in those difficult years¹⁵⁷⁴. And when the Cross itself was recovered by Heraclius, it was exultantly taken back to Jerusalem with a triumph (630) which linked the event to the return of the Ark at the times of David, and where the Cross was honoured with a *proskynesis*¹⁵⁷⁵. Also in this case the ceremony, recorded Pseudo-Sebeos in the late seventh century, arouse high the emotions of those present¹⁵⁷⁶. The Cross was sent then to Constantinople and it was received at the Church of the Mother of God at the Blachernae and then at St Sophia. Here *'it was raised high (ἀνύψωσε)*' with a ceremony whose origin was traced back to the times in which Constantine's mother Helen found and raised it for the first time¹⁵⁷⁷. Heraclius appeared with the Cross in his hands as a new Constantine fortified by the life-giving Wood¹⁵⁷⁸ and as a *'new Moses'* who stretched the Cross rather than the hands (τὸν σταυρὸν ἐκτείνοντα τῶν χειρῶν πλέον)¹⁵⁷⁹.

Even the images of the Virgin were believed to have a 'magical' power effective in times of danger: Heraclius put *'reliquaries and icons of the Virgin'* on the masts of his ships when he arrived in Constantinople from Africa¹⁵⁸⁰, and an image of the Virgin was held by the patriarch and miraculously saved the city during the siege of Avars and Persians in 626¹⁵⁸¹. But in the end, it was the Holy Cross and the relics connected with the Crucifixion which were the most evocative elements. They gave strength to the public image of the emperor by associating him with biblical and historical models, especially on triumphal occasions. Parallelisms with biblical imagery were enforced also in panegyrics, where authors came to build up a new kind of 'imitative relationship' in which the emperor was not only a 'new David', but also 'the same David who had lived in biblical times, now transposed to the

¹⁵⁷⁴ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 348, AD 614; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 704-705; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 157; *Ibidem*, n. 438, p. 157. On the 'obsession' of obtaining relics which characterized the period, and their employment in ceremonies, see KAEGI 2003, pp. 197-198, p. 202.

¹⁵⁷⁵ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *In restitutionem S. Crucis*, ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, pp. 226 ff. For the ceremony recorded in another source, the *Reversio Sanctae Crucis*, and its christomimetical meaning, see MEIER 2019, p. 1043.

¹⁵⁷⁶ PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*, 41, 131; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, p. 90.

¹⁵⁷⁷ TOBIAS and SANTORO 1990, n. 120, p. 88. On the (much disputed) date of restoration of the Cross in 630 (against the date of 614 given by the *Chronicon Paschale*), see MANGO and SCOTT 1997, n. 3, pp. 459-460.

¹⁵⁷⁸ GEORGE OF PISIDIA *In restitutionem S. Crucis* 62-63; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 227. Heraclius even burnt an image of his predecessor Phocas which some fools *'had conducted in the Hippodrome with burning candles'*, probably an attempt to exploit the power which such a ceremony still entailed in the mind of the audience to associate the emperor with Constantine; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 347, AD 610; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 701; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 153.

¹⁵⁷⁹ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Expeditio Persica* III, 415-417; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 134. In another passage Heraclius is also defined as the one who stretches his hands; GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Heraclias* I, 179; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 248.

¹⁵⁸⁰ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *Heraclias* II, 15; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 252; cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6102, AD 609/10; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 298; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 427. On the role and the power bestowed on the robe of the Virgin, discovered in the 619 at the church of the Blachernae, see CAMERON 1979.

¹⁵⁸¹ On the sources which recorded or not the presence of the image in this crucial moment, see PERTUSI 1959, pp. 220-221.

present¹⁵⁸². Heraclius not only shared with his biblical heroes inner virtues like the piety toward God, the gentleness, and the wisdom (that is, he not only imitated (μιμεῖσθαι) them). He also reproduced them with his outward appearance (εἰκονίζω, lit. ‘to render visible into an image’, ‘signify’). This latter was a rare term which began to be more and more employed: Claudia Rapp recognized how George of Pisidia used it three times to indicate a connection ‘between the imitator and his archetype’, in which Heraclius ‘participates in the essence’ of his Old Testament predecessors and enacted in this way a type of identification ‘qualitatively different from the historicizing mode of the *exemplum* and the biblicizing mode of the *typos*’. He modelled himself after his model ‘in the same way that an icon does’¹⁵⁸³.

Heraclius’ effort in crafting his public image is hardly surprising. He was depicted as a man with an authoritative personality ‘able to impress his subjects and contemporary intellectuals’ with a clever employment of guiles and stratagems¹⁵⁸⁴. He seems to have been well aware of the power of his physical appearance to inspire awe and devotion and to communicate with his subjects, and to fulfil different roles according to the circumstances and to his political needs: he enriched the imperial *schema* with a new sacral connotation in order to overcome his coup d’état against Phocas and the earlier defeats by the hands of Persians, and then continued to enrich and improve it in several ways. He continued to renovate the structures of the palace¹⁵⁸⁵ and increased the ceremonial occasions in which he could publicly display his body and an increasingly formal *schema*¹⁵⁸⁶. ‘For reasons of security and for the purpose of respecting and honouring his rank’ wrote Kaegi, ‘subjects were not to approach him, but they were able to see him’¹⁵⁸⁷.

Heraclius introduced captivating liturgical chants revolving around the act of looking and actively partaking in the liturgy¹⁵⁸⁸. He also made large use of ecclesiastical settings: the ambo and the pulpit of Hagia Sophia flanked the Kathisma and the streets of Constantinople as visual and meaningful places from which the *schema* of the authority could be powerfully displayed in front of the audience. These

¹⁵⁸² RAPP 2010.

¹⁵⁸³ RAPP 2010.

¹⁵⁸⁴ KAEGI 2003, p. 12.

¹⁵⁸⁵ MAGDALINO 2015, p. 177.

¹⁵⁸⁶ See especially CAMERON (1979) 1981, pp. 16-26; CAMERON 1979, pp. 79-108.

¹⁵⁸⁷ KAEGI 2003, p. 62.

¹⁵⁸⁸ The chant introduced in 615 vigorously encouraged those present to look at the pre-sanctified gifts paraded from the *skeuophilakion* (the sacristy) to the altar during the Great Entrance, promoting an active involvement in this liturgical moment: ‘for behold (ἰδοὺ γὰρ), the king of glory enters in. Behold (ἰδοὺ), the mystic and perfect sacrifice is being escorted. In faith and fear (πίσται καὶ φόβῳ) let us approach, so that we may become partakers (μέτοχοι) in eternal life. Alleluia!’; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 348, AD 615; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 705-706; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 158. In 624, another chant accompanied the moment after the Communion in which the clergy ‘were about to replace in the sacristy the precious flabella, paten, chalices, and other holy vessels’ and urged the audience with prayers and hymns ‘to share (μετασχεῖν)’ in the Mysteries just performed; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 351, AD 624; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 714; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 167-168.

have long provided the perfect frames for public speeches and announcements: already in the fifth century the patriarch Acacius managed to overcome the crowd's wrath by raising on the ambo of St Sophia and pretending his support to the Chalcedonian belief. It seems that also Anastasius made public his addition to the Trisagion by declaring his decision '*from the pulpit of the church of St Theodore of Sphorakios*'¹⁵⁸⁹. And when he decided to decrease the taxes of the provinces of Bythnia and of Asia – a way to gain support against the usurper Vitalianus – he put the document on the altar of the Church¹⁵⁹⁰. In the seventh century, St Sophia increased further its role as 'the natural point of assembly and public communication in times of crisis'¹⁵⁹¹: the patriarch Sergius rose on the ambo together with the prefect of the *praetorium* and some officials to calm down the insurgents who were chanting against John Seismos, assuring that he would have dismissed him¹⁵⁹². When Heraclius received the insolent letter of Chosroes (whether real or fabricated, a weapon effective in raising patriotic feelings and in feeding a sense of outrage in the mind of the people and the army)¹⁵⁹³, he ordered it to be read before the patriarch and the *optimates*. Then he put it '*before the holy altar*'. At this sight, everybody '*fell on their faces to the ground before the Lord and wept bitterly, so that He might see the insults which his enemies had inflicted upon him*'¹⁵⁹⁴. The communiqué concerning the fall of Chosroes (sent by Heraclius from the eastern region) was read aloud by the ambo too, '*Sunday, at the holy Pentecost itself*' and giving emphasis on the divine intervention¹⁵⁹⁵.

St Sophia continued to be used also to rise the awe of – and thus also to control – the urban audience, becoming the main frame for imperial proclamations and coronations. We have seen how already Justin II and Phocas mixed and played with the traditional military and the sacred *schemata* in different locations. Heraclius developed the ceremony in a fully spectacular and Christianized sense: on the fifth of October 610 he received the crown by the hands of the patriarch Sergius in St Sophia¹⁵⁹⁶. He then showed off his young children in what has been defined as 'carefully scripted parts of the pageantry of

¹⁵⁸⁹ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AD 5967, AD 474/5; AM 6005, AD 512/13; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 122; p. 159; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 189; p. 240. Also in this case, Theophanes' references are taken from the sixth-century work of Theodore Lector.

¹⁵⁹⁰ JOHN OF ANTIOCHIA, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 311; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 534-535. The reference can be found only in this author who wrote in the early seventh century. It could thus either report an earlier source or a practice followed at the author's times.

¹⁵⁹¹ McCORMICK 1986, pp. 193-194.

¹⁵⁹² CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 351, AD 626; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 715-716; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 168.

¹⁵⁹³ KAEGI 2003, pp. 122-124.

¹⁵⁹⁴ PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*, 38, 123; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, p. 80.

¹⁵⁹⁵ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 352, AD 628; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 727; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 182.

¹⁵⁹⁶ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 347, AD 610; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 701; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, pp. 152-153. According to Theophanes, on the other hand, Heraclius was crowned in the palatine chapel of St Stephan; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6102, AD 609/10; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 299; tr. MANGO and SCOTT p. 428.

his reign¹⁵⁹⁷: the daughter Epiphania was crowned by the patriarch in the palatine chapel of St Stephen and then escorted on a chariot by high members of the court¹⁵⁹⁸. The son (future emperor Constantine III) was crowned by his father in the palace, received the obeisance of the senators and the acclamations of the factions at the Hippodrome, and then was crowned once again in St Sophia by the patriarch¹⁵⁹⁹. These impressive ceremonies surrounding the emperor and his family were used to re-establish legitimacy and prestige. Later on, Heraclius made use of them also as a mean to recover moral authority, especially after the decision to re-marry his niece Martina became a hot topic in the public opinion and among religious authorities. The 'unchaste union' had to be justified with the divine approval: Martina was proclaimed Augusta and crowned in the Augusteus by the patriarch, while their first child Heracleonas was baptized at the church of the Blachernae¹⁶⁰⁰. He even brought the family with him to Nicomedia celebrate in their company the Easter festival before leaving for the second Persian campaign¹⁶⁰¹.

Heraclius put himself and his family at the centre of the 'fabric of beliefs, institutions and practices of Byzantine society' which at the time was going toward 'the realignment of the key elements in the symbolic narratives'¹⁶⁰². The emperor was no longer only seen as the God's vice-regent on earth, the implementer of His will and the mediator among the mankind and guardian of orthodoxy. He was also His devout servant, the πιστὸς ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεὺς (the official title adopted by Heraclius), and the ruler 'of an empire with a christo- or biblical-centric culture' whose symbolism expressed an entirely divinely bestowed imperial authority¹⁶⁰³. His *schema* was fully Christianized in the context of spectacular events where sacred and secular were finally completely integrated. This process has been seen as a 'near-extinction of classical culture as a living force and its replacement by an imperial Christian culture as the exclusive basis of social and political cohesion'¹⁶⁰⁴. Heraclius was nevertheless

¹⁵⁹⁷ KAEGI 2003, p. 63. It seems that already Maurice had his four-year son Theodosius crowned by the patriarch John during a triumph over the Persians, but the information is reported only by the later THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6082, AD 589/90; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 267; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 390

¹⁵⁹⁸ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 348, AD 612; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 703; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 154; cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6102, AD 609/10; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 299; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 428.

¹⁵⁹⁹ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 348, AD 613; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 703-704; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 155; cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6103-6104, AD 610/11-611/12; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 300; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 429-430.

¹⁶⁰⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6105-6106, AD 612/613-613/14; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 300-301; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 430-431. Even if the details about the setting of the ceremony are found only in Theophanes, they seem likely and in line with the ceremonial traditions of those years.

¹⁶⁰¹ CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 351, AD 624; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 715; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 166. This is the only reference to Martina in the Chronicon Paschale since, suggested Whitby, the author disapproved the incestuous union; WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, n. 452, p. 167 (also for the debate about the date of the campaign).

¹⁶⁰² HALDON 1990, p. 372.

¹⁶⁰³ HALDON 1990, pp. 328-333; p. 441; p. 365; SPAIN ALEXANDER 1977, pp. 232-234.

¹⁶⁰⁴ BELL 2009, p. 5.

also an emperor who continued to ‘look forward as well as backward’¹⁶⁰⁵, and the instability of the political situation called also for the reassuring force of the traditional Roman features: they remained deeply rooted in the visual imagery of the ruler and continued to affect the models of imperial behaviour. So, for example, John of Antiochia offered political and historical models to Heraclius and his entourage that, after the tyranny of Phocas, were still characterized by the traditional ‘republican’ values, especially for the relation between the *optimus princeps* and his subjects¹⁶⁰⁶. Rulers like Romulus and Caesar continued to be condemned for their arrogance (φρόνημα) toward the citizens and the Senate, unbecoming for the Roman *eleutheria*¹⁶⁰⁷, and for their tyrannical attitude¹⁶⁰⁸. Men like the consul Aemilius Lepidus and the emperor Vespasian continued then to be praised for their *moderatio*¹⁶⁰⁹ or their patience toward the jests of rhetors and factions¹⁶¹⁰. The lack of self-control continued to be highly rebuked¹⁶¹¹. The imperial model behaviour continued to be therefore a more complex matter than a mere display of a highly perfect, formal, and pre-ordained public image. And this especially when the emperor had to face daily problems of his rule.

Later sources offered a more nuanced perspective on the way in which Heraclius dealt with the practical challenges presented to him in occasion of the military, religious, and cultural struggles experienced by the empire in those troubled times. The *Short History* written in the ninth century by the patriarch Nikephoros could praise Heraclius but also claim that he did not care to put in order his private affairs, so much that he brought the ‘*matters of the state*’ in a highly ‘*sorry and abnormal pass*’ (δυσχερείας καὶ ἀνωμαλίας)’¹⁶¹². Nikephoros reported also some anecdotes probably widespread during the reign of Heraclius (or shortly after), which better reveal the instability of the political

¹⁶⁰⁵ Heraclius’ reign was indeed ‘part of Late Antiquity but was also something else’; KAEGI 2003, p. 13.

¹⁶⁰⁶ ROBERTO 2005, pp. XXIII-XXV. For John’s attitude toward history and the use of traditional themes to express the transformations and the issues of his times, see *ibidem*, p. XV; pp. XXVIII-XXX.

¹⁶⁰⁷ For this reason, Romulus, described on the ground of Dionysius Halicarnassensis, lost his power; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 59, 1-8; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 124-125.

¹⁶⁰⁸ John repeated an episode already in Eutropius, when Caesar refused to stand in front of the Senate; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 150.1, 119-129; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 260-261.

¹⁶⁰⁹ In line with Eutropius, Aemilius Lepidus refused the kneeling of the defeated Pompeus and made him sit next to him on the throne; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 133.2; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 204-205.

¹⁶¹⁰ JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 182; fr. 193-194-200; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 316-319; pp. 333-339. Vespasian was famous for being ‘*very witty* (facetissimus)’ and because he ‘*used to bear patiently the agitation of his friends* (amicorum motus)’, ‘*responding to their jibes* (contumeliis) *with jests* (iocularibus); *EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS*, 9.3; ed. PICHLMAYR and GRUENDEL 1961, p. 142; tr. BANCHICH 2009.

¹⁶¹¹ Emperors like Caligula and Nero continued to be described according to Cassius Dio and Tacitus as bad models of shameful men who arrived at the point of publicly perform as actors or charioteers; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 162.1; 172; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 284-285; pp. 298-309.

¹⁶¹² NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 11.1-2; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 52-53. See also the highly critical point of view over Heraclius’ demand that church treasuries had to be used to pay tribute to the ‘barbarians’ (a fact set immediately after the description of the shameful affair with Martina). The act is presented by the less critical Theophanes as pushed by extreme necessity; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 11; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 52-55. See KAEGI 2003, pp. 110-111; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6113, D 620/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 302-303; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 435.

situation, the level of weakness of the imperial power in front of the Constantinopolitan audience, and how the emperor confronted the situation by adapting his public appearance to the circumstances. A positive stance toward Heraclius is taken by Nikephoros when he reported the story of the widow who searched for revenge during an imperial procession, Heraclius is described as showing his *moderatio* by exceptionally not caring of the physical approach toward his sacred persona: the woman held the bridle of the imperial horse and showed off the bloodstained clothes of her son, died because of the unfair behaviour of the wealthy *candidatus* Boutilinos. As a response, the emperor did not take offence and decided to embody the image of the just guarantor of justice by punishing the guilty man despite his belonging to the elite¹⁶¹³. This was a prominent act pushed by the need of asserting authority, impressing the people, and avoiding unrests¹⁶¹⁴.

Heraclius is described as a keen tactician in the affair of Priscus, the *Comes Excubitorum* inherited from the reign of Phocas¹⁶¹⁵. This latter was a liar who during the coup d'état '*behaved treacherously* (δόλφ)' toward his ruler and '*pretended to be striving on his behalf*' while he was actually cooperating with Heraclius¹⁶¹⁶. He tried to trick Heraclius too: on occasion of an imperial visit, he pretended to be ill and lied down '*in the manner of an invalid* (ἐν σχήματι ἀρρώστου)', but the emperor this time '*understood the plot* (τὸ δρᾶμα)'. For the moment '*he bore the insult and bade his time*'¹⁶¹⁷, while in the meantime he organized his revenge through a public spectacle of punishment. Priscus came to Constantinople on a pretext and unaware of '*the play that was being acted* (τὸ δραματούργημα)'. Heraclius declared in front of the senate, the people, and the bishop that the act of insulting the Emperor has to be paired to that of insulting God who gave the power to him. He then accused Priscus to have feigned (κατεσχηματίσατο) his illness and to have degraded the imperial dignity and the empire¹⁶¹⁸. Then, with a gesture far away from the sacredness promoted by his panegyrists and from the imagery he had just evoked in words, '*picking up a book, he struck him of the head* (κατὰ κόρρης)'. He reproached him for his disloyalty toward Phocas ('*since you did not make a good son-in-law*' declared indeed Heraclius, '*how can you be friend?*'), and forced him to assume the monastic *schema*¹⁶¹⁹.

¹⁶¹³ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 4; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 42-43.

¹⁶¹⁴ KAEGI 2003, pp. 63-64.

¹⁶¹⁵ For the political career of Priscus under Maurice and then under Phocas (of whom he was son-in-law), and the possible reasons for the hostility against Heraclius, see TOBIAS and SANTORO 1990, n. 10, p. 63; WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, n. 434 p. 155.

¹⁶¹⁶ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 1.24-29; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 36-37.

¹⁶¹⁷ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 2.10-19; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 38-39.

¹⁶¹⁸ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 2.31-42; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 38-39

¹⁶¹⁹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 2.42-44; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 38-39. The public tonsure of Priscus was recorded also by the Chronicon Paschale; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 348, AD 612; ed. DINDORF 1832, p. 703; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 155.

A serious incident occurred when the Avars raided the neighbourhood of Constantinople¹⁶²⁰. Theodore Syncellus chose to underline the fact that Heraclius for the occasion left the palace and assumed a penitential *schema*: ‘prone on the ground and dressed as a private citizen in the church of the Theotokos (...), struggled and laboured to his utmost, pouring forth tears’¹⁶²¹. The humble *schema* was still used by the emperor to catch the attention of his audience. Also when Heraclius triumphantly entered Jerusalem and was prevented to pass through the Golden Gate by some portents, he removed the crown and dismounted from his horse, holding the relic of the Cross and choosing to show an image of humility¹⁶²². Nikephoros for his part included the Avar ambush and other misfortunes in the narrative to demonstrate that the incestuous sinner was properly afflicted with failures by the divine justice¹⁶²³. Heraclius’ body could be wounded during a battle¹⁶²⁴, and when the leader of the Avars faked friendship and ambushed him he barely escaped by taking off the purple robe and wearing ‘some mean and miserable clothes so as to appear like an ordinary man (ἰδιώτης ... φαίνοιτο) to anyone he encountered; hiding, furthermore, his imperial crown under his arm (τῇ ὀλένην περιεσπόμενος), immediately turned to ignominious flight and barely escaped to Byzantium’¹⁶²⁵. The negative precedents for this behaviour were present in the collective memory of Byzantium and included positive and negative figures like Maximin Daia (who ignominiously fled in front of Licinius) and the Persian Kabadēs (who adventurously escaped from prison through the clever expedient of dressing the clothes of his wife). Different was, on the other side, the disguise of *schema* performed by the members of the clergy or saints: they often managed in this way to free themselves from the harassment of wicked men (like when the bishop Euphemius escaped from a plot organized against him ‘by putting on civilian clothes’)¹⁶²⁶. Theophanes reported a more positive reading of the episode likely based upon a different source than that used by Nikephoros: he charged all the responsibilities of the event on the Avars who, ‘transgressing the agreements and oaths, suddenly attacked the

¹⁶²⁰ According to the Chronicon Paschale, the incident was caused by the rumour that peace was about to be made between Romans and Avars, and that a chariot race was about to be held at Heracleia. This led an ‘innumerable throng’ to come out from the city and be attacked by the enemy; CHRONICON PASCHALE, Olymp. 350, AD 623; ed. DINDORF 1832, pp. 712-713; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, p. 165. For the date of the episode in 618-619 or, more likely, in 623, see WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, appendix 4, pp. 203-205; MANGO and SCOTT 1997, n. 1, p. 434. Cameron dated it at 619, but it seems more likely that the incident occurred in 623, as stated by Mango and Scott.

¹⁶²¹ CAMERON 1979, p. 49. He was joined there by the patriarch and by the entire population.

¹⁶²² KAEGI 2003, p. 206, with bibliography. Kaegi quoted also another episode reported by a ninth-tenth century encomium of Nikephoros Skeuophylax: the day in which Heraclius and the Senate welcomed the relics of St Theodore by kneeling together in public, they arose the mood of the public and emphasised ‘the solidarity and testimony of prominent constituencies’; KAEGI 2003, p. 106. For a reading of the episode as the culmination of the sacralization of the sovereign, saviour of the world and parallel to Christ, see MEIER 2019, p. 1037.

¹⁶²³ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 11; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 52-55.

¹⁶²⁴ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 14; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 60-61.

¹⁶²⁵ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 10.24-30; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 50-53.

¹⁶²⁶ All those examples are quoted by Theophanes Confessor on the ground of earlier sources still at disposal at his times; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AD 5806, AD 313/14; AM 5968, AD 475/6; AM 5987, AD 494/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 15; p. 123; p. 139; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 25; p. 190; p. 214.

*emperor in a treacherous manner*¹⁶²⁷. Theophanes' version underlined more 'the tenuousness of the situation and the insecurity that prevailed so close to Constantinople'. In front of the traditional trickery of the deceiving barbarians, Heraclius acted indeed with 'adroitness and resourcefulness'¹⁶²⁸. The last decades of Heraclius' reign were marked by religious controversies and by the loss of the support of holy men to the imperial family. In the seventh century *Life of John the Almsgiver*, for example, the saint on his way to Cyprus refused to deviate the travel to Constantinople to grant to the emperors his prayers when a vision foretold him his imminent death. The call of the '*earthly king* (τὸν βασιλέα τὸν ἐπίγειον)' can indeed be ignored at the moment in which the heavenly King (ὁ οὐράνιος) summoned the saint to Himself¹⁶²⁹. More critical and revealing of the religious controversies of the times is the third recension of the *Life of Maximus the Confessor*, written in the tenth century on the basis of previous sources of the seventh century. Heraclius here is described as a man characterized by a '*simple-mindedness and foolish judgment* (εὐηθεία καὶ γνώμης κουφότητι)¹⁶³⁰. Also the '*detested*' patriarch Sergius '*knew that Heraclius was easy-going by nature* (εὐκόλον εἰδότος) *in all respects and easily led* (εὐάγωγον)', and convinced him to support the Monothelist heresy. But then, when the orthodox bishops gathered around St Sophronius, the '*dull* (ἀμβλὺς)' Heraclius '*succumbed to fear and anxiety, turning inside out* (ποικιλλόμενος πρὸς ἑαυτὸν) *and vacillating* (μετατρέπόμενος), *and not knowing how he could now change the innovatory doctrine, probably being ashamed* (ὑπόγυον) *of the quick turn around*¹⁶³¹. Heraclius was therefore punished for his sins and his wrong religious positions with a shameful and painful death which disfigured his body: Nikephoros described in details that he was hit by dropsy, and that the illness reached such a stage that '*when he was about to urinate, he would place a board against his abdomen; (otherwise) his private parts turned round and discharged the urine in his face. This was in reproof of his transgression (namely, his marriage to his own niece) on account of which he suffered this ultimate punishment*¹⁶³². Once again, it was the perishable mortal body of the emperor who shamelessly sinned and therefore

¹⁶²⁷ A year later, then, the emperor will be then able to make the Chagan get ashamed of his conduct by assuming a friendly attitude; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6110, AD 617/18; 618/619; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 301-302; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 434. It is rather the Persian Sarbaros who was later attacked in turn by surprise by Heraclius who fled '*naked and unshod as he was*'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6115, AD 622/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 311; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 443.

¹⁶²⁸ KAEGI 2003, p. 119.

¹⁶²⁹ LEONTIUS OF NEAPOLIS, *Vita S. Ioannis Eleemosynarii*, 52.35-45; ed. and tr. FESTUGIÈRE 1974, p. 403 (p. 516); tr. DAWES and BAYNES 1948, p. 255. For other later hagiographies, see KAEGI 2003, p. 260. On the relationship of Phocas and Heraclius with contemporary saints, and the imperial dependency on the blessing and the association with holy men, see *ibidem*, p. 39, pp. 52-53, p. 59. For the general lack of participation of the old Heraclius to the imperial ceremony and his alleged retirement in the isolation of Hieria, *ibidem*, p. 317.

¹⁶³⁰ *VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, RECENSION 3*, 8; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 53.

¹⁶³¹ *VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, RECENSION 3*, 12; ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 59. The Monothelite question raised from the last unsuccessful attempt of the Chalcedonians and imperial establishment to win over the Monophysite East; HALDON 1990, p. 364.

¹⁶³² NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 27.4-10; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 76-77.

suffered the divine punishment: John of Nikiu declared that Heraclius died (in this version for a fever) *'in accordance with the decree of God who takes away the souls of rulers, and of men of war as well as of kings'*¹⁶³³.

Those later recounts show how even the most sacred emperor had occasionally to step aside by showing his *moderatio* and accepting to be approached by a subject anxious to ask for his help. He can publicly declare his affinity to God and still use a rude gesture to put one of his generals in line. Furthermore, they show how even best emperor could not deflect all the criticism. Accuses of moral sins and heresy impacted the reputation he had tried so hard to keep unstained and under control. His carefully sacralised mortal body came to be hit by an equally new kind of critique revolving around the emphasis on the distinction between earthly and divine realm, and around the descriptions of him leaving aside his imperial attire and his crown to play the part of an ordinary man. Those sparse stories about his ignominious flight in the middle of the Avar ambush, or about his shameful death, were circulating and managed to survive and to be included in later sources' narrative. The same will happen later with Heraclius' nephew, Constans II: he also put much effort, as we will see, to use symbolic gestures¹⁶³⁴. Even so, stories about his misbehaviour remained present in Theophanes' narrative. Like Heraclius, also Constans II saved himself after a battle against the Arabs (lost because of a tactical mistake) by giving his robes to another man (who will be consequently killed by the enemies) and escaping *'leaving everyone behind'*¹⁶³⁵. He displayed then unholy behaviour toward the pope Martin, toward Maximus the Confessor, and in general toward the orthodox followers of the Chalcedonian faith: he was, therefore, *'hated by the people of Byzantium'*, so much that he had to flee to Sicily where he was assassinated during a bath. When *'he began to smear himself with the soap'* one of his attendants struck him on the head with a bucket¹⁶³⁶. A violent death, thus, occurred when the emperor was performing a highly 'human' and ordinary activity.

The divine nature of the imperial persona remained on the other hand always unquestionable and the imperial body continued to be felt as something sacral despite failures and sins. Heraclius's body was carried indeed in the Church of the Holy Apostles and here *'for three days, as he had ordained while he was still alive, the tomb containing his body remained uncovered and attended by ministering eunuchs'*¹⁶³⁷. The sacredness attributed to the imperial body is testified also by the 'strange story' reported by Nikephoros (and likely originated by contemporaneous accounts aimed at discrediting

¹⁶³³ JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 116, 2; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 184.

¹⁶³⁴ See below, pp. 272-273.

¹⁶³⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6146, AD 653/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 346; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 482. For the reigns of Constans II and Constantine IV, Theophanes likely relied on an earlier Greek source well informed about the events and close to the court; DEBIÉ 2015, pp. 277-278 with bibliography.

¹⁶³⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6160, AD 667/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 351-352; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 490-491.

¹⁶³⁷ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 27.15-19; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 76-77.

Martina and her offspring) about the ‘unsettling event’ happened to the corpse of Heraclius’ first wife Eudocia¹⁶³⁸: during the funeral procession, a waiting maid accidentally spat on the garment in which the empress was wrapped. The incident was felt like a serious matter of pollution of something sacred, so much that those present sentenced the woman to death by fire in order to ‘decontaminate’ it. The author complained because those ‘*sacrilegious men*’ attached to the demise of the empress an ‘*unholy burial rite*’ performed ‘*in the manner of barbarians*’¹⁶³⁹. A sacred thing had to be kept indeed untouched and safe to avoid pollution: when a mob outraged the sacred robes of St Sophia (they ‘*tore the altar cloth, shamefully defiled the holy spot*’, and paraded the keys of the Church on a pole through the city), the patriarch Pyrrhus tried to remove the pollution by embracing himself the sacred objects and covering the altar with his *pallium* (ὠμόφορον)¹⁶⁴⁰. And the reliquary of the Holy Cross was declared to have been ‘*preserved untouched (ἀνέπαφα) by the profane and murderous hands (βεβήλοις καὶ μαιφόνους χερσὶ) of the barbarians and unseen (ἀθέατα) by them*’, since its seal (σφραγῖδα) was intact¹⁶⁴¹.

The period after Heraclius’s death was marked by political instability, mostly because of the dynastic struggles among his sons and his nephews. The search for legitimation even pushed Constantine III to exhume the body of his father Heraclius to pick up the crown with which he had been buried. The crown was then dedicated to God by Heracleonas the day of his accession and was employed to crown Constantine III’s son Heracleius/Constans II on the ambo of St Sophia in a moment of high political tension¹⁶⁴². The crown was an object of undeniable economical value and its reuse could be seen as the sign of the financial problems experienced by the power in this period. But it was also a powerful ‘benchmark’ which could be used by Heraclius’ sons to demonstrate the connection with their father and therefore the legitimate nature of their power¹⁶⁴³. The problem of legitimacy became thornier in

¹⁶³⁸ KAEGI 2003, p. 61.

¹⁶³⁹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 3; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 40-41.

¹⁶⁴⁰ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 31.14-28; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 82-83. ‘*Without renouncing the priesthood*’, declared Pyrrhus, ‘*I abjure a disobedient people*’. He then sailed off away from Byzantium; *ibidem*.

¹⁶⁴¹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 18.8-14; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 66-67 (recorded also in *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1931, Η 465). According to another version, the captives were forced to walk on the cross; WHITBY and WHITBY 1989, n. 437, p. 157. The pollution through the sight is present also in the accuse moved against the soldiers of Phocas, who ‘*share in the pollution*’ of their ruler when they participated ‘*through their observation (διὰ τῆς θεωρίας)*’ to the slaughtering of the ‘holy’ emperor Maurice and his family and looked at the cut-off heads exposed at the Hebdomon; THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, VIII, 12.8-9; ed. DE BOOR 1972, pp. 307-308; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 229.

¹⁶⁴² See below, p. 265.

¹⁶⁴³ KAEGI 2003, pp. 319-320. For the idea that the honour passes through material objects, so that those who honoured the crown honoured also the head and the hands of the emperor who made it with his own hands, see KAEGI 2003, pp. 297-299. Agnellus in the ninth century reported that the crown of Justinian II, probably the same employed by the other members of his family, was decorated by the hands of the Augusta with gold and pearls (*illi sua ex auro et margaritas discreverat regia coniunx*); AGNELLUS, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 138; ed. DELIYANNIS 2006, p. 315; tr. DELIYANNIS 2004, p. 262. The crown will be then reused by

those years also because the military defeats against the Arabs had caused an increasing instability in the army and in the mob, who increased their power to influence the imperial policy. The political coups, military rebellions, and attacks, that characterised the second half of the seventh century, explained Haldon, may have immediate, conjunctural causes, but they also testified how much the rules of society had changed to make such actions ‘ideologically acceptable’¹⁶⁴⁴. Inappropriate behaviour returned to be felt as being empowered to cost the throne to those who did not follow the rules: the conspiracy of the patrician and ‘tyrant’ Valentinus against Constans II, for example, failed at the moment in which he sent his violent attendant Antoninus to handle with an angered crowd gathered in St Sophia. The recount attributed to the Armenian Sebeos reported that Antoninus went in the church with a thousand of man and chose a punitive *schema* highly ineffective in such a climate of tension: he ‘*began to punish their leaders with the bastinado. The patriarch stood up and said: ‘It is inappropriate and wrong to do such a thing in this place.’ Antoninus attacked him and struck him a blow on the jaw, saying: ‘Keep your place’’*. The crowd was shocked at the sight of a gesture which, as we have seen, entailed high political consequences: it hurled at Antoninus, burned him alive in the middle of the city, while also Valentinus was beheaded and burned and Constans II was finally confirmed on the throne¹⁶⁴⁵. Nikephoros, who likely based his account on earlier sources, reported a different version of the story but he also testified the importance of carefully handling with the crowd to take the power. In this version, the crowd gathered when they saw their harvest and vineyards threatened by the army of Valentinus and urged the patriarch Pyrrhos ‘*by their clamors (βοῶντες)*’ to crown Constans II. The patriarch was initially smart: ‘*on beholding the disturbance and uprising of the people*’, indeed, he ‘*excused himself on the grounds that the insurrection had a different purpose, namely, to gain the imperial office for Valentinus*’. The mob, however, insisted, and the patriarch laid the matter before Heracleonas who at the time was the emperor in charge. He took his nephew Heracleius/Constans II to the church, mounted on the ambo together with the patriarch, ‘*and as the crowd (ὄχλοι) was pressing him to accomplish the deed, he took from the church the crown of his father Herakleios and performed the ceremony*’¹⁶⁴⁶.

Leo IV, and according to an iconodule account, it will bring him a painful death, causing boils on his head (see below, pp. 306-307).

¹⁶⁴⁴ HALDON 1990, p. 370.

¹⁶⁴⁵ PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*, 44, 142-143; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, p. 106. On the political context and the sources of the anecdote, see *ibidem*, vol. II, p. 254.

¹⁶⁴⁶ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 30.3-6; 31.11-14; 31.1-14; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 80-83. Theophanes Confessor did not mention the role of the mob in the events, and the rebel Valentinian is killed after the order of the emperor; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6136, AD 643/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 343; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 476. For the two reigns of Justinian II until 720 c., Theophanes’ and Nikephoros’ likely relied on an early eighth-century chronicle attributed to ‘Trajan the Patrician’. For a summary of the debate and a recent discussion around this problematic source, see FORREST 2015.

The power of the crowd was evident especially during the reign of Justinian II, the son of the warlike Constantine IV. The attention paid by this emperor to the ceremonial frame is testified by the intense building activity which involved the City and the palace (where the *lausiacus* and the *Iustinianos triclinus* provided new magnificent reception halls)¹⁶⁴⁷. The usurper Leontios proved nevertheless to be a better handler of the mob: at one point he released the prisoners held in the Prætorium (where he himself was convicted for three years), scattered them all around Constantinople and commanded them ‘to call loudly to all Christians to assemble at the church of Sophia’. In the while, he also went ‘with the monks and other friends of his’ to the Church and forced the patriarch to declare to the multitude gathered at the fountain: ‘This is the day that the Lord hath made!’. The words led the mob to insult Justinian and to proceed to the Hippodrome. The day after, at dawn, he was brought to them and they called for his head. Leontios was thus ‘proclaimed emperor by the crowd’. Leontios, in the end, spared Justinian II’s life ‘because of his affection for (Justinian’s) father Constantine (IV)) and, after cutting off his tongue and his nose, exiled him to the city of Cherson’¹⁶⁴⁸.

We have already seen how mutilation has long been used to deprive someone of the physical integrity necessary to take and retain the power, and how the parade of the mutilated limbs of the emperor’s enemies in front of the population was a widespread practice in the sixth century. We have also seen how the mutilation had struck also the imperial body on the occasion of the murder of Phocas. In the seventh century, however, the mutilation of significant limbs developed further its symbolic meaning in connection with a penal law increasingly concerned with physical punishments that had to symbolically display the nature of the crime¹⁶⁴⁹. The example of Arius was well present in the mind of the authors of the sixth-seventh century, as witnessed by John Moschos’ description of the death of the unworthy archbishop of Thessaloniki Thalilaïos. He declined to worship the holy Trinity and died like Arius on a latrina while he was on his way to an imperial audience. Moreover, he was found ‘with his head down in the drain of the privy and his feet up in the air’ because the angels ‘lifted up into the air those feet which would not walk in the way of righteousness (...)’¹⁶⁵⁰. Such a symbolic meaning was behind the traditional mutilation of the heretics who used their powerful limbs to defend their faith and were in this way deprived of weapons¹⁶⁵¹. And when Constans II wanted to punish Maximus the

¹⁶⁴⁷ For a summary of those activities, of which nothing survives, see HEAD 1972, pp. 52-54.

¹⁶⁴⁸ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 40.20-37; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 96-97; cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6187, AD 694/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 368; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 514-515.

¹⁶⁴⁹ PATLAGEAN 1984; HALDON 1990, p. 400. Also later in Leo III’s *Ecloga* body mutilations came to be associated with the crimes of sexual offence, sacrilege and treason, ‘for power and sexuality, and the metaphors by which these were represented in symbolic discourse, are universally related’; *ibidem*.

¹⁶⁵⁰ JOHN MOSCHOS, *Pratum Spirituale* ch. 43; ed. PG 87.3, col. 2897; tr. WORTLEY 1992, pp. 33-34.

¹⁶⁵¹ See, among many examples, the punishment theoretically decided for Severus of Antioch, recounted in EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV, 4.11-14; ed. BIDEZ 1898, p. 155; tr. WHITBY 2000, pp. 202-203

Confessor, after trying in vain to convert him to his heresy, he also ‘cut off the tongue of this divinely wise and most learned man as well as his right hand on account of having written (...) many works against his impiety’¹⁶⁵². The Monothelites, declared the hagiography of the saint, ‘unlawfully’ cut off his ‘God-speaking tongue which bubbled forth words (...)’, so that by removing his speech they would remove both his word and teaching with it (λόγος καὶ διδασκαλία), and in the future he would be voiceless and silent’¹⁶⁵³. Upset by the fact that Maximus, as well as his disciple Anastasius, continued miraculously to talk without their speech organs, the Monothelites cut off also their right hands, who were dragged and mocked around the agora¹⁶⁵⁴.

As for the idea of the mutilation of an emperor, it returned to be seen as problematic after the long rule of Heraclius. The Augusta Martina was punished with mutilation after having allegedly plotted to murder Constantine III in order to put his son Heracleonas on the throne: according to Pseudo-Sebeos she had the tongue removed¹⁶⁵⁵, while John of Nikiu specified that she and her son were first deprived of the crowns and only after they were punished with the cut of the nose¹⁶⁵⁶. As for the brothers of Constantine IV who were deprived of their noses by Justinian II to disqualify them in advance as potential candidates to the throne, they seem to have no crown and ‘had no dignity whatever’, if we consider Theophanes’ report as based on an earlier source¹⁶⁵⁷.

The case of Justinian II, on the other hand, stood out since he was surely fulfilling his role as emperor when he was deprived of both his nose and his tongue. The decision was taken by Leontios, who managed to temper the request of the crowd who was loudly requesting Justinian’s II death by performing the mutilation instead. The fact that the punishment was requested by the mindless crowd and not by the authority was nevertheless a sign of weakness for the new ruler, and Leontios shared

¹⁶⁵² THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6149, AD 656/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 347; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 484. The symbolism of a mutilated limb was already present in Cassius Dio’ anecdote about the end of Cicero, still recorded by John of Antioch. After he was beheaded, his right hand was cut off, Antonius’ wife Fulvia kept the head, insulting, spitting on it and then perforating the tongue with a hairpin. The head was then publicly displayed on the rostra, the same place where he used to talk against his Antonius and Flavia; CASSIUS DIO, *Historia Romana*, XLVII, 8.3-4; ed. and tr. CARY 1955, vol. V, pp. 130-133; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*; fr. 152, 1-6; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005; pp. 268-269.

¹⁶⁵³ VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, *RECENSION 3*, 68 (1716-1725); ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 177. The tongue, explained the author with attention to the physical detail, was cut off ‘internally from the pharynx and the attached epiglottis’; *ibidem*.

¹⁶⁵⁴ VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, *RECENSION 3*, 69 (1726-1741); ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, pp. 177-179.

¹⁶⁵⁵ PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*, 44, 141; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, p. 104.

¹⁶⁵⁶ JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 120, 52; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 197. In line with his narrative program to show the divine punishment due to emperors who misbehaved, Theophanes justified the decision by declaring that Heracleonas’ sentence was approved by the Senate and the people as a ‘godly decision’, due to his unlawful ruling as the ‘illicit offspring’ of Heraclius and his adhesion to the Monothelite faith; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6121, AD 628/9; AM 6133, AD 640/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 331; pp. 341-342; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 461; p. 475. For the accuses against Martina, see THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6132, AD 639/40; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 341; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 474.

¹⁶⁵⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6161, AD 668/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 352; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 492; see also n. 1, p. 492.

the same fate when he was in turn overthrown by the usurper Tiberius Apsimar and his nose was slit¹⁶⁵⁸.

Times had changed, and the belief that an imperial body had to be healthy and ‘perfect’ had been surpassed by the awareness that the emperor could also be affected by physical injuries, illness, and even mutilation. Justinian, therefore, managed to regain the power from Tiberius¹⁶⁵⁹. This was not an easy task: Agnellus of Ravenna, for whom Justinian was deprived of the nose and the ears by the soldiers who ‘reduced the excellence of his body’ to a wrecked one (*‘de praestantissimo dimissum reddiderunt corpus’*), reported that he made for himself an artificial nose and ears of pure gold (*‘ex obrizo’*)¹⁶⁶⁰. The anecdote remains suspect, since it has been written more than one century later and even the name of the emperor is misunderstood – at the beginning he mentioned Constantine, and only then correctly reported Justinian¹⁶⁶¹. On the other hand, the practice of replacing an amputated limb with a metal one was attested later under the rule of Romanos Lecapenos: when Basil, an impostor who pretended to be the dead general Constantine Doucas, was arrested and his right hand was cut off, he ordered to make a bronze hand with which he could continue to fight¹⁶⁶². Whether real or not, the tale about Justinian’s golden nose is meaningful in reporting how widespread was still in the first half of the ninth century the news of the imperial mutilation, and how strong was felt the concern about the integrity of the imperial body. The mutilation became also an occasion to mock the emperor: Justinian was nicknamed ‘the *Rhinotmetos*’, and when he was going to re-take the City and search for the approval of the urban mob, encamping for three days by the walls of the Blachernae and demanding to the inhabitants of the City to accept him as emperor, ‘they dismissed him with foul insults’¹⁶⁶³. The cut of the tongue seems to have been not such serious issues, since his ability to speak was not impaired and he continued to be ‘unusually talkative’¹⁶⁶⁴.

¹⁶⁵⁸ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 41.31-33; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 100-101; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6190, AD 697/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 371; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 517.

¹⁶⁵⁹ For the reconstruction of this enterprise, marked by legendary features which sounds like something out of a novel, see HEAD 1972, pp. 102-111.

¹⁶⁶⁰ AGNELLUS, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 137; ed. DELIYANNIS 2006, pp. 312-313; tr. DELIYANNIS 2004, p. 259.

¹⁶⁶¹ According to Head ‘we are given no clue as to how he held on this prosthetic device or where he obtained it. As an exile, it seems rather unlikely that he had access to much pure gold, and perhaps this adornment came only later when his fortunes improved’; HEAD 1972, p. 100. It is possible in any case that the device was not actually of pure gold but only gilded so as to appear as gold.

¹⁶⁶² THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS VI, *De Romano Lecapeno*, 33; ed. BEKKER 1838, p. 421; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, X.27; ed. THURN 1973, 228; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 220.

¹⁶⁶³ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 42.44-46; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 102-103; cf. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6197, AD 704/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 374; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 522.

¹⁶⁶⁴ HEAD 1972, p. 100. The *Historia Syntomos* reported that the mutilation was limited to the nose. When he returned to the throne, indeed the emperor himself ‘laughed at the usurpers that they had not cut out his tongue: for, as he often said, nothing else could make clear an emperor’s state of mind (φρόνημα) but words’; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.81; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 72-73.

As soon as Justinian regaining control of the City¹⁶⁶⁵, he used his public *schema* to visually convey the legitimacy of his coup and to prove that he was still able to perform the imperial role. He immediately organized a spectacular ceremony to humiliate his enemies, which simultaneously tried to stage once again the parallelism between emperor and Christ. Apsimar and Leontios were thrown down at his feet ‘for a short time’ during the horse races, one ‘on the right, the other on the left’, before their customary beheading at the Kynegion¹⁶⁶⁶. The biblical connotation of this *calcatio colli* was now underlined also by the acclamations of the audience: according to Theophanes, the emperor left his feet on their necks ‘until the end of the first race’ and in the while the people made clear the connection between the gesture of the emperor and the gesture of Christ by repeating the traditional Psalm of reference ‘You have set your foot on the asp and the basilisk, and you have trodden on the lion and the serpent’ (Ps90(91):13)¹⁶⁶⁷. Immediately after he arranged another spectacle to proclaim Caesar the Bulgarian chief Tervel (Terbelis), who had helped him regain the throne: he gave him the imperial mantle, and then ‘he had him sit by his side and ordered the people to pay homage (ποιησόμενος προσκυνεῖσθαι) to them jointly (...)’¹⁶⁶⁸.

Justinian II especially made extensive use of violence to keep the throne: his second rule was characterized by violent purges described in detail by Nikephoros and especially Theophanes as parts of his regime of fear. Even if scholarship recognized now the biased nature of those sources and have presented Justinian II’s reign in a more positive light¹⁶⁶⁹, even the ‘black legend’ built up around his figure remained remarkable in this sense. The violence was an efficacious political instrument to fight

¹⁶⁶⁵ He entered in the City with few men through an aqueduct; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 42.47-49; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 102-103; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6197, AD 704/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 374; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 522.

¹⁶⁶⁶ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 42.54-58; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 102-103. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6198, AD 705/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 375; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 523.

¹⁶⁶⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6198, AD 705/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 375; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 523. See above, p. 179.

¹⁶⁶⁸ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 42.58-64; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 102-105. Before that, Tervel received also the title of Caesar; OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, p. 122. It seems that it is not possible to give credit to the description, provided by the highly biased *Liber Pontificalis*, of the visit of Pope Constantine in 710-711. It is indeed unlikely that the emperor, still with the crown on his head (*cum regno in capite*) and while the population was watching (*viderunt*), bowed to kiss the pope’s feet (*sese prostravit et pedens osculans pontificis*) and staged a mutual embrace with him (*in amplexu mutuo corruerunt*), with great joy of the people who could perceive the humility displayed by their ‘good princes’; *LIBER PONTIFICALIS* 90, 5-6; ed. DUCHESNE 1957, p. 391; tr. DAVIS 1989, p. 88. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, already Justinian would had debased himself (*humiliavit se*) and had performed the prostration (*adoravit*) to welcome pope John in 525 and then ten years later in front of the pope Agapitus; *LIBER PONTIFICALIS* 55, 3; 59.4; ed. DUCHESNE 1957, p. 275; pp. 287-288; tr. DAVIS 1989, p. 51. Very different will be the treatment given to pope Vigilius, struck in the face and cast into prison after an initial promising welcome; *LIBER PONTIFICALIS* 61.6; ed. DUCHESNE 1957, p. 298; tr. DAVIS 1989, pp. 59-60.

¹⁶⁶⁹ HEAD 1972. On the prejudices which characterized those two authors (especially Theophanes) as possibly due to the use of sources produced under the reign of Leo III and eager to erase the previous dynasty which still captivated the feeling of loyalty of the population, see HEAD 1972, pp. 15-18; pp. 117-119.

political opponents and to control the instability which, as we have seen, characterized the mob and the army in those years marked by succession struggles and military defeats. In a manner similar to what happened to Phocas before him, however, the source presented the physical punishments and purges under Justinian II's rule as the result of the emperor's thirst for blood and madness, and even as the cause of the final rebellion against him. He was '*full of joy*' at the news of the sinking of a fleet in which a multitude of men have died: Nikephoros just reported that he '*decided to send another fleet there*'¹⁶⁷⁰, but Theophanes (who especially underlined the senseless, disorderly and shameful behaviour of Justinian in the battlefield) more openly declared that he was '*possessed by this frenzy*' and '*threatened with loud cries that he would send another fleet and mow everyone down to the ground*'¹⁶⁷¹. Justinian was especially in the search for revenge because of his early deposition. Agnellus of Ravenna reported the many punishments inflicted by Justinian once he regained the throne and reported that the emperor remained awake during the night like his homonymous, in this case grudging against Ravenna whose citizens had allegedly contributed to his deposition¹⁶⁷². Paul the Deacon even exaggerated the dimension of the punishments inflicted by the emperor by ironically reporting that every time he made with the right hand the gesture of cleaning a drop of mucus (a possible sarcastic reference to his cropped nose, mentioned immediately before, or to the traditional gesture of command), this motion was intended as an order to cut the throat of an enemy¹⁶⁷³. Finally, when the Armenian general Philippicus Bardanes overthrown Justinian II for the second and last time in 711, he received the head of the latter cut off '*with the dagger*' by the governor of Cherson¹⁶⁷⁴. He even dispatched it to be publicly displayed in the West as far as Rome¹⁶⁷⁵. Agnellus, who described the death of Justinian with abundance of lively details (attacked by people, the emperor vomited blood and his hair was '*scattered (sparsis crinibus)*'), recounted that his head was severed by a soldier while '*clutching the hair in his hand*'. It was then sent and paraded through the Italian squares for the delight of the citizens¹⁶⁷⁶. Those later and highly biased accounts have to be taken carefully, but they also seem to reflect the escalating use of a new kind of violence, much more physical, around the imperial court,

¹⁶⁷⁰ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 45.32-34; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 108-109.

¹⁶⁷¹ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6202, AD 709/10; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 378; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 527.

¹⁶⁷² AGNELLUS, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 137; ed. DELIYANNIS 2006, p. 313; tr. DELIYANNIS 2004, pp. 259-260. For the problems between the emperor and Ravenna, see also HEAD 1972, pp. 137-141. See also HEAD 1972, pp. 78-79.

¹⁶⁷³ (...) quotiens defluentem guttam reumatis manu detersit, pene totiens aliquem ex his qui contra eum fuerat iugulari praecepit; PAUL THE DEACON, *Historia Longobardorum*, VI, 32; ed. SCHWARTZ 2009, p. 322; tr. CAPO 1992, p. 335.

¹⁶⁷⁴ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6203, AD 710/11; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 381; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 529. For the events that occurred during the 'Cherson crisis', which led to the rebellion against Justinian, see HEAD 1972, pp. 142-148.

¹⁶⁷⁵ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 45.88-92; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 112-113.

¹⁶⁷⁶ AGNELLUS, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 142; ed. DELIYANNIS 2006, pp. 320-321; tr. DELIYANNIS 2004, p. 267.

both by and against the emperor. Remarkable it is also the impact (or lack of impact) it had in the eyes of the audience, who seems at this point much more desensitized toward it.

Acclaimed at Cherson, Bardanes ended Heraclius' dynasty, but he quickly lost the throne too. The account of his fall witnessed once again the idea that ceremonial formalism did not work and could not confer legitimacy to an emperor charged of unworthiness. Bardanes, claimed both Nikephoros and Theophanes, unlawfully refused the Sixth Ecumenical Council and did not care to face the Arab and Bulgarian attacks against the Byzantine territories. He, therefore, '*appeared to administer the empire in an indecorous and negligent manner (ἀσέμνως καὶ ῥαθύμως)*'¹⁶⁷⁷. He '*lived a carefree life in the palace*' dissipating '*at random*' the richness collected by his predecessors. And even if he was '*eloquent and prudent*' in his speeches, '*he was proved by his actions to be in every way incompetent, living as he did in an unseemly and incapable manner (ἀσέμνως καὶ ἀνικάνως)*. He was also a heretic and an adulterer'¹⁶⁷⁸. Unable to strengthen his legitimacy through his public image, Bardanes was overthrown and killed precisely in the context of a ceremony: according to Nikephoros, the emperor was commemorating the birthday of the City with the customary horse races¹⁶⁷⁹, while Theophanes reported that he '*decided to make on the Saturday of Pentecost an entry on horseback*' (better would have been perhaps a more humble bare-footed posture), and '*to bathe in the public baths of Zeuxippos*'¹⁶⁸⁰. Both the authors agree that the emperor organized a banquet (with friends according to Nikephoros, '*with citizens of ancient lineage*' according to Theophanes) and that he was surprised during his midday nap in the palace. He was blinded in the Hippodrome, and apparently no-one was concerned about the fact ('*anyone being aware of it*'). The crowd at this point felt no shock at the sight: it mindlessly and carelessly gathered in St Sophia to acclaim the new emperor Artemios without batting an eyelid¹⁶⁸¹.

3.2. THE POWER OF THE CROSS

We have seen the importance of the role played by *acheropoieta* images and the Holy Cross in the imperial military *schema*. The Cross functioned as a talisman to call for God's aid against the enemies

¹⁶⁷⁷ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 45.1-2; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 112-113.

¹⁶⁷⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6203, AD 710/11; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 381; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 530.

¹⁶⁷⁹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 48.1-5; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 114-115.

¹⁶⁸⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6205, AD 712/13; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 383; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 533. According to Nikephoros, the feast of the Pentecost was the following day, when the new emperor was proclaimed; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 48.15-19; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 114-117.

¹⁶⁸¹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 48.12-15; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 114-115; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6205, AD 712/13; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 383; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 533.

but it also recalled an imagery connected with Christ, Constantine, and Moses and enhanced the imperial image in the moment of triumph. Furthermore, the Cross and its fragments were used in urban processions (usually kept in wooden caskets) and in the context of oaths to reinforce the gesture performed on the Gospels. So Heraclionas vowed to not harm the son of his half-brother Constantine III after this latter's death (and after the army was incited against him and his mother Martina) by showing off the child and by laying 'his hand on the life-giving cross (τῶν ζωοποιῶν ξύλων ἤπτετο)'¹⁶⁸².

The cross was not only employed as a material object ('the Wood'). The emperor could also shape it with the movement of his hand. Like any other Christian faithful, the emperor could trace his forehead in front of a miracle, as happened to Maurice in front of the huge boar who attacked him and his retinue during a hunt. The boar disappeared without killing anyone and the emperor 'traced on his forehead the sign of the cross (ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον τοῦ σταυροῦ διατυπώσας τὰ σήμαντρα), as it is customary for Christians to do at miracles'¹⁶⁸³. Furthermore, this was a society where even the highest and privileged members accepted magical practices in their day to day physical reality¹⁶⁸⁴. Therefore, the emperor also could be seen, like the saint, as a special category performing gestures effective on reality. Heraclius raised his arms or his hands to heaven when he wanted to call for God's help in problematic moments, and his nod could bring victory to his army: where it is the imperial nod (νεῦσις), declared George of Pisidia in an unfortunately mutilated passage of his work, the fight has a victorious result. When the nod is contrary (ἀντινεύσεις), also the victory supports him with opposite nod (συναντιεύει). The standing emperor holding sceptre and crown was the arbiter (βραβευτής) who silently determined the result of a struggle between barbarians, and those present looked at the imperial nod (νεῦμα)¹⁶⁸⁵. Heraclius' offspring also shared the power of gesture on the battlefield. Pseudo-Sebeos recounted that Constans II managed to make the Ismaelite army leave the siege of Chalcedon also through his ritual gestures: when he received an offensive letter from the Ismaelite ruler, indeed, he 'went into the house of God, fell on his face' and then, uttering evocations based on biblical Psalms, 'he lifted the crown from his head, stripped off his purple (robes) and put on sackcloth,

¹⁶⁸² NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 30.16-23; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 80-81. The ceremony was organized by Martina in the presence of the patriarch Phyrros and succeeded in calming down the army.

¹⁶⁸³ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, V, 16.13-14; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 220; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, p. 157. Many other prodigies occurred to the emperor. Theophanes underlined the perfect control of the emperor, steady on his horse who was 'in terror of the sight'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6083, AD 590/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 268; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 391.

¹⁶⁸⁴ The 'magic of the Christian symbolic universe' and the superstitious beliefs, mostly pagan survivals, can still be found in the seventh century's accounts of exorcism, rites of purification, wondrous qualities attached to icons, relics, saint's tomb and pieces of the cross, together with words recited or chanted at the right moment in the appropriate form. The difference between magic and miracle (one served and inspired by the devil, the other by God) remained nevertheless a functional one; HALDON 1990, pp. 331-332, with bibliography.

¹⁶⁸⁵ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *In restitutionem S. Crucis* 85-89; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 229.

sat on ashes, and ordered a fast to be proclaimed in Constantinople in the manner of Nineveh¹⁶⁸⁶. The image of the king of Niniveh who likewise stood up from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust (*Jon* 3:5-6) was enriched therefore with the reference to the meaningful gesture of removing the crown. With this *schema* full of biblical references, Constans II induced God to make the Ismaelite's fleet being wiped out by a storm: 'on that day', concluded Pseudo-Sebeos, 'by his upraised arm God saved the city through the prayers of the pious king Constans'¹⁶⁸⁷.

As for the sign of the cross, the developments in the connection between this gesture and the imperial power is witnessed by the iconography in coins. Upon those meaningful *loci* the emperor could display significant gestures like that of the *mappa*, introduced in coins by Tiberius II. John of Ephesus told us that this latter was also the emperor who first replaced on the reverse of his coins the image of the Victory holding the cross (the *globus cruciger* or, starting from Justin II, the large cross 'sceptre') with the image of the cross alone¹⁶⁸⁸. Tiberius took seriously the form of the cross: if we trust the story transmitted later by Paul the Deacon, already when he was co-regent of Justin II he ordered to remove the decorative crosses from the floor to avoid them to be stepped on¹⁶⁸⁹.

On coins, the cross often stood on top of a staircase (likely a reference to the Constantinian column erected in the homonym Forum) and visually declared the Christian faith of the emperor. Starting from Maurice then, the imperial iconography were more and more driven toward a linear and two-dimensional style as that of the icons¹⁶⁹⁰, and the cross came to be more tightly related with the imperial hand. It could stand on the *globus* to express the dominion over the Christian Empire but it could also be present as a simple cross brandished in a manner similar to how the *mappa* was held. In a Maurice's *solidus* the emperor held the cross in his palm, while the Victory (or an angel) on the reverse displayed the same posture in a full length body's representation. Later, on Phocas' coins, the cross is clearly held by the imperial hand, while the gesture of the *mappa* remained present on other coins. The process reached an important stage under Justinian II, an emperor who showed a particular

¹⁶⁸⁶ PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*, 50, 170; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, p. 145.

¹⁶⁸⁷ PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*, 50, 171; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, p. 146.

¹⁶⁸⁸ John described the Victory in Justin II's coins as 'a female figure, which was generally compared to Venus', and declared the Tiberius' decision was 'dictated to him in a vision'; JOHN OF EPHEBUS, *Historia Ecclesiastica, pars Tertia*, III, 14; tr. PAYNE SMITH 1860, p. 192; tr. BROOKS 1952, p. 104; also MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, ch. 17; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 412. On this important iconographical shift, see also ALTIERI 1990, pp. 73-74.

¹⁶⁸⁹ PAUL THE DEACON, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 12; ed. SCHWARTZ 2005, p. 196; tr. CAPO 1992, pp. 139-141. 'Crucem Domini frontem nostram et pectora munire debemus' declared Tiberius, 'et ecce eam sub pedibus conculcamus'. The pious act will be rewarded with a great treasure hidden under the floor; *ibidem*. The representation of the cross on the floor will be officially prohibited in 691/692 at the Council of Trullo, also concerned in avoiding to insult 'the trophy of our victory' 'by the trampling feet of those who walk upon it'; *CANONS OF THE QUINISEXT COUNCIL IN TRULLO*, 73; ed. OHME 2013, pp. 51-52; tr. NEDUNGATT and FEATHERSTONE 1995, p. 155.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Art historians have already unveiled how the style of religious icons owed a great deal to the portrayals of emperors on coins; HALDON 1990, p. 415, with bibliography.

aesthetic sensibility in supervising his coinage: he paid attention in choosing and approving innovative designs and showed himself on the coins dressed in the civil costume (*divitesion* and *chlamys*) or in a full-length portrait clad in the *loros*¹⁶⁹¹. In 692 he approved the introduction of the bust of Christ on the obverse of coins. The imperial portrait was relegated on the reverse, but only to vividly underline the relation between heavenly and earthly sovereign, accompanied respectively by the words ‘REX REGNANTIUM’ and ‘SERVUS CHRISTI’¹⁶⁹². The way in which both the rulers fashioned their fingers appears here very similar: on one side Christ performs the benedictional gesture, on the other side the emperor grabs the cross disposing his fingers around it in a very similar shape, as in a reflex image. The gestures of both the authorities, divine and earthly ones, seem thus to coincide: on one side, Christ blessed and held the Gospel; on the other, the emperor displayed the cross and held the *globus cruciger* inscribed with the word PAX¹⁶⁹³.

In an era in which the role of the icon continued to increase in society, this visual connection between the two gestures had to be seen as powerfully evocative of the sacred nature of the imperial hand, here closely linked with the symbol of the Cross. Whether held as a material *insigne* or physically performed with the hand and the fingers, the symbol of the cross bestowed to the emperor the ‘magical’ and effective power which was felt inherent in its shape. ‘You own the mystical power of the cross (μυσταρχίας ἔχεις τὸ κῦρος)’, declared George of Pisidia to Heraclius, and through its grace, the emperor rejoiced together with the region, with the City and with the whole world¹⁶⁹⁴. The power of the cross was bestowed on the emperor’s hand for the benefit of the Roman Empire and the whole world. ‘For what manner of force’, asked also the popular Apocalypse of the Pseudo-Methodius, ‘or what lordship has sufficient strength ever to grasp the power of the cross, by whose might and holiness the kingdom of the Romans has been covered with a breastplate through the one who was hung upon it, our Lord Jesus Christ?’¹⁶⁹⁵. This work, originally composed in Syriac in the late seventh century and translated in Greek some decades later, was guided by the belief in the supremacy of the empire and in the emperor’s power to deliver the empire from the Arab invasion¹⁶⁹⁶.

The actual employment of the benedictional gesture by the emperor in the ceremonial context is testified by the famous series of silver disks commonly known as the ‘David Plates’. Discovered at Lambousa in 1902 and now divided between the Metropolitan Museum of New York and the

¹⁶⁹¹ HEAD 1972, pp. 54-55.

¹⁶⁹² GRABAR (1936) 1971, p. 19. This iconographical choice will be then interrupted during the Iconomachy, and then re-taken by Michael III in the ninth century without the inscription REX REGNANTIUM.

¹⁶⁹³ This is a rare gestural occurrence expressing the parallelism between Christ and the emperor. This parallelism otherwise played a central role in the imperial self-presentation of the emperor in this period. This association had indeed to be presented with a high level of ‘Sensibilität und Subtilität’, so that it could be ‘nur indirekt greifbar’ through a strenuous interpretation of the details; MEIER 2019, p. 1037.

¹⁶⁹⁴ GEORGE OF PISIDIA, *In restitutionem S. Crucis* 43-46; ed. and tr. PERTUSI 1959, p. 227.

¹⁶⁹⁵ PSEUDO-METHODIUS, *Revelationes*, ch. 9; ed. and tr. GARSTAD 2012, pp. 32-33.

¹⁶⁹⁶ B. GARSTAD, ‘Introduction’ to PSEUDO-METHODIUS, *Revelationes*; ed. and tr. GARSTAD 2012, esp. pp. VII-X.

Archaeological Museum of Nicosia, those nine disks had been since long recognized as a product of the Heraclian age. Made of pure silver and artfully manufactured (all qualities which seem to suggest an imperial and Constantinopolitan commission), they seem to have been publicly displayed at court to visually display and celebrate the emperor as new David. They represented indeed the earlier events in the life of the biblical hero (1 *Sam* 16-18) through a courtly style which made him a recognizable prototype of the emperor¹⁶⁹⁷. They are therefore a precious source for the imperial ideology and provide a visual representation of how imperial gestures were seen and performed in a formal and ceremonial setting. Several gestures, mostly of speech and benediction, could be seen on those highly refined and detailed pieces. Those gestures could function of course as narrative devices to indicate a dialogue between characters, like in the scene in which David played the harp and is approached by the messenger who summoned him at Samuel's presence. Or the scene in which David converses with his brother Eliab and their hands reflect the passion of the discussion (Eliab is reproaching him for his choice to join the war instead of working as a shepherd). Those were the traditional rhetorical gestures similar to those employed to depict a conversation between two characters in the fifth century's Virgilius Vaticanus and Romanus. The sacredness of the context is nevertheless underlined by the presence of haloes around the heads of David and the messenger. In the following scenes, the rhetorical gestures came to be used by the artist to signify an endorsement: Jesse approves David's anointment as King of Israel by raising the index, the middle and the little fingers (his brothers in the while contemplate the scene and Eliab even rises his finger to the mouth)¹⁶⁹⁸. Saul makes the same gesture (reversed since the figure is now on David's right side) in front of David receiving his armour. Other gestures seem to reflect actual ceremonial details, in particular in the scene in which David is introduced to Saul's court. Saul fulfils here a clear imperial role: he sits on his throne in a fully imperial attire (a *chlamys* decorated with the *tablion*), is surrounded by bodyguards in a 'barbaric' attire, and performs a clear gesture of benediction in the form of the sign of the cross. Like in the case of the above-mentioned Missorium of Madrid, also in this case the gesture did not signify a mere speech or approval for narrative's sake: it is a sign which denotes and allows to recognize the imperial status of the figure who bestowed power and benediction. In the scene in which Saul presides on the marriage between David and Michal, on the other hand, he performs a gesture parallel to the one performed by the patriarch to intercede for God and grant the divine approval over the union. In similar terms,

¹⁶⁹⁷ The intentional parallel between David and the emperor was first underlined by Grabar, while the effort of the plates to revive the qualities of Theodosian art to reconnect the emperor with the standards and the ideals of the early years of the Empire was recognized by Kitzinger. Spain Alexander has recognized the complexity of the connection between Heraclius and David, and suggested that the plates belonged to the period after the victory of the Persians in 629/630, when 'Heraclius was concerned with his image, his authority and his historical role'; SPAIN ALEXANDER 1977, esp. p. 218 and pp. 226 ff., with bibliography. For the way in which the figure of David was a plausible reference for Heraclius and the events of his life, see MEIER 2019, p. 1038.

¹⁶⁹⁸ The same gestures characterized Jesse and Eliab in the Anointment of David of the Paris Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. gr. 139, fol. 3v).

Simocatta wrote indeed that the patriarch John at the marriage of the emperor Maurice ‘took the royal pair’s hands, joined them to each other, and blessed them to each other’, blessing than the marriage with prayers and with the imperial crowns¹⁶⁹⁹.

An imperial gesture of benediction, performed this time in a triumphal setting, appears also in a fresco on the southern wall of the Church of St Demetrius of Thessaloniki. Badly damaged and re-painted after the fire of the church in 1917, the work still shows a haloed emperor on a horse who had to be likely identified with Justinian II triumphantly entering the church in 688¹⁷⁰⁰. This is an exceptional witness not only of the further development occurred in the iconography of the *Adventus imperatorum*, connected to the imagery of Christ’s Entry in Jerusalem by a ‘reverse current of influence’¹⁷⁰¹. It also shows how the military triumphal *schema* of an emperor had been enriched by the gesture of the hand raised in benediction. Finally, the effort of Justinian II to emphasize his subordination to Christ through art is confirmed by the eighth century *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, which described a ‘gilt statue’ of Justinian made during his second rule where he appeared as ‘kneeling (τὸ γονυκλινῆς)’ together with his wife and a huge elephant¹⁷⁰². The emperor, therefore, chose to be portrayed in the attitude of prayer or adoration in front of an image of Christ, which in all likelihood stood next to the statuary group.

We have seen how in the seventh century the emperor used his public image to face an audience made more demanding by political and military breakthroughs, which had undermined the imperial authority, and by the economic and territorial crisis, which had generated a general feeling of uncertainty toward the future and the fate of the empire. The blows suffered by the bodies on the body of Maurice first, and of Phocas afterwards, had dramatically revealed what had emerged already during the reign of Justin II: the mortal and vulnerable dimension of the imperial body. In the previous century, the compresence of a mortal and a divine nature in the imperial being could still be subject to reflection in the political theology and even included by the emperor himself in his public *schema*. But now it made the imperial person more exposed and less ‘untouchable’. To perform the role of the emperor had become riskier: to take into count the feelings of the audience and to choose the right

¹⁶⁹⁹ THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA, *Historiae*, I, 10.2-3; ed. DE BOOR 1972, p. 57; tr. WHITBY and WHITBY 1986, pp. 32-33.

¹⁷⁰⁰ OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, p. 113; n. 108, p. 134; McCORMICK 1986, p. 233, with bibliography. For the events connected with the entrance of Justinian II in Thessaloniki, see also HEAD 1972, pp. 37 ff.

¹⁷⁰¹ Originally it was the imagery of Christ’s Entry in Jerusalem which was shaped after the imperial model, as can be seen in the Christian sarcophagi of the fourth century. Roman emperors had in turn followed the Hellenistic trend for which the same honours given to gods at their epiphany were conferred also on kings who appeared at the gate of a city; KANTOROWICZ (1944) 1965.

¹⁷⁰² *PARASTASEIS SYNTOMOI CHRONIKAI*, 37; ed. and tr. CAMERON and HERRIN 1984, pp. 98-99. On the identification of the statue as Justinian II (against the identification as Justin by Grabar), and the rarity of this kind of representation with a kneeling emperor in this early period, see CAMERON and HERRIN 1984, pp. 210-211.

performance and the right gestures were central to make stable the position and avoid conflicts. Simultaneously, a new way to display the imperial *schema* was required. Heraclius learnt the lesson well, and exploited skilfully the process of 'Liturgisierung', which has invested the Byzantine society starting at least from the half of the sixth century, to build a fully Christianized *schema*, which draws strength from biblical and Christological associations to emphasise a new relationship with the divine realm. Not only did he propagate his image as good soldier and triumphant winner under the guise of the biblical hero or lieutenant of Christ. His mortal body also intermingled together the human and supernatural dimension to acquire almost the characteristics of the icon he held in his hand during the battle. This powerful imperial *schema* was then further surrounded by new evocative settings, by an even tighter bond between his right hand and the cross, and by an increasing number of formal ceremonies, designed to maximize the participation of the crowd and to increase the occasions of visibility for him and his family. On the other hand, it appears that the full Christianization, the Christomimesis, and the biblical connotations were accompanied by the general atmosphere of physical violence which, as we have seen, had also hit the emperors themselves. Heraclius himself had initially used it against Phocas, and after his death, his successors employed extensively physical punishments to solve succession struggles and get rid of political opponents. *Schema* and physical punishments were both important instruments that helped the emperors of the seventh century to win their subjects and visually promote their legitimacy, in order to stabilize their position and overcome the crisis.

This carefully constructed public image, however, did not lack nuances and, occasionally, criticism. Its Christianisation had led, it is true, to a drastic reduction of the imperial iconographical themes¹⁷⁰³, i.e. a drastic reduction in the repertoire of visual 'weapon' at disposal of the emperor. Even if the traditional, pagan-based, and 'republican' imagery attached to the imperial *schema* had faded from the imperial *schema*, however, it occasionally re-surface in the *moderatio* required by the emperor on specific occasions. So, Phocas can be presented like a *tyrannos* when he proved his lack of *moderatio* in front of the population who publicly mocked his ceremonial fails. Even Heraclius proved to be able to put the formality aside when the situation required it.

As for the criticism, two types of critique have emerged at this point: on one side the charge of not being able to use the ceremonial correctly, which possibly reflect actual ceremonial failures which were promptly emphasised by the religious and political biased sources. Despite all the efforts, the emperor could always be charged with dishonourable behaviour which overturned his sacred image (like when Heraclius escaped from an attack dressed like an ordinary man), or of a shameful and painful death. Furthermore, the liturgification and the sacred character of the emperor seem to bring forward a new

¹⁷⁰³ GRABAR (1936) 1971, pp. 158-159.

kind of critique, which could be even seen as a further development of Procopius' description of Justinian as the prince of the demons. 'Bad' emperors acquired a supernatural dimension also in their bad behaviour. Emperors like Phocas and Justinian II fell especially into the hands of their detractors: the violence used for political purpose, as well as the anger and lack of control (i.e. the passions recognized as inherent in his fallible nature as human being), became supernatural madness. The authors, therefore, managed to show the damage a bad emperor could cause to the empire and his unfitness to the rule by overturning the sacred official image and the political use of physical punishments into equally exceptional 'black legends', welcomed by later sources.

The emperor, therefore, continued to cope with the new threats posed to his authority in this period of crisis and in the face of the dramatic changes experienced by the society also by adapting and promoting an image suitable to the situation, flexible when it was necessary, and effective in different contexts, from the battlefield to the urban settings. The mortal dimension of the imperial body (now more than ever dramatically clear in the mind of the population) had been firmly established in a supernatural and exceptional dimension. Despite all his effort, however, the emperor was never in full control of the public image he offered at the sight of his spectators, and especially on the several interpretations and presentations given to his public performance, in positive but also in negative.

4. THE YEARS OF 'ICONOMACHY' (EIGHT – NINTH CENTURIES)

In 717, after the period of 'anarchy' and the brief reigns of Bardanes, Anastasius II, and Theodosius III, the *strategos* of the Anatolic theme Leo III managed to take the throne, to restrain the advance of the Arab forces against the capital and the empire, and to found a new dynasty, known as the 'Isaurian'. Especially during the reign of Leo III's son Constantine V, the empire regained the political and economic stability necessary to face the threats of Arabs, Bulgars, and Slavs, and the rising power of the Carolingians in the West¹⁷⁰⁴. Inside the society, however, this was also a period of serious religious and ideological conflicts revolving around the veneration of the icons. The start of the 'Iconomachy' had been traditionally placed in 726, when the icon of Christ at the Chalké would have been allegedly destroyed under the command of Leo III, or better in 730, when the same emperor issued the Edict in which he officially labelled as idolatric and banned the images representing Christ, the Virgin, the angels, and the saints in human form. Those were destroyed and replaced with symbols, decorative images, portraits or deeds of the emperors. After a brief interruption between 787 and 815, the Iconomachy knew a second phase under the emperors Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilos, until the final

¹⁷⁰⁴ OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, pp. 143-145. The alleged Isaurian origin of Leo III has been questioned by scholars who now tend to consider him as born in a town in northern Syria; TOBIAS and SANTORO 1990, n. 1, pp. 147-149.

victory of the iconophiles in 843. This heated debate over the images touched important issues of perception and meaning and left a deep mark on theological discussions and on society. Written texts were used as weapons in the struggle to establish a firm religious and cultural identity, and a renovated attention toward the historical development of the empire, from its biblical past to its golden age, had also consequences on imperial ideology¹⁷⁰⁵.

4.1. CEREMONIES AND GESTURES TO REINFORCE THE POWER

Never as much as for this period, we feel the weight of the lack of 'reliable' source. Almost every author who has described the events of the Iconomachy has indeed written from the point of view of the 'winner', either during the iconophile break after 787 (the patriarch Nikephoros for the events until 769, Theophanes Confessor for the events until 813, and the hagiographer of St Stephen for the reign of Leo III and Constantine V)¹⁷⁰⁶, after the final 'triumph of orthodoxy' in 843 (the accounts transmitted under the name of Scriptor Incertus, some hagiographies, and George the Monk), or then in the tenth-eleventh centuries (the descriptions of Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilos made by Genesios, Theophanes Continuatus, and John Skylitzes). Their accounts had, therefore, to be taken 'with the greatest caution'¹⁷⁰⁷. Despite the highly biased perspective, it is possible nevertheless to grasp also here some glimpses of the official use of ceremonies and gestures by iconoclast emperors as instruments of their policy. Even the most slating text could include, indeed, material concerning the undeniable good activities they performed as generous builders or their achievements as clever military leaders against the enemies of the empire. Theophanes could still define 'pious' Leo III when, at the beginning of his reign and before becoming iconoclast, he freed the City from the Arab siege in 717 with the help of God¹⁷⁰⁸. Even the impious and godless Constantine V, whose edicts and councils against the icons provoked God's wrath under the form of a plague, could be described by the patriarch Nikephoros as a man pursuing good building activities and successful military campaigns¹⁷⁰⁹. Such positive references can be due to the fact that the author 'copied mechanically' and mindlessly some

¹⁷⁰⁵ BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, p. XXIII-XXIV; n. 2 with bibliography.

¹⁷⁰⁶ For the iconophile biases of those authors, see below, p. 287. For the earlier sources they used, their personal intervention, and their editorial activity (especially in the case of Theophanes), see FORREST 2015 (for the early years of the reign of Leo III); MORDECHAI 2015 (for the period 714-813); AFINOGENOV 2015 (for the reigns of Leo III and Constantine V); HOWARD-JOHNSTON 2015 (for the early and middle decades of the eighth century).

¹⁷⁰⁷ BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, p. 166. Authors writing after 843 wrote and re-wrote, tempered and interpolated, the original sources at their disposal affecting 'the historical details, the rhetorical of ideological import of the life and the moral tone of the composition'; BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, p. 202.

¹⁷⁰⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6209, AD 716/17; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 396; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 545. He also managed to reach an important agreement with the Bulgarians; *ibidem*.

¹⁷⁰⁹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 73; 85.1-12; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 144-145; pp. 160-161.

pieces of propaganda favourable to the Isaurians¹⁷¹⁰. But it is also possible to read those statements as reflecting an idea for whom the 'evil' iconoclasts occasionally preserved their bravery, their sacredness, and the protection of God and the Theotokos, when they embodied the traditional imperial role as builders and commanders. Constantine, the iconoclast soldier of Artabasdos who dared to throw a stone to and trample upon an image of the Theotokos, could also retain his quality as '*brave soldier*' when he fought for the empire on the battlefield. And this even if in the end he was rightfully hit in turn by a stone which broke his head and face¹⁷¹¹.

We read about the spectacular ceremonies of investitures involving the imperial family and new-born babies. They continued to be organized to emphasise the concept of dynasty and secure power against the usurpers. Leo III had his wife Maria crowned at the Augusteion after the birth of their firstborn Constantine (the future Constantine V)¹⁷¹². And two years later he personally crowned his son at the Tribunal of the Nineteen Couches at the presence of the patriarch¹⁷¹³. When his father died, Constantine V had in turn to secure his position threatened by the usurper Artabasdos: since this latter had his son Nikephoros crowned by the patriarch Anastasius, Constantine overthrew and erased this dynastic image by blinding them and parading them in chains during an equestrian contest¹⁷¹⁴. The patriarch also was harshly punished: he was publicly flagellated and paraded through the Diipion, naked and riding backwards on a donkey, for his support to the rebel. The humiliation was in this case only a way to terrify and bend the will of the patriarch: it ultimately prevented him to be executed and allowed him to return back to his previous position to support the iconoclast stance of the emperor¹⁷¹⁵. On Pentecost, Constantine V proceeded to make the patriarch crown his new born son Leo (IV)¹⁷¹⁶. Later, in 767, he had his first wife Eudocia crowned in the Tribunal of the Nineteenth Couches, and while the patriarch was reciting a prayer, he personally invested his three sons (two of them as Caesars, one as Nobilissimus) with the cloaks and the crowns. He then led them to St Sophia where they proceed

¹⁷¹⁰ BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, pp. 168-170.

¹⁷¹¹ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6218, AD 725/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 406; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 560. The same reason could explain the positive judgment over Leo V at the end of the book (see below, p. 312), usually seen as a hint to date the text to the years immediately preceding the time when this emperor disclosed his iconoclast beliefs (in 814); MANGO AND SCOTT 1997, 'Introduction', pp. LVI-LVII.

¹⁷¹² THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6211, AD 718/19; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 400; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 551.

¹⁷¹³ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6212, AD 719/20; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 400-401; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 554; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 52.20-24; 58; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 120-121; pp. 128-129.

¹⁷¹⁴ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6234-6235, AD 741/2-742/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 417; p. 421; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 578; p. 581; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 65.3-4; 66.26-27; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 134-139.

¹⁷¹⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6235, AD 742/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 420-421; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 581.

¹⁷¹⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6241, AD 748/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 426; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 588-589; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 70.1-2; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 142-143.

to the *largitio*¹⁷¹⁷. Constantine V also organized a sumptuous wedding for his son Leo (IV) and Irene of Athens: the bride arrived at Constantinople with a splendid escort and was welcomed by prominent men of the capital with their wives. The following days she married Leo in a chapel of the palace, received the imperial crown in the hall of the Augusteus, and then the nuptial crown in the chapel of St Stephen in Daphne¹⁷¹⁸. When Constantine V died, then, Leo IV took immediately care of securing the position of his young son Constantine (VI) by having him ‘born in the Porphyra’¹⁷¹⁹. Furthermore, Leo IV relied also on his rhetorical ability: he uttered a speech in front of the army in which he appealed once again to his mortal nature, a kind of statement which was at the time fully integrated into the ‘imperial custom’. ‘My son is an only child’, declared the emperor, ‘and I am afraid of doing so lest I suffer the fate of all men and, while he is an infant, you put him to death and appoint another’. In this way, he was able to obtain a first oath from the soldiers who assured him ‘that they would not be ruled by anyone other than his son if God wanted him to die’. The following three days (from Palm Sunday until Holy Thursday) the people gathered in the Hippodrome and also requested to make Constantine emperor. On Holy Friday the emperor asked for a second and more formal oath: this time ‘those of the themata, the members of the Senate, the City tagmata, and all the citizens and artisans, swore on the holy and life-giving Cross’ and ‘set down their oath in signed documents’. Finally, the oath was further sealed in St Sophia: the emperor went up with the patriarch and the son on the ambo and uttered powerful words, while the written oaths were placed on the altar. Remarkably, the imperial words underlined the role played by his hand in the passage of power, with a parallelism with the hand of Christ: ‘Look (Ἴδοὺ), receive my son from the Church and from Christ’s hand (τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ)’ cried out the emperor. The audience in turn looked at the gesture and promised to accept and defend the one raised with the emperor’s hand (ἐκ τῆς χειρός σου). The following day Constantine was crowned by his father in the Hippodrome and then once again by the patriarch in the Great Church¹⁷²⁰.

While ceremonies involving the coronations of the members of the emperor’s family continued to captivate the subjects and instil in them the idea of a dynastic continuity¹⁷²¹, therefore, a new emphasis

¹⁷¹⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6260, AD 767/768; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 443-444; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 612-613; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 87; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 162-163.

¹⁷¹⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6261, AD 768/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 444; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 613.

¹⁷¹⁹ The first mention to the chamber designated for the imperial birth is present in the passage in which Theophanes declared that Irene confined his son Constantine ‘to the Porphyra, where he had been born’; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6289, AD 796/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 472; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 648.

¹⁷²⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6268, AD 775/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp 449-450; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 620-621.

¹⁷²¹ The custom was followed also in the second phase of Iconomachy: Michael II also crowned his son Theophilos in St Sophia as soon as he took the power from Leo V; and when he came along, Theophilos crowned his son Michael (III); GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 110, coll. 999-1000; cols. 1027-1028 (not present in De Boor

on the staging of public oaths before the coronations and the acclamations helped the emperor to make clear the distance from a despotic kind of government, presenting the choice of the imperial heir as the expression of the popular will¹⁷²². The shift of location, increasingly focused in the palace and in the Church of St Sophia, seems then to suggest also a new effort to keep the ceremonial occasions under control by staging them in a more controllable scenery. The danger of staging the ceremony in an open location is particularly revealed under the reign of Irene: she wanted to show her respect to her subjects by summoning *'all the population'* in the palace of the Magnaura for the appointment of the patriarch Tarasios. In this way, she gave to the occasion the semblance of a popular election¹⁷²³. Irene and her son acted respectfully behind the stage and watch *'from the gallery'* the proceeding of the meeting organized at the church of the Holy Apostles to discuss the restoration of the icons¹⁷²⁴. But the meeting ultimately failed because the iconoclast *scholarii* and *excubitores* attacked and threatened the participants: the empress intervened directly, expelled those responsible, formed a personal army, and organized the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (787). This time she sat on her throne and signed the decree for the restoration of the icons¹⁷²⁵.

A slightly different strategy seems to have been used in the 'iconophile break' between 787 and 815 by the *logothete* Nikephoros I. The night in which he overthrew the empress Irene, he tried to pursue his legitimacy in front of a wider audience: he sent immediately *'some insignificant people and slaves to make the proclamation before midnight'*, and the morning after he received the crown by the hands of the patriarch Tarasios¹⁷²⁶. But things did not always unfold as planned: it seems that the ceremony organized by this *'wretch'* usurper (so he was defined by Theophanes who was a great supporter of the empress) did not obtain the desired effect. Even if *'all the populace of the City gathered together'* in the Great Church, indeed, *'everyone was displeased by what was happening and cursed both him who was crowning (the patriarch Tarasios) and him who was being crowned (καὶ τὸν στέφοντα καὶ*

edition). The dynastic idea was achieved also with the recurrent use of the names 'Leo' and 'Constantine', and with the choice of representing on coins different generations of rulers together: Constantine V included on his *nomismata* his son and his deceased father, and Leo IV went so far as to flank his portrait with that of his son (on the obverse), his father Constantine V and his grandfather Leo III (on the reverse); BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, p. 123, with bibliography.

¹⁷²² OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, pp. 160-161. Ostrogorsky understood the increase in the use of oaths under Leo IV as a reaction to the previous despotic government of Leo III and Constantine V: the heir was presented as supported by the army and by the people, even if they actually obeyed an imperial order and did not have a decisive power on the choice. It seems however that this tendency could be also explained as a new kind of weapon, related to the needs of the emperor according to the contemporary events.

¹⁷²³ OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, p. 161.

¹⁷²⁴ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6278, AD 785/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 461; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 635.

¹⁷²⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6280, AD 787/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 463; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 637.

¹⁷²⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6295, AD 802/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 476; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 655.

τόν στεφόμενον) *and those who approved of these actions*¹⁷²⁷. The same year, however, Nikephoros wasted no time and crowned his son Staurakios on the ambo of St Sophia, in front of the patriarch¹⁷²⁸. Michael I Rangabè for his part was proclaimed at night by the army (assembled in the covered Hippodrome), and then at dawn by the Senate at the palace. He had to sign a written statement of true faith as a prerequisite requested by the patriarch Nikephoros to obtain the crown on the ambo of St Sophia. Shortly after he proceeded with the coronation of his wife Procopia (in the Augusteus) and his son Theophylact, also crowned by the patriarch on the ambo of the Great Church¹⁷²⁹. Those events were characterized by a display of generosity toward the clergy meant to keep the distance from the greed and avaricious nature which had caused the fall of Nikephoros I¹⁷³⁰.

Michael I was overthrown by Leo V (so-called 'the Armenian') but managed to save his life and the life of his family thanks to the ceremonial¹⁷³¹. Theophanes, who wrote in the years in which Leo V could be still defined as '*pious, extremely courageous, and fit in every respect to assume the kingship*', reported that the emperor paid great attention to avoid any accusations of usurpation: he initially objected his appointment by the army and expressed his wish '*to preserve his correct stance, untouched by treachery* (ὁρθὸν καὶ ἀνεπίβουλον). And when Michael fled in front of the Bulgarian army on the threshold of the City, forcing Leo to finally accept the power, the general '*wrote to the patriarch Nikephoros an assurance of his own orthodoxy and asked for his prayers*' so to be '*proclaimed most legitimately* (ἐνομμότατος) *emperor of the Romans*¹⁷³². Most importantly, the legitimacy of the appointment was made clear by the following ceremony in which Michael publicly staged his willing renounce to power. Already Theodosius III, reported Theophanes Confessor, conferred with the patriarch Germanus and the Senate, received by Leo III '*a promise of his immunity*', and then '*handed*

¹⁷²⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6295, AD 802/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 476; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 654. While Theophanes, undoubtedly biased against Nikephoros, spoke in general about the disappointment of the multitude (τὸ πλῆθος τῆς πόλεως), an interpolation in George the Monk's work referred to the crowd as an undisciplined mass (ὄχλοι ἐπηρῶντο); GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 110, coll. 969-970 (not present in De Boor's critical edition).

¹⁷²⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6296; AD 803/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 480; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 659.

¹⁷²⁹ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6303, AD 810/11; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 493; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 675.

¹⁷³⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6304, AD 811/12; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 493-494; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 677-678. The Scriptor Incertus, who underlined the special role of the empress who was present in front of the altar in grand style (μετὰ δόξης πολλῆς) and assisted to the crowning of her son, reported that she was the one who gave the *largitio* since her husband was a mild-mannered man (ἀνὴρ πρᾶος); *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* II, 1-10; tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 89. For the role of the empress before the war and her exhortations to the soldiers, see *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* II, 48-53; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 91.

¹⁷³¹ On the title 'Armenian', based on some confusion of the historian Genesios grounded in turn on George the Monk, see KALDELLIS 1998, n. 107, p. 25.

¹⁷³² THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6305, AD 812/13; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 502; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 685.

(ἐγχειρίζει) *the Empire*' to him¹⁷³³. The presence of a specific ceremony staged for this occasion is suggested by the version reported by George the Monk: when Theodosius III saw Leo III acclaimed by the army, he removed the crown from his head and put it on Leo III's head¹⁷³⁴. As for Michael I, Theophanes stated that he also had an exchange of views with the patriarch Nikephoros, after which he agreed to abdicate in order to spare his life and that of his sons. Leo V was then proclaimed by the army at the Hebdomon and entered in triumphal procession through the Charsian Gate, while Michael, his wife Prokopia, and their children received the monastic tonsure and garb in the chapel of the Pharos. After a night spent in the palace, Leo V received the crown by the patriarch Nikephoros on the ambo of St Sophia¹⁷³⁵. Genesios reported that Michael sent his household servants to bring the imperial *insignia* (βασιλικῶν συμβόλων) to Leo, and '*urged the Senate to go out and greet him, so that not a drop of Christian blood would be shed on his own account*'¹⁷³⁶. More in detail, the version reported by Michael the Syrian described the transfer of power as a carefully organized ceremony: in this version Michael I himself carried the crown to the new emperor and '*when the two met each other, Leo dismounted to bow down to the emperor. Michael also dismounted and placed the crown on the head of Leo saying, 'Accept the kingdom because it is worthy of you.'* He bowed down before him and went on saying, '*Since you have achieved victory the crown is suited to you.*' Such a move was appreciated by the Romans, and Leo sat on the throne. Michael and his wife tonsured their hair and assumed monastic garb', while his four sons were castrated¹⁷³⁷. It seems therefore that emperors who in those years took the throne through a coup d'état like Nikephoros I and Leo V relied not so much on violence and mutilations. Violent spectacles of punishment and beheading of defeated enemies continued to make clear the failure of a rebellion and the restitution of the order, and cropped heads '*preserved in vinegar*' continued to be sent to the emperor and paraded in front of the population of the City or of the provinces¹⁷³⁸. We have seen the punishment inflicted to Artabasdos, and the head of Anastasius II Artemius (beheaded at the Kynergion after he failed to take back the throne from Leo III)

¹⁷³³ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6208, AD 715/16; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 390; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 540.

¹⁷³⁴ GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; PG 110, coll. 915-916; ed. DE BOOR (1904) 1978, vol. II, p. 737, 18-20.

¹⁷³⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6305, AD 812/13; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 502; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 685-686.

¹⁷³⁶ GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 3; ed. LESMÜLLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 5; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 7. According to the Theophanes Continuatus, the ceremonial entrance passed through the Golden Gate and Leo V was welcomed by the Senate in the Church of St John the Forerunner at Stoudion, where they '*greeted him with hands held high, escorting and extolling him as divine*'; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 9; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 30-31.

¹⁷³⁷ MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, XII, 15; MOOSA 2014, p. 557.

¹⁷³⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6210, AD 717/18; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 398; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 549; n. 5, p. 551. Theophanes referred here to the heads of the usurper Basil, who opposed Leo III under the directions of the governor Sergius in Sicily, and his general. According to Nikephoros, the Sicilians were defeated and punished by the patrician and chartulary Paul, who managed to re-establish the order in the region; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 55; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 124-125.

had been also paraded, together with those of his supporters, through the Hippodrome¹⁷³⁹. But the example of Michael I proves that it was possible to resort to a more positive ceremonial to stage the new emperor position and secure his legitimacy.

After the coronation, emperors continued to display their bodies in triumphs and grandiose ceremonies. Arabs also recognized the power of those spectacles to confer authority: when Isam (or Hisham, father of Süleyman) opposed the emperor Leo III by supporting the imperial claim of the alleged son of Justinian II Tiberius, he gave him '*the appropriate imperial honours*' and an escort of guards and send him on tour from Jerusalem and around Syria '*with great pomp so that all should see him and be amazed*'¹⁷⁴⁰. Michael the Syrian's version reported that the '*fake Tiberius*' dressed in purple and '*pretended to be the Christ*', and that the show '*stirred up great trouble among the Romans*'. When he arrived in Edessa, he even '*had the audacity to go to the altar and take by hand the offering from the Table of Life, according to the custom of the kings of the Romans*'¹⁷⁴¹. Especially Constantine V organized several eye-catching ceremonies: we have seen his political use of the triumphant parade against his enemy Artabasdos and the patriarch. Constantine V also celebrated with great pomp his military victories against the Bulgars: for example, he appeared with a full military *schema* (ἀρματομένοϛ) in front of the defeated lord Teletzes, who was forced to proceed in wooden fetters among the soldiers and the acclamations of the *demes* before being beheaded outside the Golden Gate¹⁷⁴². It is interesting to note that during the reign of Irene, triumphal processions could be used to overcome intrigues and could undergo variations meant to strike even more the audience's eyes: '*on the Monday of Holy Easter*', indeed, she did not ride a horse as usual but '*processed from the church of the Holy Apostles, riding in a golden chariot drawn by four white horse and held by four patricians (...), and she distributed largess in abundance*'¹⁷⁴³.

The symbol of the Cross continued to appear at the emperor's side, this time as powerful aniconic symbol alternative to figural sacred art. As well highlighted by Moorhead, indeed, the exaltation of the cult of the Cross 'went hand in hand with the destruction of images' and the crosses replaced the figural decorations of the main churches of the City. The persistence of this symbol anyway was at this

¹⁷³⁹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 57.33-35; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 126-129. The head of the patrician Sisinnios was sent from Thessaloniki by the Bulgars who killed him; *ibidem*.

¹⁷⁴⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6229, AD 736/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 411; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 570.

¹⁷⁴¹ MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, XI, 21; tr. MOOSA 2014, pp. 501-502.

¹⁷⁴² THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6254, AD 761/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 433; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 599. For the triumph involving booty and captives organized after the victory of 772, see THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6265, AD 772/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 447; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 617. For the way in which Constantine welcomed the emissary of Bulgarian lord Paganos, see THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6256, AD 763; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 436; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 603.

¹⁷⁴³ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6291, AD 798/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 474; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 651.

point not only a way to fill the gap in the decoration emptied by the removal of the icons. It was rather a way through which the iconoclast emperors searched to 'capitalize on a symbol with a recognizable value' in order to underline their connection to God and to evoke in the mind of the audience a powerful connection with Constantine and the imperial victory. In the same way as for Heraclius, the Cross was used thus to express a 'reassuring message of imperial power' and victory against non-Christian emperors¹⁷⁴⁴. Many iconoclast poems repeatedly referred to the power of the Cross in driving the enemies away, defining the emperor as the one who '*gloriously raise up the Cross*'¹⁷⁴⁵. On coins, too, the idea of the imperial victory gained through the power of Christ was celebrated: the new formula IESUS CHRISTUS NIKA replaced the *victoria augusta* in Leo III's silver ceremonial *milaresia* and flanked the name of the ruling emperor down to the reign of Theophilos as a form of acclamation; and the *globus cruciger* or the ceremonial Cross continued to appear in the emperor's right hand¹⁷⁴⁶.

It seems therefore that emperors in the eighth century continued to be aware of the potential inherent in physical and evocative gestures carefully chosen and performed in meaningful settings. Despite the general trend toward a military and economic recovery, emperors still had to struggle for the support of the people, the army, and the members of the court: the imperial prestige and image continued indeed to be potentially threatened not only by the opposition against the emperors' iconoclast stance, but also by occasional catastrophes such as the plague of 746/747, the death of the emperor Nikephoros I on the battlefield of Pliska (811), and the fall of the city of Amorion (838). It is difficult to state how the emperor at this point used his body and appearance to handle his political needs, and to follow the effects of the previous developments in the construction of the imperial image. The attempt to reconstruct and fully understand the imperial effort to present a body theologically irreproachable, victorious, and powerful, indeed, has been undermined by the later condemnation of the iconoclast policy which highly affected the descriptions of its supporters. Still, we can see how the search for legitimacy was now pursued through spectacular ceremonies of coronations, triumphs, and public oaths toward and by the emperor, in the context of a gradual shift of the ceremonial location inwards of the palace. We still can find occasional references to the parallelism between Christ and the emperor staged in a ceremony, and we can still assess the increase in the number and the formalism of public ceremonies (several protocols assembled later in the miscellaneous section of the second Book of the *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus dated back to this period), as well as the kind of appearance and gestures that were employed in the search for legitimation.

¹⁷⁴⁴ MOORHEAD 1985, pp. 165-170.

¹⁷⁴⁵ MOORHEAD 1985, p. 170. The poems analysed by Moorhead come mainly from Theodore the Studite's *Refutatio Peom. Iconomach* (PG 99).

¹⁷⁴⁶ BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, pp. 121-122.

Furthermore, then, we can take cognizance of the level of refinement reached in those years by the above-mentioned two kinds of literary ‘technique’ of subverting the imperial *schema* as a mean for critique: on the one hand, the depiction of the emperor as an irrational, mad, and demonic being, on the other the overturn of the imperial official image proposed by the propaganda. The political use of violence is turned into madness, carefully organized ceremonies are described as tainted by pollution and incidents, while the emperor is simultaneously accused of being unable to held public meeting and trial and of using ambiguities and performative skills to deceive the audience.

4.2. THE SUBVERTING AND THE MANIPULATION OF THE IMPERIAL SCHEMA: MADNESS AND DEMONS, BRUTALITY AND VIOLENCE, AMBIGUITIES AND STRUGGLES OF SCHEMATA

Authors wrote in the period in which ‘all the grievances accumulated’ erupted, and their descriptions of the events and the main characters of the period were part of the spectacular process in which ‘reforming emperors were travestied as heretics’ and religious sovereigns were ‘caught in the trap of exegeses’¹⁷⁴⁷. The mechanisms set in motion in the previous century to overturn the official propaganda and by depicting enraged, uncontrolled, deceiving, and even demonic authorities who expressed outwardly their inner wickedness, reached in those years their peak. The iconoclast emperor was the instrument (ὄργανον) of the devil’s work: Leo III, who was Syrian by race and mentality (τὸ γένος καὶ τὸ φρόνημα), was expert in sorcery, in magical incantations, and in fooling easily impressed people¹⁷⁴⁸. Constantine V was not only a man unable to restrict his sexual behaviour (he had three wives), to eat properly (he ‘stuffs food down himself’) or to amuse decently (‘he does not just laugh, he guffaws’, and loved to have always ‘a background of music from stringed instruments’)¹⁷⁴⁹. Since his youth, he was also led astray ‘by magic, licentiousness, bloody sacrifice, by the dung (κόπροις) and urine of horses and delighting in impurity (μαλακία) and the invocation of demons’. All those pursuits were ‘soul-destroying (ψυχοφθόροις)’ and turned him into a ‘pernicious, crazed, bloodthirstily, and most savage beast’¹⁷⁵⁰. Later on, the men secretly sent by Leo V to remove, once

¹⁷⁴⁷ DAGRON (1996) 2003, p. 6. In the ‘trap of exegesis’ is caught for example Leo III, when the famous rhetorical question ‘Am I not emperor and priest’ is assigned to him to evoke ‘the enigmatic figure of Melchizedek, who had hunted the imagination for centuries’; *ibidem*.

¹⁷⁴⁸ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 23; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 211. The mention is present only here, but remains a long-standing aspect in the imperial critique; AUZÉPY 1997, n. 149.

¹⁷⁴⁹ CORMACK 1985, p. 120.

¹⁷⁵⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6232, AD 739/40; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 413; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 573. Psellos’ *Historia Syntomos* also mentioned Constantine V’s practice of sorcerer’s and divinations activities, together with his love for theatre; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.89; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 80-81. For the satanic (σατανικὸν) and demonic (φιλοδαίμονα) chariot races and charioteers which replaced the representation of the six ecumenical councils at Milion under Constantine V, see STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 65; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 265. Contrary to Grabar, Auzépy doubt the truthfulness of this replacement, since the images allegedly replaced did not depict Christ, the Virgin or the saints, and maybe were neither figurative. The charioteer could be seen as a reference to the theme of the emperor

again, the image of Christ from the Chalké not only threw stones and mud and uttered impious words, but also invoked the hell and the devil¹⁷⁵¹. The monk Antonius, former jurist and future bishop of Sylva, was a romancer (μυθολόγον) who loved to laugh (γελοιαστήν) and conducted a depraved life (αἰσχρῶς βιοῦντα), which set a bad example for younger monks¹⁷⁵². A demon pushed John, nicknamed Hylzilas (Ἰλζιλᾶς), toward disorderly manners (ἀτάκτως) and deprived him of his mental health (διάγων ἐν ἀσυνεσίᾳ)¹⁷⁵³. The author likely referred here to John the Grammarian, whose reputation remained for a long time stained with the charge of being the ‘chief sorcerer (μαντιάρχη) and chief demon (δαμονιάρχη)’ at court¹⁷⁵⁴. Theodore the Studite defined him as the worst among the un-holies (τῶν δυσσεβῶν δὲ τῷ ἐξόχῳ), a corrupted spirit (κατεφθαρμένῳ τὸν νοῦν), the champion of lies (ὑπερμάχῳ τοῦ ψεύδους), and a man of the same type as Jannes and Jambres (two biblical types of sorcerers)¹⁷⁵⁵. In this guise he appeared also in the ninth-century marginal illustration of the Khudov Psalter (fol. 35v; Ps 36:35)¹⁷⁵⁶. The figure accompanied with the inscription ‘Iannes’ and with coins in his hands, is inspired by a ‘money-loving demon’ who blew the heresy toward him in the form of a stream flowing from the demon’s mouth to John’s ear. ‘A shock of wild hair’ stood on his head like on those of his ‘demonic companion’: this helped to identify him in the psalter and contributed to illustrate the iconophile claim that John was inspired by, or a servant of, the devil¹⁷⁵⁷. Criticism, however, was best conveyed through the usual binary opposition between good and bad appearance reflecting good and bad characters. So the ‘good’ appearance and physical movements of

driving a quadriga, largely present also on tissues and silks of the period, as well as an image of Elias ascending to the sky ‘volontairement détournée de son sens par Étienne le Diacre’; AUZÉPY 1997, n. 411 p. 265.

¹⁷⁵¹ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS*, III, 393-404; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, pp. 118-119.

¹⁷⁵² *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS*, III, 289-296; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 114-115. Cf. PSEUDO-SYMEON, I, 4; ed. BEKKER 1838, p. 606.

¹⁷⁵³ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* III, 261-266; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, pp. 112-113. The name, explained the version of Pseudo-Symeon, meant in Hebraic the ‘precursor and helper of the devil (πρόδρομος καὶ συνεργὸς τοῦ διαβόλου)’: since his childhood, he was possessed by a demon (δαίμονα εἶχε) who pushed him to practice divination; PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales*, I, 4; ed. BEKKER 1838, p. 606.

¹⁷⁵⁴ *VITA THEODORAE AUGUSTAE*, 5; ed. MARKOPOULOS 1983, p. 261; tr. VINSON 1998, pp. 367-368.

¹⁷⁵⁵ THEODORE THE STUDITE, *Laudatio Theophanis*, 14; ed. and tr. EFTHYMIADIS 1993, p. 280-281. Those names could also occasionally refer to John (Jannes) and Anthony Kassiteras (Jambres), patriarch between the 821 and the 837; EFTHYMIADIS 1993, n. 35, p. 289. For the biblical reference, see *2Tim*3:8; *Ex*7:11; *22*; *9*:11. An interpolation in George the Monk called Joannes and Jambres the perfect instruments of the imperial impiety (ὄργανον ... τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως ἀσεβείας) and supporters of his iconoclast decisions; GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 10; coll. 1017-1018 (not included in De Boor version). For similar biblical parallels see also IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 166.11-14; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 76.

¹⁷⁵⁶ John is also paired with Stephen and Longinos tormenting Christ on the cross in the scene in which he whitewashed an icon and with the simoniacal and sorcerer Simon Magus in the scene in which he prostrated himself under the feet of the patriarch Nikephoros (fol. 51v); CORRIGAN 1992, fig. 38, p. 252.

¹⁷⁵⁷ CORRIGAN 1992, p. 2; CORRIGAN 1992, fig. 41, pp. 28-30; p. 254; n. 14, p. 162. See also the illustration for Psalm 68:28 (fol. 67v.). Illustrations in the marginal psalters reflected the contemporary iconophile literature (depicting the iconoclasts as simoniacs, sorcerers inspired by demons, and Jews); *ibidem*, pp. 27 ff., with bibliography. Theophilus on the opposite will be later mocked for his lack of hair, a shame which led him to decree that ‘no Roman should be permitted to wear his hair beyond the neck’; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 17; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 154-155. The thinness of Theophilus’ hair, especially on the forehead, is recorded also in JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 12; ed. THURN 1973, 64; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 65.

St Stephen (well-trained through abstinence from food and sexual relationships to perform miracles)¹⁷⁵⁸ clashed against those of the iconoclast supporters when he prostrated in front of martyr Theodorus' chapel. While he was on the floor, with the hands stretched, the head slightly inclined, and the eyes raised to the sky, one of his executioners violently smashed his head, only to suffer a demonic possession which threw him on the ground and led him to die¹⁷⁵⁹. The crowd also was foolishly unrestrained: they rhythmically beat Stephen on the head with flexible branches like as if he was a buffoon, and danced in front of him in derision¹⁷⁶⁰. In the very moment in which Stephen was dying, then, Constantine V was feasting at the pagan festival of the Brumalia: as recognized by Marie-France Auzépy, this opposition was more than a literary device. It showed how the disputes about the icons were associated with other alignments and contrasts, in this case an opposition between a profane and heretic way of life on one hand, and a sacred one on the other¹⁷⁶¹.

The most striking 'struggle of behaviour' was the one conveyed when pious iconophile men, usually monks, confronted the heretical emperor and his henchmen during a public reception. On those occasions, the imperial persona expressed at its best its all-changing and deceiving nature and its unrestricted rage. When Constantine V, a polymorphous dragon (πολύμορφος...δράκων) who feigned indulgence and then harshly punished his subjects, was confronted by St. Stephen, he hypocritically (ὑπόδωλος πως) changed his form (παρεμορφοῦτο) as a snake¹⁷⁶², roared like a lion (an old image favourably applied to his father Leo III too)¹⁷⁶³, and acted indecorously. He jumped from his throne and, like an ass, kicked the face and the belly of the saint, who was sitting on the ground and meekly suffered the injuries¹⁷⁶⁴. Stephen made the emperor angry (θυμομαχήσας) on several occasions: he did not answer the imperial questions and remained motionlessly prostrated on the ground, so that Constantine looked at him full of rage (ὀργίλως ἐπιδών), opened wide his bloodshot eyes (ἐναίμιος

¹⁷⁵⁸ He healed a sick praying and sustaining his head with his hand; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1800-1803; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 255; pp. 287-288.

¹⁷⁵⁹ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani Iunioris*, 69; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 269-270.

¹⁷⁶⁰ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 41; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 237-238. For the meaning of the term ἐγχεσίγελως, see *ibidem*, n. 278, p. 237. The same disorder will characterize the soldiers who drag the iconophile patriarch Nikephoros out of his house: they were ill-mannered men who crowded 'as the Jews against Christ' in St Sophia shouting, squalling disorderly (ἀτάκτως) and swearing; *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS*, III, 491-496; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 123. Similar tones were already employed by IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 193.9 – 194.16; tr. FISHER 1998, pp. 109-110.

¹⁷⁶¹ See also AUZÉPY 1997, n. 241, p. 230.

¹⁷⁶² STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 65; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 266. His own clemency, recognizes also Auzépy, is offered to the reader as 'l'effet d'une versatilité due à un caractère animal et monstrueux'; AUZÉPY 1997, n. 362 p.255.

¹⁷⁶³ For example, in STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 10; 68; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 193; p. 268. He could even erupt words from his choleric heart (ἐκ τῆς ὀργίλου αὐτοῦ καρδίας) as the Etna Vulcan; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 9; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 190. On the biblical connotations in the comparison between the emperor and the beast, see CUNNINGHAM 1991, n. 98, pp. 149-150; n. 124 p. 154.

¹⁷⁶⁴ *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1660-1675; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 134-135; p. 250.

τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς συνταράξας), shook the hands in the air (αἰθερίως τὴν χεῖρα περιγυρίσας), and emitted a loud dragon-like hiss (δρακοντιαῖόν τε συριεῖς μέγα)¹⁷⁶⁵. Constantine V get angry also when he met the holy Anne (a loyal iconophile supporter who refused to produce a false deposition against Stephen and showed off instead her *parresia*). On this occasion, too, his gestures became those of a demon-possessed: he remained speechless (ἐννεῶς), nibbled the fingertips of one hand (τὸ ἀκροδάκτυλόν τε τῆς μιᾶς χειρὸς ἐνδακῶν) and made swirls in the air with the other (τῆ ἑτέρᾳ χειρὶ αἰθερίως περιγυρίσας)¹⁷⁶⁶, that is he turned into a senseless movement the traditional gesture of command with the right hand. This meaning is more clear in the version of Metaphrastes, where is specified that the emperor bit the fingertips of the left hand (τῆς λαῖας χειρὸς), waved around the right hand (τὴν δεξιᾶν χεῖρα κύκλω περιδινήσας), and commanded (προστάττει) to leave the woman in prison¹⁷⁶⁷. Constantine then whistled (συριεῖς), furrowed the eyebrows (σύνοφρυς καθεσθείς) and remained open-mouthed (μεμένηκεν ἀχανής): this, specified the author, was the ordinary way (τρόπος) in which the emperor reacted to such occasions¹⁷⁶⁸.

Descriptions of gestures, noises, and physical expressions to underline the imperial rage and unworthiness are exploited also by the author of the earliest version of the *Passion of St Andrew in Crisis* (a likely fictional story of the trial and execution of St Andrew of Crete, held in Constantinople in 767, which was composed after the restoration of the icons in 843¹⁷⁶⁹). Constantine V, the great and eager minister of Satan (ὁ μέγας καὶ πρόθυμος τοῦ σατᾶν ὑπηρέτης)¹⁷⁷⁰, summoned Andrew at the palace of St Mamas, and once again his unrestricted anger (τῆ λύττη ... ἀσυγκρίτου) was triggered by the saint's *parresia*. The emperor uttered blasphemous and deceiving words, and then roared like a lion¹⁷⁷¹, behaved like a rabid (μανικὸς) dog, played childish (ἄθυροστομεῖν), and barked without control (ἄκρατως ὕλακτεῖν) against the Church¹⁷⁷². He continued to act in a physical manner with the members of the court: as was his custom (ὡς ἦν αὐτῷ ἔθος), he spoke loud (φθεγγομένους), stared (ἀποβλεψάμενος) with a murderous and dragon-like eye, and nod with the head (τὴν κάραν πως νευστάσας) when he ordered to bring back the saint at his presence. Those present, who were accomplices of the *tyrannos*, intended the blame and the anger of the ruler from his face (τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ τὸν θυμὸν τοῦ ἄνακτος, ἐκ τῆς προσόψεως τεκμηράμενοι) and bent docilely to his will¹⁷⁷³.

¹⁷⁶⁵ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani Iunioris*, 55; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 252-253. Similar the description in Metaphrastes, who also recorded the emperor's shaking of the hand (ὡς ἔθος τὴν χεῖρα περιδινήσας) and shouting; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 2041-2045; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 150; p. 265.

¹⁷⁶⁶ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani Iunioris*, 35; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 230

¹⁷⁶⁷ *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1280-1285; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 119; p. 336

¹⁷⁶⁸ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani Iunioris*, 35; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 230.

¹⁷⁶⁹ BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, p. 206. The story will be rewritten later also by Symeon Metaphrastes.

¹⁷⁷⁰ *PASSIO S. ANDREAE IN CRISI*, 3; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, VIII (1853), 136.

¹⁷⁷¹ *PASSIO S. ANDREAE IN CRISI*, 5; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, VIII (1853), 138.

¹⁷⁷² *PASSIO S. ANDREAE IN CRISI*, 4; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, VIII (1853), 136.

¹⁷⁷³ *PASSIO S. ANDREAE IN CRISI*, 7; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, VIII (1853), 138.

On another occasion Constantine kept off the anger (τὸν θυμὸν) and hide the unholiness (ὁ ἀνόσιος) under the surface of the flesh (ὑπουλος) by summoning the saint with the hand (τῆ χειρὶ) and pretending (ὑποκρίσει δολερᾶ) to stop the trial against him. The saint for his part equipped himself with the sign of the cross (σταυροῦ τῷ τύπῳ ἑαυτὸν σημειωσάμενος)¹⁷⁷⁴, like as he was in front of a demon, and showed the outward signs (σταθηρᾶς γνωρίσματα) of strength, faith, and courage which were always present in an honest, generous and brave soul¹⁷⁷⁵. He then slightly reclined the head and fixed his eyes on the terrible emperor¹⁷⁷⁶.

Emperors of the second phase of the Iconomachy (Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilos, especially the former and the latter) continued also to be described as impious, deceiving, and savage beasts unable to control their anger and to rationally use their bodies, their gestures, their eyes, and their voices. The *Life of Michael the Synkellos*, written by an anonymous author who ‘it is tempting to believe although impossible to prove’ worked ‘not much more than a generation after the saint’s death’ in 846¹⁷⁷⁷, tells the life of a hesychast monk of Jerusalem who moved to Constantinople during the reign of Michael I and then suffered the persecutions during the second iconoclast revival¹⁷⁷⁸. This text offers a good compendium of descriptions: Leo V was impious (ἄσεβής), God-fighting (θεομάχος), named after a beast (θηριωνύμος), and ‘concealed his deceit’ when Michael and his disciples first arrived in Constantinople¹⁷⁷⁹. The emperor’s son Constantine Symbatios was ‘unworthy of the purple (ὁ τῆς ἀλουργίδος ἀνάξιος)’¹⁷⁸⁰, a serious charge against the dynastical claim so important for emperors. Theophilos especially was ‘savage in ways and harsh in mind (ὠμὸς τοῖς τρόποις, ἀπηνῆς τῷ φρονήματι)’, *breathing forth Christ-hating anger and fury* (πνέων χριστομάχου θυμοῦ καὶ ὀργῆς). He was ‘possessed (κρατούμενος)’ by ‘unbridled’ and ‘ungovernable’ anger (θυμῷ) which drove him to use all sorts of punishments and tortures against the iconophiles, ‘expecting perhaps to persuade them through such afflictions to embrace the truth’¹⁷⁸¹. This rage was as usual expressed by irrational and beastly movements of the body: every time he found out some acts performed by the iconodules, he ‘let out great groans, gnashed his teeth like a lion, struck his face with his two hands and cried out,

¹⁷⁷⁴ PASSIO S. ANDREAE IN CRISI, 8; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, VIII (1853), 138.

¹⁷⁷⁵ PASSIO S. ANDREAE IN CRISI, 10; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, VIII (1853), 138.

¹⁷⁷⁶ PASSIO S. ANDREAE IN CRISI, 3; ed. *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, VIII (1853), 136.

¹⁷⁷⁷ CUNNINGHAM 1991, ‘Introduction’ to *VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI*; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, p. 5.

¹⁷⁷⁸ Michael was interrogated, beaten and imprisoned by Leo V and exiled under Michael II. In 834 *ca.* he returned back to Constantinople, where he suffered the persecution of Theophilos together with his disciples, the brothers Theodore and Theophanes. After the triumph of orthodoxy in 843, Michael was finally appointed abbot of the monastery of Chora and *synkellos* of the new patriarch Methodios; M. B. CUNNINGHAM, ‘Introduction’ to *VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI*; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁷⁹ *VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI*, 9; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, pp. 62-63. The ‘deceit (τὸν δόλον)’ is an evocative term which referred to *Prov.*26:24-26 and painted the imperial deceit with biblical undertones.

¹⁷⁸⁰ *VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI*, 28; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, p. 109. The Proverbs declared that the deception (δόλον) could conceal the malice (ἔκθρα) but the wickedness (ἀμαρτία) is always exposed in the end; CUNNINGHAM 1991, n. 80, p. 146.

¹⁷⁸¹ *VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI*, 17; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, pp. 72-73; pp. 78-79.

'*Woe is me!*'¹⁷⁸². Especially his eyes were good conductors of the imperial rage: when he summoned Michael's disciples Theodore and Theophanes at the Chrysotriklinos, surrounded by the Senate in attendance (περισταμένων), he beheld (ὄφθη) them from his throne (ἐκαθέζετο) and breathed forth anger and fury (θυμοῦ καὶ ὀργῆς πνέων). When the two brothers (who '*possessed within themselves the fear of God*'¹⁷⁸³) entered the room without distress and were left '*alone before the eyes of the emperor* (ἐνώπιον τῶν τοῦ βασιλέως ὀφθαλμῶν)', Theophilos '*was struck with amazement* (ἔκθαμβον) *at their appearance* (ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως)' and '*commanded them in a harsh and arrogant voice to approach and come before him*' in order to engage them in a dialectic discussion. Unable to bend them with his fearful appearance or with his words, the emperor relied in the end on physical violence: he '*ordered strong men to strike their faces* (τὰς ὄψεις) *forcefully* (...)', a punishment connected by the author to the blows suffered by Christ in the presence of Pilate¹⁷⁸⁴, and then he had them stripped, tied up, and whipped¹⁷⁸⁵. Same tones characterized the description of Leo V in the hagiography of the iconophile patriarch Nikephoros, written by Ignatius the Deacon shortly after 843. Leo V was the responsible for the resignation of the pious patriarch, and earned the definition of '*chameleon of many guises in his elaborate impiety* (τὸν τῆ ποικιλία τῆς ἀσεβείας φανέντα πολυειδῆ), *who lost his senses* (τὸν λογισμὸν) *from the very* (moment of) *his proclamation*'¹⁷⁸⁶. He was a '*brutish* (ἀγνώμονα)' who roared like a lion¹⁷⁸⁷, with '*a beast's name and a wolf's heart* (τοῦ θηριωνύμου καὶ λυκόφρονος)'¹⁷⁸⁸. Leo V was also unable to use his body during a speech: when he confronted the patriarch Nikephoros in a dialogue over the nature of the icons, indeed, he was '*overwhelmed by his inability to formulate* (ἀφασία) *an answer*', so that '*he managed with difficulty to speak in a faint and lifeless voice*'¹⁷⁸⁹. He was neither able '*to stretch out his hand* (to help) *his own argument* (οὐ γὰρ εἶχεν ὀρέξαι χεῖρα τῷ ἑαυτοῦ λόγῳ)' or to respond¹⁷⁹⁰. And this because arrogance (ἀλαζονεία) caused men to become unstable and to be driven away from their senses¹⁷⁹¹.

To depict an emperor without control in front of the entire court, unable to rule himself during a public meeting or during a trial, to properly use his body and his words during a dialogue, and even misusing the imperial gesture of command, was an efficacious strategy which overturned the steady, sacred,

¹⁷⁸² VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI, 18; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, pp. 78-79.

¹⁷⁸³ VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI, 19; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, pp. 82-83.

¹⁷⁸⁴ They were indeed '*made equal to their Creator in contest*', and '*just as my Christ was smitten as He stood in the presence of Pilate, so His true servants rejoiced as their countenances were struck for His sake and for the sake of His icon*'; VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI, 19; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, pp. 82-83.

¹⁷⁸⁵ VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI, 21; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, pp. 90-91. The trial will end with the famous '*bizarre*' punishment of the tattooed verses inscribed on their forehead; see below, n. 1952, p. 320.

¹⁷⁸⁶ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 162.23-25; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 70.

¹⁷⁸⁷ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 163.17-18; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 72.

¹⁷⁸⁸ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 187.5-6; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 101.

¹⁷⁸⁹ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 185.19-20; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 100.

¹⁷⁹⁰ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 188.29; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 103.

¹⁷⁹¹ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 188.31-33; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 103.

and powerful image the emperor offered in front of his court in public occasions. This charge was not limited to iconoclast emperors and could be also extended to the context of the battlefield: the Scriptor Incertus used the same rhetorical strategy when he wanted to build up his critique against the iconophile emperor Nikephoros. During the campaign against the campaign in Bulgaria against Krum, the emperor suddenly neglected his duties because his mind (τὰς φρένας) became unsound and troubled like that of someone who had lost his reason (δίικην ἐξεστηκότος). He was easily confused and indulged in the slumber of boastfulness (ἀλαζονείας). He did not leave his tent and did not say a word or a command anymore¹⁷⁹². In front of such foolishness and incoherence (τὸ ἀδιάτακον καὶ ἀσύστατον), the soldier also began to act without control, raiding, killing and avoiding the battlefield¹⁷⁹³. The emperor, therefore, ruined himself and the army¹⁷⁹⁴. He was a mighty man smart in the affairs of state, commented finally the author, but he was also a man of few words (μικρολόγος) and stingy (φιλάργους) to excess¹⁷⁹⁵.

Iconophile authors worked hard to overthrow the ceremonial imagery carefully constructed, propagated, and then performed by the emperor. The context of ceremonies and public displays was more dependent upon the individual personality of the emperor, and authors turned against him the same instruments he employed to strength his power and meet his political needs. The ceremonial formalism that surrounded the emperors in this period was overturned by sullyng it with embarrassing and out-of-norm events, which rather revealed the unworthy nature of the performers. The baptism of Constantine V was marked therefore by a *'terrible'* and *'evil-smelling-sign'* when the infant (defined as the *'precursor of the Antichrist'* and the *'subverter of the divine Incarnation'*¹⁷⁹⁶) defecated in the holy font. Whether happened or not (Theophanes, of course, declared that the fact was testified by eyewitnesses) the incident earned him the long-standing nickname *'Copronimus'* and blemished with an indelible stain the moment in which the newly born son of the emperor was *'received as sponsor'* *'by the chief men of the themata and of the Senate'*¹⁷⁹⁷. Theophanes skilfully introduced the incident

¹⁷⁹² *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* I, 51-61; tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 80.

¹⁷⁹³ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* I, 68-71; tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 81.

¹⁷⁹⁴ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* I, 51-61; tr. IADEVAIA 1987, pp. 85-86.

¹⁷⁹⁵ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* I, 158-165; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA, 1987, p. 86. Theophanes also agreed that the emperor was *'dumbfounded'* (ὡς ἐμβρόντητος), remained indolent when Krum secured all the entrance and the exits of his country, and *'surpassed all his predecessors by his greed, his licentiousness, his barbaric cruelty'*; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6303, AD 810/11; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 491-492; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 674. More positive is the judgment of Michael the Syrian, who described Nikephoros as *'an administrator and a mighty man'*, with noble origins, intelligent and used to fast and pray. *'(...) since the rise of Islam'*, declared the author, *'no one among the emperors of the Romans was a fighting man and successful in war like Nikephoros'*; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, XII, 5; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 525.

¹⁷⁹⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6221, AD 728/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 408; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 564.

¹⁷⁹⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6211, AD 718/19; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 400; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 551-552. Later the *Historia Syntomos* attributed to Michael Psellos added that the ceremony did not appear as holy as hoped because Constantine was *'rather ducked than baptised'* (κατεβάπτισε δὲ τοῦτον μᾶλλον ἢ ἐβάπτισατο) by his father, who plunged him *'totally into the godly waters'*; MICHAEL PSELLOS,

as a revealing sign of Constantine's inner pollution: in a society where every small ceremonial incident was seen as a serious matter connected with the divine will and agency, it is not surprising to read indeed that, immediately after, the holy patriarch Germanus who was performing the ceremony 'declared prophetically that that sign denoted the great evil that would befall the Christians and the Church'¹⁷⁹⁸. Germanus revealed his prophetic skills also during another ceremonial incident. Before his deposition by Leo III, on his way to the palace, Germanus met Anastasius, the man with whom he will be replaced and who will become a more accommodating patriarch for the iconoclast emperor¹⁷⁹⁹. Anastasius 'stepped on the hind part of his vestment', and Germanus immediately cried out "Don't hurry, you will enter the Diipion in good time!": with those words, which much disturbed Anastasius, Germanus foretold his future punishment¹⁸⁰⁰.

Furthermore, then, the emphasis on the savage and out of control nature of the emperor's soul meant to question also his role as impartial and rightful judge. 'If you want to condemn me', clearly declared St. Stephen when finally spoke in front of the angered Constantine, 'do it; but if you want to proceed to an interrogatory, temper your heart with sweetness: this is indeed how the laws expect the judge to administer justice'¹⁸⁰¹. As happened to Phocas and Justinian II, therefore, the traditional punitive power of the iconoclast emperors was turned into a mad, brutal, and merciless violence against innocent victims¹⁸⁰². When 'lawless emperor Leo III used mutilations, lashes, banishments, and fines, against pious laymen as well as against clerics and monks, he was driven not by reason but by his

Historia Syntomos, ch.88.29-31; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 78-81. The more famous version of the event is recounted immediately after; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.89.35-37; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 80-81.

¹⁷⁹⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6211, AD 718/19; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 400; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 552. For Theophanes' idea that the bad ruler could be seen as a punishment sent by God for the multitude of sins of the citizens of the empire, see THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6233, AD 740/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 414; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 575.

¹⁷⁹⁹ Anastasius was 'the spurious pupil and synkellos of the blessed Germanus' who 'was ordained and appointed false bishop of Constantinople on account of his worldly ambition' after Germanus' resignation; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6221, AD 728/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 409; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 565.

¹⁸⁰⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6221, AD 728/29; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 408; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 564. For the punishment inflicted on Anastasius, see above, p. 280. Already in the seventh century, this incident is attributed by John of Antioch to Jovian, who would have foretold his future imperial role by stepping on the chlamys of the emperor Julian. The anecdote will be reported by successive authors; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 270; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 452-453. The same happened then to Leo V, whose hem was stepped upon by the future emperor Michael II; GENESIUS, *Regna*, I, 4; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 5-6; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 7-8; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 9; ed. and tr. KALDELLIS 2015, pp. 30-31; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, I, 3; ed. THURN 1973, 8; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸⁰¹ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani lunionris*, 55; tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 252-253.

¹⁸⁰² The critique was directed not so much to the public denigration and mutilation of bodies in themselves but rather to the fact that punishments, driven by the anger, were misdirected. Leo III, for example, could rightfully punish rebels and enemies of the empire but then he unrightfully caused tortures and sufferings to those who rejected his unholy decision; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 62.9-12; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 130-131.

'raging fury against the correct faith' and his 'furious' state of mind¹⁸⁰³. The theological approach of Theophanes mindfully connected this despicable imperial iniquity with biblical and historical precedents: Leo III attacked Germanus like Herod attacked John the Baptist¹⁸⁰⁴. Constantine V also unleashed his rage as the King Ahab¹⁸⁰⁵, while the Constantinopolitan monk Andrew dared to call him 'a second Valens and a second Julian'¹⁸⁰⁶. Constantine V was particularly criticized for his extensive use of staged public punishments (we have already seen the public shame inflicted to the rebel Artabasdos, his supporters, and the patriarch Anastasius early in his reign)¹⁸⁰⁷. Especially after the Council of Hieria in 754, he turned toward harsher repressions against his political opponents¹⁸⁰⁸. He falsely charged with treason 'several men in high positions and dignities', because of their faith but sometimes only because he bore a personal grudge against their handsome and strong appearance¹⁸⁰⁹. He then exposed them to highly violent and humiliating public treatments. Those who complained about the suffering endured by St. Stephen at the hands of the emperor, for example, were exposed to scorn at the Hippodrome, were 'spat upon and cursed by all the people', and then beheaded at the Kynergion¹⁸¹⁰.

¹⁸⁰³ When he punished those who fought against the removal of the Christ's icon at the Chalké, he punished 'especially those who were preminent by birth and culture': THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6218, AD 725/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 405; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 559. On the intensified assault against holy icons, 'many clerics, monks, and pious laymen', and the rage vented against the patriarch Germanus and the pope, see THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6221, AD 728/9; AM 6224, AD 731/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 407-410; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 563-565; p. 568. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6221, AD 728/9.

¹⁸⁰⁴ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6221, AD 728/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 408; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 564.

¹⁸⁰⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6258, AD 765/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 438; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 607. Also the rage of the Valens against the monk Isaac was connected by Theophanes to the same biblical model; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 5870, AD 377/8; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 65; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 100. Theophanes employed Old Testament models to show the continuity between biblical and contemporary history, and to reassure his like-minded iconophile audience that their side was that of the true Israel; RAPP 2010.

¹⁸⁰⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6253, AD 760/61; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 432; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 598.

¹⁸⁰⁷ See above, p. 280.

¹⁸⁰⁸ For the possible political reasons behind the persecution of the iconophiles, see OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, pp. 156-159. It seems for example that the martyrdom of Stephan has been due not only to his iconophile faith. Theophanes reported that 'the impious and unholy emperor becomes enraged at all God-fearing people' since 'he (Stephen) had admonished many people to enter the monastic life and had persuaded them to scorn imperial dignities and money'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6257, AD 764/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 436-437; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 604. See also the story of George Syncretus (see below, pp. 301-302).

¹⁸⁰⁹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Synthomos*, 83.8-11; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 156-157; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6257, AD 764/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 438; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 605.

¹⁸¹⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6257, AD 764/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 438; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 605.

The outstanding humiliation inflicted to the patriarch Constantine, charged with the crime of treason and deposed in 767¹⁸¹¹, testifies how powerful was the sight of bodies violently struck and shamefully paraded, and how carefully those kinds of spectacles were staged at the time. The patriarch was brought back to Constantinople from his exile and was beaten so hard that he was almost unable to walk. A chariot carried him therefore to St Sophia where the entire population of the City *'had been gathered by imperial order and were looking on (ὄρωντος)'*. He sat on the *solea* (the raised passage between the ambo and the altar) and was flanked by the imperial *a secretis*, who started reading out from a document the charges against him, *'so everyone could hear it. And at every item the a secretis hit him in the face (or on the head, according to Nikephoros), while the patriarch Niketas (the man who was going to succeed him) was sitting in the synthronon and witnessing the scene (καθεζομένου καὶ θεωροῦντος)'*. At this point the two patriarchs went up together on the ambo: Constantine was set up straight (στήσαντες ὄρθιον) and *'Niketas took the document, sent bishops to remove Constantine's pallium, and anathematized him. And after calling him Dark-face (Σκοτιόψιν)¹⁸¹², they expelled him from the church facing backwards'*. The next day Constantine was completely shaved, dressed with a *'short sleeveless garment of silk'*, and seated backwards on a donkey *'led by his nephew Constantine whose nose had been cut off'*. He was brought to the Hippodrome *'by way of the Diippion'* and suffered the offensive gestures of the people and of the demes: they spat on him, *'trampled on his neck'* at the *stama*, and made him seat in front of their benches to *'listen to derisory words until the end of the races'*. The third and final stage of Constantine's humiliation was staged in front of the emperor: here, with the mind weak and confused (ματαιωθεὶς τὰς φρένας), the deposed patriarch was tricked by the patrician's questions into declaring that the iconoclast faith and synod were right. *'This is just what we wanted to hear from your foul mouth'*, replied the accuser before anathematizing and dismissing him, a reference which seems to suggest a pre-ordinated action staged to make clear the correctness of the imperial religious stance. The patriarch was finally beheaded at the Kynegion and vilified for the last time: *'his head, tied by the ears, was hung for three days at the Milion so the people could see it (εἰς ἔνδειξιν τοῦ λαοῦ)'*, and his body was dragged along the Mese and threw together with the head in the quarter of Pelagios. *'Oh the senseless (ἀλογίας), the cruelty, and mercilessness of the wild beast!'* commented in the end Theophanes, blaming the lack of respect displayed by the *'ferocious and savage'* Constantine V¹⁸¹³.

¹⁸¹¹ The event is reported both by the patriarch Nikephoros and, with more details, by Theophanes; NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 83-84; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 158-161; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6259, AD 766/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 441; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 609-610.

¹⁸¹² Tobias and Santoro translated this term in Theophanes as 'of darkened vision'; TOBIAS and SANTORO 1990, n. 186, p. 187.

¹⁸¹³ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6259, AD 766/7; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 441-442; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 609-610.

Iconophile authors, anyway, presented the monks as the main target of the persecutions: not their venerable appearance, nor their age and neither their gender was spared from the vilification. The lack of respect toward the monastic *schema* was a common statement in stories about evil authorities fighting against holy men: already in the mid-seventh century the Monothelites flew upon Maximus the Confessor ‘in a shameless way’ (ἀναίδην), dragged him to his trial still unshod and without a cloak, and insulted him ‘without respect for the honour of his old age (...), nor the grace blossoming in his face (τῷ προσώπῳ), nor for his orderly conduct (τὸ ἐν ἤθει κόσμιον) and his other distinction (εὐπρεπῆ), and most dignified deportment (σεμνοτάτην κατάστασιν)¹⁸¹⁴. As for the iconophile monks, the abuse was staged in large-scale spectacles at the Hippodrome or through the streets, under the eyes of the entire population. They were divested of their robe (the μοναχικοῦ σχήματος)¹⁸¹⁵, their hair was shaved with liquid wax or fire¹⁸¹⁶ or pulled¹⁸¹⁷, and their sacred habit (σχῆμα) was insulted (καθύβρισεν) by parading them, hands by hands, with nuns¹⁸¹⁸. The attack against the iconophile *schema* was conducted also ‘in negative’ when Constantine V ordered the citizens of Constantinople to break the divine Law and shave, so to make the hirsute monks stand out in the society¹⁸¹⁹. Finally, monks were subject to a large variety of mutilations of noses, eyes, hands, and ears¹⁸²⁰. Once again, those were more than mere physical tortures aimed at making the victim suffer: tongues and hands likely continued to symbolically refer to their function and their role in disputes, since the iconophiles used them to look at and to hold the icons, and to write and speak in favour of them.

Beyond the literary *topoi* and the criticism, however, those descriptions portrayed a period characterized by physical struggles in which the power of gestures and bodies publicly displayed was dramatically revealed. On the one hand, we found the peculiar use of the body as political instrument made by the iconophiles. Through their body, they expressed their faith: they were accused, indeed,

¹⁸¹⁴ VITA MAXIMI CONFESSORI, *RECENSION 3*, 24 (545-547), ed. and tr. NEIL and ALLEN 2003, p. 81.

¹⁸¹⁵ VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES), 950-955; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 105; p. 225. See also p. 243. The black colour which once adorned the city, declared the author, disappeared from the City.

¹⁸¹⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6263, AD 770/71; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 446; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 615.

¹⁸¹⁷ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 80.8-10; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 152-153.

¹⁸¹⁸ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 83.1-8; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 156-157; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6257, AD 764/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 438-439; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 605.

¹⁸¹⁹ God urged Moses to keep his beard, and a shaved cheek was the expression of juvenile excitement; VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES), 1403-1412; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 124; pp. 240-241. See also BRUBAKER 1989a, p. 79. For example, George Synkletos, was recognized as a member of the court because of his dress, his figure (προσώπον) and his fresh-shaved chin, all readable signs which made detectable a lay condition from a monastic one; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 38; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 233.

¹⁸²⁰ An episode of the Life of St Stephen summarizes the variety of the mutilation by presenting the ‘elite’ of the holy monastic *schemata* (λογάδας τοῦ ἁγίου τῶν μοναχῶν σχήματος) met by the saint: STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 55; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 256.

not only because of the production and exhibition of the images of Christ, the Virgin and the saints, but also because of the physical expressions of faith performed toward them¹⁸²¹. Those who were tortured and punished by the iconoclast government, explained Nikephoros, were not only those ‘*who had kept their profession (of faith) (ὁμολογίαν)*’ but also those who ‘*had clung to their schema (ἐπὶ τοῦ οἰκείου διαμείναντας σχήματος, translated as habit by Mango)*’¹⁸²². Tobias and Santoro translated the two propositions together as ‘*those who guarded their faith*’ but it seems that the author underlined here the fact that monks expressed and kept their faith steady both internally (in the doctrine) and outwardly (in their *schema*, that is, in their public self-presentation and outward forms of the cult). Iconophiles used highly appropriated gesture to communicate with Gods¹⁸²³ (the icons could in turn respond to the faithful with a gesture)¹⁸²⁴ and with each other¹⁸²⁵. Especially, they used highly rational gestures to fight against their enemies. So the monk Paul publicly defied an iconoclast prefect by refusing to step on (πατήσαι) an icon of Christ, and opposed this sacrilegious act with his loud voice (φωνῆ μεγάλη ἀνέκραξεν), a *proskynesis*¹⁸²⁶, and, following Symeon Metaphrastes, a kiss, through which he showed (δεικνύων) his scorn for physical threats¹⁸²⁷. They used emblematic movements of hands and fingers in public speeches, when they wanted to emphasize, clarify, or give strength to their words. Stephen interrupted the insane (ἄφροσύνης) stances of Constantine of Nacolea by signalling the silence with his hand (νεύσας τοῦτον τῆ χειρὶ

¹⁸²¹ St Stephen, for example, despised the imperial instructions not to prostrate before the icons (οὐ δεῖ τάς τας προσκυνεῖν) and was martyred because of his prostration (προσκύνησις) in front of a saint’s body and the venerable icons; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 1; 9; tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 179; p. 190. To understand this reference as a mere abstract ‘*reverence*’, explained also Auzépy, is not enough, since this ‘*ne rendent pas compte du fait que la proskynèse est un geste*’; AUZÉPY 1997, n. 2, p. 179.

¹⁸²² NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 80.5-7; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 152-153. Third, they were also those who ‘*had opposed the unholy doctrine (τῷ ἀνοσίῳ αὐτῶν ἀνθεστηκότας)*’; *ibidem*.

¹⁸²³ Stephen lifted up his eyes toward the sky (τὸ ὄμμα πρὸς οὐρανὸν ... ἀνατείνας) and stretched his hands out (τὰς χεῖρας ἐκτείνας) before speaking to God and asking for His protection; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 44; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 243. Anna, the mother of Stephen, asked for divine intercession to the icon of the Virgin by raising the hands upwards (ἐκτείνασα δὲ τὰς χεῖρας πρὸς τὸ ἄνακτες) and prostrating, and then pointed with the finger (δακτυλοδειτοῦσά) the sacred image to the husband, so that both reclined their heads and prostrated on the floor; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 6; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 186-187.

¹⁸²⁴ A story, originally reported by Sophronius of Jerusalem and repeated by John of Damascus, tells the attempts of the martyrs Cyrus and John to heal the young Theodorus, afflicted with gout. They prostrated in front of an image of Christ, the Virgin and the Baptist and beat their heads on the floor three times, until the image performed a nod of consensus (ἐπένευσε); JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Contra imaginum calumniatores*, III, 132; ed. KOTTER 1975, p. 196-197; tr. FAZZO 1983, pp. 189-190.

¹⁸²⁵ Many are the signs of greeting and respect: for example, Stephen asked for the benediction and prostrated himself in front of John, the head of the monastery of St Aussenius; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 15; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 200; see also *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 430-436; 575-581; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 83; p. 89; p. 203; p. 208

¹⁸²⁶ He reclined on the ground (πρὸς γῆν νενευκώς), and performed the prostration (τὴν προσήκουσαν προσκύνησιν) due to the holy icon; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 58; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 258.

¹⁸²⁷ *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 2280-2299; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 160-161; pp. 273-274.

σιγᾶν)¹⁸²⁸ (Metaphrastes specified that he signified (ἐπισημῆνας) it)¹⁸²⁹. He also performed a vivid gesture toward the patrician Callistus: he made a cavity with his palm and clamped his fingers together (τὴν παλαιστὴν ὑπολακκίσας τῇ τῶν δακτύλων ὀρδιναίᾳ συμπήξει), displayed (ἐδείκνυεν) the shape assumed by the hand (similar to a small container), and affirmed that even if he would have only this quantity of vital blood, he would pour it for the image of Christ¹⁸³⁰. Stephen repeated the same words and the same gesture when he was tortured, also swearing over his faith by nodding and crossing the hands (τὸν παλαιστὴν ὑπολακκίσας) over the chest, i.e. by taking advantage of the clarity of a gesture which was usually performed at court to swear loyalty to the emperor¹⁸³¹. Stephen used a highly effective gesture also when he publicly faced the emperor in the presence of the dignitaries on the terrace of the Pharos. He drew from his cowl and exhibited a previously hidden *nomisma* with the image (χαρακτῆρα) and the name of the emperor, declared how serious would be to step on it, and then proceeded to throw it on the ground and to trample on it. The gesture was felt like a serious injury against the emperor himself, who in turn concealed once again his innate boundless anger and, according to his changeable and snake-like nature, showed indulgence only to harshly punish him later¹⁸³². The saint, therefore, used a gesture already imposed by the court to the iconophiles by substituting the icon with the image of the emperor: he managed thus to injure the enemy with his own weapon, proving his position and the value of the image in relation to the character depicted on it. Michael the Synkellos and his disciple also reinforced their statements with their bodies: they ‘shouted aloud in a great voice’ their orthodox faith in front of Leo V and, like St Stephen before them, ‘they wrung their hands (τὰς δὲ χεῖρας αὐτῶν ὑπολακκήσαντες) and said, ‘To this extent may our blood be poured out (...)’¹⁸³³.

¹⁸²⁸ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 44; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 241.

¹⁸²⁹ VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES), 1698-1699; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 136; p. 251.

¹⁸³⁰ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 30; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 225. Metaphrastes wrote that he displayed the hollow hand (τὴν χεῖρα ὑποκοιλίνας); VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES), 1091-1094; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 111; pp. 229-230. The term παλαιστὴν referred to a measure which corresponded to the content of a hand, and thus alluded to a precise volume of blood; AUZÉPY 1997, n. 217, p. 225.

¹⁸³¹ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 44; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 241. The same gesture was performed by George Syncretus to make a heartfelt oath when he was asked to express his loyalty to the emperor Constantine V; STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 37; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 232. Michael the Syrian recorded the use of this gesture at the Persian court: when Chosroes asked revenge for his friend the emperor Maurice, Romizan/Shahrbazar ‘jumped out and stood in the middle, with hand cross’, declaring ‘I am ready to fulfil your desire’; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, X, 25; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 431.

¹⁸³² STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 55; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 254-255; VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES), 1215-12141; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 116-117; pp. 267-268.

¹⁸³³ VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLI, 13; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, 70-71. The translation of ὑπολακίζω as ‘wrung’ is suggested by Cunningham on the ground of the verb λακίζω which means ‘to break or rend’; CUNNINGHAM 1991, n. 105, p. 151. Michael even died in a *schema* fit for a saint, lying down in his bed with the hands folded in prayer (τυποῖ τὰς χεῖρας εἰς προσευχήν); VITA MICHAELIS SYNCELLII, 38; ed. and tr. CUNNINGHAM 1991, pp. 126-127.

On the other hand, iconoclast emperors also made a refined political use of his gestures: their deceiving nature included an active manipulation and a distortion of public occasions, which seems to suggest an actual ability to exploit the ceremonial resources and to take advantage of the ambiguity of gestures. When necessary, the impious and iconoclast emperor could act like a chameleon or wear the appearance of the fox in order to trick the orthodox clergy and the patriarch: so Leo III falsely promised to the patriarch Germanus to act piously (εὐσεβεῖν), and Constantine V feigned to be orthodox for ten years before revealing his true nature through an impious and blasphemous speech in front of an assembly¹⁸³⁴. Leo IV initially feigned support to the iconophile cause so as to lure the army into asking him to crown his first-born Constantine (VI)¹⁸³⁵. Like his father, then, he revealed his ‘*hidden wickedness*’ and started once again to persecute iconophiles members of the court and other pious men. He scourged and tonsured them, paraded them in chains through the Mese, and confined them in exile¹⁸³⁶.

Constantine V, the ‘*subverter of our ancestral customs (θεσμῶν)*’¹⁸³⁷ and greatest master of the simulation, made a distorted use of the Holy Cross when he imposed a public oath of iconoclast faith on the population gathered in St. Sophia. The rise of the Cross was a gesture not so different from the distinctive iconophile gesture of rising the icons: so, for example, the iconophile Artabasdos, who competed with Constantine V for the throne, entered in Constantinople with his army and ‘*raised the holy icons of the saints (τῶν ἁγίων ἀνίστη τὰ ἱερὰ ἀπεικονίσματα)*’¹⁸³⁸. To the iconoclast, however, belonged the rise of the Cross: in front of Artabasdos success, the iconoclast patriarch Anastasius managed to keep his position when he falsely ‘*swore to the people (his iconophile faith) while holding the venerable and life-giving Cross*’¹⁸³⁹. Constantine V for his part convinced the crowd to utter an iconoclast oath in front of the blood and the body of Christ, the sacred Gospels (where, ironically reminded the author, the act of swearing has been forbidden by Christ himself), and the incorruptible

¹⁸³⁴ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 9; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 190; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 176-185, 194-197; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 73-74; p. 194. For the association between deceiving emperors and the chameleon in the case of Julian the Apostate, see GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oratio* 6.12.62; ed. and tr. MORESCHINI 2000, pp. 126-127

¹⁸³⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6268, AD 775/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 450-451; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 620.

¹⁸³⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6272, AD 779/80; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 453; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 625. It was undeniably a less strong persecution, compared to that of his father Constantine V.

¹⁸³⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6233, AD 740/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 414; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 575.

¹⁸³⁸ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 64; tr. TOBIAS and SANTORO 1990, p. 44; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 134-135. I follow here the translation provided by Tobias and Santoro, rather than that of Mango (for whom Artabasdos generally ‘*restored the holy images of the saints*’) since it seems that the verb ἀνίστημι implies an actual physical gesture.

¹⁸³⁹ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6233, AD 740/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 415; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 576. ‘*For Mary gave birth to Him, declared Constantine, ‘just as my mother Mary gave birth to me’; ibidem.*

Wood ‘where Christ had stretched out his arms for our salvation’¹⁸⁴⁰. Constantine V requested the same act from the patriarch Constantine on the ambo of the Church: ‘It is even said by eyewitnesses’ wrote Nikephoros, ‘that the then archpriest of the City elevated (ὑψώσαντα) the life-giving Cross and swore that he, too, was not a worshiper of the holy icons. Such were the daring deeds of the impious’¹⁸⁴¹. Theophanes added that the patriarch was also prompted to pollute himself with a clerical tonsure (instead of the monastic one), by eating meat, and by enjoying either music. Later on, the emperor abused the power of the Cross as an instrument to incriminate the patriarch when he got mad at him: he sent ‘some clergymen, monks, and laymen’ to the Patriarchate and caused them to present a false accusation of betrayal against him. In front of the denial of Constantine, ‘the emperor made them swear on the holy cross’ that their allegations were well-founded and managed in this way to depose and exile him¹⁸⁴².

The description of the public show aimed at convincing the nurse Anna to testify against St. Stephen seems also to suggest the careful stage of physical and highly evocative gesture: the emperor had Anna whipped with the body arranged in the form of the cross (σταυροειδῶς), while an evil maid was ordered to stand in front of her with the hands up and to spit on her face. Some others, then, pretended to be moved, and shouted in her ears to save her life by saying aloud what the emperor wanted to hear¹⁸⁴³. The position of the maid, and likely that of all participant, was ordered by the emperor himself (προσταγὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ τυράννου, stated more specifically the Metaphrastes)¹⁸⁴⁴. As for the Anna’s position in the form of the cross (which could both refer, according to Auzépy, to the ‘position réelle de la flagellation ou position symbolique qui sousentend que Constantine V flagelle la croix’)¹⁸⁴⁵, it could be easily re-interpreted by the audience (as well as by the author and his readers). No matter how hard the emperor tried to stage an effective punishment, he could not control the way in which those present interpreted the scene (in this case as the image of the crucified Christ who suffered from the iconoclastic stances).

Another carefully staged spectacle involved the member of the court George Syncretus. This man, characterized by malice (κακουργίαν), simulation (πλάσματος), hypocrisy (ὑποκρίσεως), and ability to set a scene (τὴν σχηνήν...θέσθαι)¹⁸⁴⁶, managed, through false *schemata* of repentance and

¹⁸⁴⁰ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris*, 24; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 212. See also *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 709-717; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 95; pp. 213-214.

¹⁸⁴¹ NIKEPHOROS THE PATRIARCH, *Historia Syntomos*, 81.24-27; ed. and tr. MANGO 1990, pp. 154-155.

¹⁸⁴² THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6257, AD 764/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 437-438; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 604-606.

¹⁸⁴³ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 36; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 231.

¹⁸⁴⁴ *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1340-1350; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 121-122; pp. 238-239.

¹⁸⁴⁵ AUZÉPY 1997, n. 246 p. 231.

¹⁸⁴⁶ *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1415; 1431-1433; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 124-125; pp. 241-242.

requests of benediction, to deceive St Stephen and to enter into his monastery as a monk¹⁸⁴⁷. The emperor then used George's tonsure as a pretext to accuse the saint in a public: at the Hippodrome, in front of a large crowd, Constantine V went down to the steps in a location inferior to the customary one in the tribune¹⁸⁴⁸. Here he pretended (ὑποκρινάμενος) to be distressed and accused the monks of robbing him of a member of his court¹⁸⁴⁹. Then, speaking as an 'imposter sorcerer' (ὁ γόης ταῦτα καὶ ἀλαζών)¹⁸⁵⁰, he foretold George's return, an event that he had already organized to prove the fact that God fulfilled the imperial wishes. The emperor repeated the show, sitting in the same place and assuming this time a glad appearance, when George returned back to the court¹⁸⁵¹: the public changing of George's *schema* was also put on display. People tore off and step on his monastic clothes and washed his head with a pitcher of water to ritually erase his baptism (in Stephen the Deacon) or to purify him from the pollution of the monastic *schema* (in Symeon Metaphrastes). Finally, the emperor re-dressed him with the military *schema* and placed a sword on his shoulders¹⁸⁵².

Simulation and treachery could characterize the appointment of a new patriarch too. That was the case of the ceremony/spectacle through which Constantine V appointed the patriarch Constantine after the Council of Hieria and the death of Anastasius in 754¹⁸⁵³. Constantine was the instrument (ὄργανον) at the service of the emperor and resembled him not only for his name, which had the same sound (ὁμόηχον), but also for manner (ὁμοιότροπον) and mentality (ὁμώνυμον καὶ ὁμόφρονά). The 'impious show' of his appointment was staged at the Church of the Blachernae¹⁸⁵⁴: according to Metaphrastes, the two Constantines clearly acted like they were playing on a scene (ὡς γὰρ ἐν σκηνῇ παίζοντες προδήλως) without seriousness (οὔτι σπουδάζοντες)¹⁸⁵⁵. The emperor rose

¹⁸⁴⁷ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 38; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 233-234. Metaphrastes defined one of those gestures an execrable *schema* of humility (μεθ' ὅσου τοῦ τῆς ταπεινοφροσύνης ὁ βδελυρὸς σχήματος); *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1398-1399; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 123-124; p. 240.

¹⁸⁴⁸ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 39; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 234; n. 259, p. 234; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1454-1460; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 126; pp. 242-243. They were the steps 'of the Red' (τὰ τοῦ ῥουσίου)' according to Stephen the Deacon, or the steps which were usually occupied by the dignitaries wearing purple (τὸ τοῦ ἐρυθροῦ χρώματος μέρος ἔθος) according to Metaphrastes. Auzépy reads Stephen the Deacon's reference as a mean through which the emperor was placed in an 'inverse' place, since the steps of the Red where located in front of the Kathisma.

¹⁸⁴⁹ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 39; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 234-235; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1454-1460; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 126; pp. 242-243.

¹⁸⁵⁰ *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1479 ff.; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 127 ff.; pp. 243 ff.

¹⁸⁵¹ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 40; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 235; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1501-1509 ff.; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 128; p. 244.

¹⁸⁵² STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 40; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 236-237; *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 1531-1560; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, pp. 129-130; pp. 245-246.

¹⁸⁵³ As usual, the impious Anastasius suffered a 'just punishment' and died for 'a dreadful disease of the guts after vomiting dung through his mouth'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6245, AD 752/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 427; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 591.

¹⁸⁵⁴ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 25; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 213-214.

¹⁸⁵⁵ *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 737-748; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 96; pp. 214-215.

(ἀνελθόντων) on the ambo holding (κρατῶν) the patriarch (George the Monk will specify that he held his hands (χειροκρατῶν))¹⁸⁵⁶, said a prayer and declared Constantine worthy of the ecumenical patriarchate¹⁸⁵⁷. In Stephen the Deacon's recount, the *topos* of the deceiver emperor intermingled at this point with that of his polluted body: the emperor indeed performed the sacred rite of the investiture of the *diploide* and *omophorion* on the patriarch with unclean and unholy (μιαρὰν ἅ ἀνίερος) hands contaminated by shameful actions. It was indeed highly inappropriate – ἀναξίας, wrote Stephen the Deacon, ἀτόπου τόλμης (out of norm insolence) and βδελυρᾶς ἐγχειρήσεως (execrable undertaking) wrote Metaphrastes – that a man who brought the sword, with blood on his hands, and even illegitimately married three times, would perform the holy rite of the patriarchal investiture¹⁸⁵⁸. The performers were therefore a contaminated couple bounded by wickedness (συμπλεχθείσης τῆς μιαρᾶς ξυνωρίδος)¹⁸⁵⁹.

The charge of misusing the ceremonies and unrightfully achieving treacherous purposes through the ceremonial appearance could hit also iconophile emperors: even the empress Irene, who returned back to the worship of the icons and could therefore employ her punitive power rightfully against the *strategos* of Sicily who was organizing a plot against her, could be deceived (by both her feminine nature and other by members of the court, tricked in turn by the Devil, who played on the prophetic beliefs around the imperial power and made her believe that it was written that the empire had been given by God to her)¹⁸⁶⁰. She abused the violence to eliminate her opponents and attempted to depose her son and to force the army to break the holy oath previously performed on the Holy Gospel¹⁸⁶¹. Her son Constantine VI, then, distinguished himself for his dishonourable behaviour, both on the battlefield as well as in the court¹⁸⁶². He could also be accused of abusing his ceremonial and punitive power: he punished the Armeniacs who refused to rebel against the empress by tattooing the words 'Armeniac

¹⁸⁵⁶ GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; PG 110, coll. 939-940; ed. DE BOOR (1904) 1978, vol. II, p. 755, 1-6. George defined the action unlawful and unholy (ἀθέσμως καὶ ἀνίερος); *ibidem*.

¹⁸⁵⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6245, AD 752/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 428; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 591.

¹⁸⁵⁸ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 25; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, pp. 213-214. Cf. *VITA STEPHANI IUNIORIS (SYMEON METAPHRASTES)*, 737-748; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1984, p. 96; pp. 214-215.

¹⁸⁵⁹ STEPHEN THE DEACON, *Vita S. Stephani iunioris* 26; ed. and tr. AUZÉPY 1997, p. 214.

¹⁸⁶⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6282, AD 789/90; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 464-465; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 638-39.

¹⁸⁶¹ The Armeniac Theme managed to re-affirm their loyalty to both the empress and her son with a counter-oath: 'it is inevitable that perjury should result from contrary oaths' commented Theophanes, 'and perjury is a denial of God'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6282-6283, AD 789/90, 790/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 464-66; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 638-41.

¹⁸⁶² For the Bulgarian campaign in 792, and the marriage with his lover Theodora, see OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, p. 164. The 'disgusting manner' and 'odious habits' (including wickedness, debauchery and drunkenness) are recorded also by later sources; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* II.5; ed. THURN 1973, 29; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 32; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, XII, 4; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 523.

plotter' with ink on their faces¹⁸⁶³ and ordered to blind his uncle¹⁸⁶⁴. He organized a *silentium* at the Magnaura to convince his subjects to accuse the Caesar Nikephoros and other men in the imperial service suspected to plot against him: he was so convincing that the audience '*cried out with one voice that all of them should be removed from their midst*'¹⁸⁶⁵.

Theophanes showed a high awareness of the theatrical nature of the imperial behaviour especially in the description of Nikephoros, iconophile but also betrayer of the pious empress Irene. Nikephoros was a man '*in all respects unsuitable for this office – in appearance, vigour, and temperament (τῆ ἰδέα καὶ ῥώμῃ καὶ γνώμῃ)*'¹⁸⁶⁶, a '*wretch usurper*'¹⁸⁶⁷ who took the throne by simulating '*a spurious benignity (ψευδοχρηστότητα)*' toward the empress: he compared himself to Christ betrayed by Judas, claimed to have been elevated against his will by his soldiers, and then swore '*deceitfully (δολερῶς)*' to the empress that he would not harm her. But since he was '*unable even for a short time to hide by means of dissimulation (ἐπικαλύψαι δι' ὑποκρίσεως) his innate wickedness and avarice*', he soon organized an '*evil and unjust tribunal at the Magnaura*'. Here he acted as unfair judge and revealed his real purpose '*to dishonour and subjugate all persons in authority and to gain personal control of everything*'¹⁸⁶⁸. The stratagems used by Nikephoros to secure the throne for him and for his son were presented as tricks and deceitful means. Nikephoros himself was aware of the power of a clever performance for politics: he '*blamed all the emperors before him for having been incompetent (ὡς ἀκυβερνήτους)*' and declared that the most powerful ruler was the one '*determined to exercise his authority skilfully (ἐντρεχῶς)*'¹⁸⁶⁹. As for him, he was marked by a '*peculiar trait of character (τῆς γνώμης ἐξάρετον)*, *by means of which he had deceived (ἠπάτησεν) many men*'. He '*had never respected the truth in any matter*' and had '*always acted for show (ἐπιδειξιῖν) and never according to God*'. Lies and deceits used as political instruments appeared ultimately ridiculous to those '*who clearly saw the trick*'. After the betrayal of Bardanios, for example, he confined himself to the imperial chamber and left aside the impudence, '*whimpering deceitfully (δολίως)*. *Indeed, he had a natural*

¹⁸⁶³ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6285, AD 792/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 469; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 644. In the end, God avenged those unjust deeds and Constantine VI '*was blinded by the same mother*'; *ibidem*.

¹⁸⁶⁴ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6284, AD 791/2; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 468; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 642-643.

¹⁸⁶⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6268, AD 775/6; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 450-451; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 620.

¹⁸⁶⁶ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6296, AD 803/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 480; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 659.

¹⁸⁶⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6295, AD 802/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 477; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 655. The day of his appointment, an unnatural gloomy light shone '*clearly signifying the man's future surliness and unbearable oppression*'; *ibidem*.

¹⁸⁶⁸ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6295, AD 802/3; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 477-479; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 656-657.

¹⁸⁶⁹ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6303, AD 810/11; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 489; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 672. This stance implied further that he '*entirely denied Providence*'; *ibidem*.

*faculty for a woman's tears, such as many low persons and faux bonhommes (ψευδοχρήστοις) possess. He did not, however, deceive the majority of people*¹⁸⁷⁰.

During the second phase of the Iconomachy, Leo V, a man who 'valued neither the honor nor its donor'¹⁸⁷¹, betrayed his emperor Michael II by taking the power 'by usurpation of power (διὰ τυραννίδος)¹⁸⁷², and betrayed God: already before his coronation, indeed, 'he turned himself wholly over the demons who drove him (ἐμαρέχων τοῖς ἄγουσι δαίμοσιν), rather than relying upon the <episcopal> fathers who were eager to lead him to salvation'¹⁸⁷³. He pretended to be orthodox, and in the while signed heretical documents and 'tainted the (imperial) purple with falsehood (τῷ γὰρ ψεύδει τὴν πορφύριδα χρώσας) and had fixed the mask (προσωπεῖον) of Proteus'¹⁸⁷⁴. He used deceit also to obtain the crown from the patriarch Nikephoros, since he postponed the customary oath and written statement of orthodox faith to the moment after the coronation¹⁸⁷⁵. His unworthiness and his body polluted by the heresy was nevertheless revealed to the patriarch: 'For after he had pronounced the blessing and elevated the crown, when it was time to touch the head (ψαύειν τῆς κορυφῆς) of (Leo) for consecration', recounted indeed Ignatius, Nikephoros 'seemed to press his hand into thorns and thistles, and let go of the crown with the claim that he distinctively felt pain (ὀδύνης ἐπαισθάνεσθαι). For the head, that pricked like a thorn at the saint's touch, foretold (Leo's) egregiously harsh and unlawful treatment of the Church, which was about to erupt'¹⁸⁷⁶. In the version reported by the Scriptor Incertus, Leo V (once again defined as the chameleon who changed forms (μορφῶς) and appearance as the animal in the fable¹⁸⁷⁷) did not postpone the oath, but rather managed to deceive the iconophiles by exploiting the ambiguity of ceremonial gestures. He expressed indeed his intent to not unsettle the Church by pulling out from his bosom (ἐκ τοῦ κόλπου) a cross which reproduced an image (σταυρὸν ἔχουσαν εἰκόνα). He venerated it in front of everybody (προσεκύνησεν ἐνώπιον πάντων) without telling the truth and faking it (οὐκ ἀληθεύων ἀλλ' ἐν ὑποκρίσει). Nobody could understand the treachery (πανουργίαν) because 'his mouth says one thing

¹⁸⁷⁰ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6296, AD 803/4; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 480; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 659-660. Nikephoros employed his 'mischievous character' but failed to convince through lies his army, provoking rather a mutiny; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6301, AD 808/9; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 485; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 665-666.

¹⁸⁷¹ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 163.3-5; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 71

¹⁸⁷² IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 163.11; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 72. For the attempt of Leo to avoid this blame and the ceremony in which Michael publicly renounced to the power, see above, p. 283.

¹⁸⁷³ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 164.2-7; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 72.

¹⁸⁷⁴ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 164.25-26; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 73.

¹⁸⁷⁵ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 163.26-164.2; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 72. According to Ignatius, also later he continued to refuse to sign them, this time 'vehemently (κραταιῶς)'; IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 164.23; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 73.

¹⁸⁷⁶ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 164.8-19; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 73.

¹⁸⁷⁷ SCRIPTOR INCERTUS, III, 9-15; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 80.

*while his heart wanted other*¹⁸⁷⁸. Leo V followed thus the example of the iconoclast emperors before him and employed the ritual gesture of the raising of the Cross which at distance (that is, without seeing the image carved in it) could have been understood both as an iconophile as well as an iconoclast expression of faith. On the day of Christmas 814, then, Leo V entered St Sophia, went toward the altar in line with the imperial custom, and venerated the dress (προσεκύνησεν τὴν ἐνδυτὴν) where it was depicted the Holy Nativity of Christ. In this case, the emperor performed a public gesture more clearly in line with the orthodox faith to dispel the suspect of iconoclasm. Everybody who saw (ἰδόντες) the scene were indeed reassured and did not see the trick (μὴ ἰδόντες τὸν δόλον) and the deceit (τὴν πανουργίαν)¹⁸⁷⁹. The true iconoclast stance of Leo V was revealed on the day of Epiphany of 815: this time the emperor went to the altar of the Church and refused to perform the adoration (οὐ προσεκύνησεν). Everybody understood (ἔγνωσαν) that he had previously acted with hypocrisy (ἐν ὑποκρίσει) and not sincerely (οὐκ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ)¹⁸⁸⁰. He declared his heretical position and his intent to ignore his previous iconophile oath (τὸ ἰδιόχειρον) and the cross (τὸν σταυρὸν) that he had impressed on the document¹⁸⁸¹. The emperor misused the signature cross, a choice that did not imply necessarily a supposed analphabetism of the maker, but rather the use of a powerful symbol in the hand of the authority. Even bishops and monks, under the supervision of the patriarch, put crosses (ποιήσαντες σταυροὺς) on a written oath which expressed their opposition against the impious religious choice of the emperor¹⁸⁸².

Finally, unworthy emperors continued to suffer painful and shameful death as a punishment sent by God for their misbehaviour. Constantine V was wounded during a campaign against the Bulgars and developed an inflammation which caused *'carbuncles on his legs'* and *'a violent fever of a kind unknown to physicians'*. He was *'borne on the shoulders of his subjects in a litter'* to Arcadiopolis, and died on his way to Selymbria crying out *'I have been delivered to the unquenchable fire while still alive!'*¹⁸⁸³. Leo IV's death came remarkably from his greed and his mania for precious stones (λιθομανῆς):

¹⁸⁷⁸ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* III, 441-452; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, pp. 120-121. Genesios reports another version of the event, according to which Leo V declared his respect for the icon by standing upon the porphyry circular surface (the *omphalion*) in front of the Chalkè; GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 4; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 5; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸⁷⁹ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* III, 457-461; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 121.

¹⁸⁸⁰ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* III, 461-467; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 121. From this moment, Leo continued to deceive many bishops, but this time with adulations and promises.

¹⁸⁸¹ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS*, III, 254-257; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 112.

¹⁸⁸² *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS*, III, 431-432; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, p. 120. Also Basil I, according to the version of Symeon Magister transmitted under the 'Continuator' of George the Monk, will sign in this way a written statement to assure the safety of the Caesar Bardas, dipping his pen and then putting down the venerable cross. This time the gesture will be performed in the church of the Chalcostrateia during the Feast of the Annunciation, after the reading of the Gospel and present the patriarch Photius, who in turn held in his hands the body and the blood of Christ; SYMEON MAGISTER - LOGOTHETE in GEORGE MONACHUS CONTINUATUS, V, 4; ed. PG 105, cols. 1057-1058.

¹⁸⁸³ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6267, AD 774/5; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 448; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 619.

'enamoured of the crown (στέμμα) of the Great Church' (possibly the one which was hung over the altar), he 'took and wore (it) on his head'. This action caused him a severe allergy (once again 'his head developed carbuncles' and he was 'seized by a violent fever') and died¹⁸⁸⁴. The dishonourable death of Nikephoros, who deserved eternal damnation, included the shameful treatment of his corpse by Krum (who cut off his head, exhibited it on a pole for several days, and made a cup of his skull)¹⁸⁸⁵. Shortly after also Nikephoros' son Staurakios was wounded in battle. Since he was 'the true heir of' and 'endowed with his father's implacable character (γνώμη)¹⁸⁸⁶, he suffered a rightful and painful death under the form of 'a heavy haemorrhage through his urine'. This left his limbs paralyzed and caused ulcers on his back 'so that no one could bear to approach him because of the foul stench'. He was carried to Constantinople on a litter just in time to see Michael I Rangabè proclaimed as emperor, and was 'still raging with his father's wickedness' when he dared to address the patriarch at the presence of the newly proclaimed emperor with the words: 'You will not find him a better friend than me'¹⁸⁸⁷. Leo V then suffered 'the last blow <of his life> with <perfect> justice (ἐνδίκως)' on the very head over which he 'received the imperial crown', since he was beheaded by his successor Michael II¹⁸⁸⁸. In 822, the zealous iconophile monk Theodore the Stoudite justified this action with a retrospective prophecy: the relics of Theophanes Confessor, he declared, would finally come back from the exile when the dragon (Leo V, who had been responsible for the exile) would suffer an extraordinary (ἐξαισίω) and well deserved (ἔνδικον) death¹⁸⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁸⁴ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6272, AD 779/80; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 453; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 625. George the Monk also wrote about the crown of the Great Church which the emperor dared (τολμήσας) to carry. An interpolation included in the Migne edition reported that this was the crown of Maurice (τοῦ στέμματος Μαυρικίου, translated by Migne as 'coronam Heraclii') and that it was brought in procession (προῆλθεν); GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; PG 110, coll. 955-956; ed. DE BOOR (1904) 1978, vol. II, p. 765. Later the *Hystoria Syntomos* of Psellos declared that this was the crown of Heraclius; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.90; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 80-81; MANGO and SCOTT 1997, n. 11, p. 626. Irene made up for her husband's fault by performing a public procession in St Sophia in which she 'offered to the church' the crown previously removed, 'which she had further adorned with pearls'; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6273, AD 780/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 454; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 627.

¹⁸⁸⁵ *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* I, 158-165; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA, 1987, p. 86. THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6303, AD 810/11; ed. DE BOOR 1883, pp. 490-491; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 673-674. Krum also painfully died for a cerebral haemorrhage, emitting blood from the mouth, the nostrils and the ears; *SCRIPTOR INCERTUS* III, 222-227; ed. and tr. IADEVAIA 1987, pp. 110-111.

¹⁸⁸⁶ In particular, he failed to compensate properly those who had been wronged by Nikephoros, and insulted the members of the court; THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6303-6034, AD 810-12; ed. DE BOOR 1883, 492; 495; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 674, p. 679.

¹⁸⁸⁷ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6304, AD 811/12; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 493; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 677. Different the version reported by Michael the Syrian, who claimed to have reliable information about the events from the patriarch Dionysius (informed in turn by 'a wise man' living in the Capital, 'a contemporary of four Roman kings (emperors), and knowledgeable of their affairs'). According to this version, Staurakios succumbed to the Bulgars and to her sister Procopia: she poisoned him to secure the kingdom for her husband Michael; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, XII, 15; MOOSA 2014, p. 557.

¹⁸⁸⁸ IGNATIUS THE DEACON, *Vita Nicephori*; ed. DE BOOR 1880, p. 164.20-22; tr. FISHER 1998, p. 73.

¹⁸⁸⁹ THEODORE THE STUDITE, *Laudatio Theophanis*, 17; ed. and tr. EFTHYMIADIS 1993, pp. 282-283.

The most remarkable death remains that of the emperor Theophilos, described in detail by the *Life of the empress Theodora* in the second half of the ninth century. The emperor, explained the author, was punished for his *'hostility toward God (ἀφιλοθεΐαν)*' and for his *'mindless folly (ἀπόνοιαν)*'¹⁸⁹⁰ with pain and the loss of control of his body: *'his mouth gaped so wide you could see all the way down his gullet'*, he could not breathe properly, and *'babbled, tossing his head endlessly from one side to the other'*. The reason for this condition was the fact that the Virgin was violently beating him together with his court of angels, and only the physical contact with a holy *enkolpion*, previously hidden and brought in the room by the official Theoktistos, stopped the torture: the emperor, unable to speak, *'pointed his finger (δακτυλοδεικτῶν) at him and vigorously nodded (νεύων) at him'*; and when the imperial lips touched it, *'those lips of his that had gaped wide apart, the ones that had debased the teachings of the Church and babbled a lot of nonsense against the holy and venerable images, came together and were closed. (...) the wild, guttural noises he had been making abruptly stopped and the emperor's physical appearance and features (μορφὴ καὶ ὄψις) returned to normal'*¹⁸⁹¹. Finally, after Theophilos' death, the empress entered a monastery. When she was on her deathbed, she declared meaningful words at the presence of her daughter, her household and then in front of her son.

'Even if you have had your fill of every advantage and have enjoyed the pleasures of imperial life while at the same time you were resplendent with gold and decked out with precious jewels and vast sums of money and slaves have been given to you for your personal use' advised the dying empress, *'know that this present life comes to an end for every individual, but that the everlasting pleasures of the angels are promised to us if only we carry out God's ordinance'*¹⁸⁹².

The hagiography attributed therefore to Theodora the usual last imperial speech warning about the dangers and the actual finitude of the imperial life, and testified the continuous presence of those themes in the political reflections. Remarkable in this sense is also the fact that Anastasius, when he wanted to arouse the rage of the people against Constantine V, reported his heretical words about the mortal nature of Christ, defined *'as a mere man'* like him¹⁸⁹³.

We have seen in this chapter how iconophile sources still provided some glimpses of how eighth- and ninth- century emperors used gestures and ceremonies to support and reinforce their position. The involvement of members of the imperial family in increasingly spectacular events, the use of oaths of loyalty (and now also of orthodoxy), the organization of striking ceremonies of coronations and

¹⁸⁹⁰ VITA THEODORAE AUGUSTAE, 7; ed. MARKOPOULOS 1983, p. 263; tr. VINSON 1998, p. 371.

¹⁸⁹¹ VITA THEODORAE AUGUSTAE, 8; ed. MARKOPOULOS 1983, p. 264; tr. VINSON 1998, pp. 372-373.

¹⁸⁹² VITA THEODORAE AUGUSTAE, 8; ed. MARKOPOULOS 1983, p. 270; tr. VINSON 1998, p. 380.

¹⁸⁹³ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6233, AD 740/1; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 415; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, p. 576. *'For Mary gave birth to Him, declared Constantine, 'just as my mother Mary gave birth to me'; ibidem.*

triumphs including violent punishments, and the employment of the cross as a powerfully evocative aniconic symbol, all testified the continuities with the previous century which marked the public performances of the period. On the other hand, the iconophile biases of the authors witnessed how sophisticated had become the descriptions of gestures, bodies, and physical behaviour and how carefully those were overturned and distorted for the sake of imperial critique. Descriptions of ceremonies were stained by emphasising embarrassing moments and distorted uses of gestures, and the use of violence as a political tool is turned into the action of bloodthirsty and almost bestial rulers unable to move properly their bodies and to make a proper use of the ceremonial devices at their disposal. This was even more striking in comparison with the good manners of the saints and the 'right' members of the society, whose *schema* expressed, as usual, their faith and was equally used to support their cause.

Between the lines it is nevertheless possible to find references to the ability of the emperors to stage and manipulate ceremonial gestures for their own purposes, to make the audience believe their supposed orthodox faith, or to manipulate, punish, and indelibly deface the public image of their opponents. Gestures and public acts continued to be used as weapons in the struggle for faith and power, even if the imperial ability in handling them is presented by the sources as the consequence of the abusive and deceitful nature of the ruler who performed them. Beyond the undeniably strong literary dimension, therefore, those descriptions revealed how emperors of the eighth and ninth centuries (both the iconoclast one as well as those who ruled in the iconophile break between 787 and 815) made extensive political use of carefully organized spectacles where gestures, physical actions, and ambiguities played a major role. They cleverly manipulated and exploited the visual weapons at their disposal in a more complex and sophisticated manner, and only the ultimate defeat of their religious position made them appear as mad and without control of their appearance. The description of actively distorted ceremonies, misuse of sacred objects, and the emphasis on their treacherous nature could possibly testify not only the level of refinement of the imperial critique, but also the level of sophistication in the use of ceremonial for political purposes, to win the support of the people and the members of the court¹⁸⁹⁴. Remarkably, the awareness toward the theatrical nature of the imperial appearance continued to be present. But it seems also that those techniques worked in the end. Not only the stability and the military victories that they had assured to the empire, but also the efforts in building up a strong public display of their physical Self, earned them the undeniable support of the population, which the iconophile sources have not been able to completely erase. When the gentle, kind, and pious (in Theophanes' eyes) Michael I was convinced by evil counsellors not to fight directly against the Bulgarians at the threshold of the empire, the angered population – Theophanes

¹⁸⁹⁴ For a literary point of view of similar descriptions in Gregory of Tours, who also described the shameless manipulation of the ritual by the 'evil ruler' Chilperic, see also BUC 2001, pp. 98 ff., esp. pp. 103-106.

mentioned some impious men who had joined the iconoclast heresy, but it seems that wider popular participation was involved – invoked in response the name of Constantine V, the emperor who despite his beliefs had granted the empire with many military successes. They busted into the Church during a litany, suddenly opened the door of the imperial mausoleum *‘with some kind of noise as if by a divine miracle’* and *‘fell before the deceiver’s tomb, calling on him and not on God, crying out, ‘Arise and help the State that is perishing!’ They spread the rumor that Constantine had arisen on his horse and was setting out to fight the Bulgarians – he who dwells in Hell in the company of demons!’*. The event was so convincing that the men were brought before the prefect’s tribunal and the judge had to ask them to produce witnesses for the fact that *‘the doors of the mausoleum had opened automatically by God’s will’*. Of course, they failed to produce them, and this made clear and public that they were deceivers and this was a fake miracle. Once they *‘admitted the stratagem of the wrenching’*, indeed, they were condemned *‘to be paraded in public and to cry aloud the reason for their punishment’*¹⁸⁹⁵. The anecdote lively testified how much power the imperial body of the iconoclast emperor (far away from being considered polluted) retained in the eyes of a population, who could still believe in his coming back from the dead to fight the enemies of the empire. Still Genesios, in the tenth century, could declare that Leo V *‘even though he was impious in religious matters, was a highly competent administrator of the public affairs’*. After his death, even the patriarch Nikephoros declared that *‘the government of the Romans had lost a great provider, even though he was impious’*. He *‘was harsh against criminals, but justly so’*, and presided as right judge in the issue of the man whose wife has been abducted by a Senator¹⁸⁹⁶.

4.3. OVERVIEW: LEO V THE SINGER, MICHAEL II THE STAMMERER, AND THEOPHILOS IN THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TENTH – ELEVENTH CENTURIES

The images of the emperors ruling during the second phase of the Iconomachy remained very present in the historical memory of Byzantium of the following centuries. The descriptions of the emperors Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilos provided by Genesios, by Theophanes Continuatus, and, later, by John

¹⁸⁹⁵ THEOPHANES CONFESSOR, *Chronographia*, AM 6305, AD 812/13; ed. DE BOOR 1883, p. 501; tr. MANGO and SCOTT 1997, pp. 684-685. Theophanes mentioned a group of soldiers who had been convinced by the Devil to blame not their sins but the return to the orthodox faith for military failures. Those were *‘Christian only in semblance’* who seduced those ignorant and convinced them to support Constantine and his impiety; *ibidem*.

¹⁸⁹⁶ GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 16; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 14; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 17-18. According to Theophanes, on the other hand, the episode revealed the fact that the emperor *‘wished to be called a lover of justice, though he was not one; nevertheless, he sought after this and, sitting in the Lausiakos, he delivered many judgements by himself’*; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 19; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 48-49. The episode of the senator’s wife is recorded also by John Skylitzes; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* I.5; ed. THURN 1973, 18; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 20. The same sense of justice, in a similar episode, will be displayed by the most impious and iconoclast Theophilos, see below, p. 318.

Skylitzes well state the continuities of the themes, the imagery, and the judgments previously expressed about the imperial behaviour, as well as the developments occurred in the imperial imagery to include lively stories and details about their behaviour, their physical appearance, and their gestures. In a society by now ‘uncompromisingly Christian and orthodox’, indeed, authors were free to apply to each individual emperor ‘a vocabulary of curses and epithets’ and ‘a range of stories whose origins may lie somewhere between reality and legend’¹⁸⁹⁷. Those authors wrote on the ground of previous written and oral sources, but they also appealed to the peculiar taste for narrative of the audience of the tenth – eleventh centuries with stories that emphasise the more human dimension of the imperial behaviour, so that his mortal body came to the fore.

Leo V continued to be addressed as mad, feral, savage, and violent ruler who deceived his audience¹⁸⁹⁸, and even became a ‘wild beast (τὸν ἀνήμερον θῆρα)’ and ‘a monster of mixed race (ἕτερογενές τι τεράστιον)’¹⁸⁹⁹. He was ‘the idol of the demons (δαιμόνων εἰδωλον), the slave of ignorance, muter than a shadow’, while his collaborator Symbatios (likely John the Grammarian) was an ‘evil, envious demon in the guise of piety’ who whispered in the emperor’s ear¹⁹⁰⁰. Remarkably, an emphasis is given to the lack of success of public punishments, which produced fear but earned him hate instead of friendship, while his successes in the military campaigns against Arabas and Bulgarians, so vividly present in the minds of the population, were pointed out as the cause of his madness and cruelty¹⁹⁰¹.

¹⁸⁹⁷ BRUBAKER and HALDON 2001, pp. 172-173, referring to George the Monk’s chronicle.

¹⁸⁹⁸ On Leo V, see PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales*, I, 1; ed. BEKKER 1838, 603; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 5; I, 8; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 22-23; pp. 28-29; GENESIOS, *Regna*, preface; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 3; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 5. As for the simulation of iconoclast faith at his proclamation, the authors seems to agree that he was iconoclast before taking the throne (even if Genesios expressed the doubt whether ‘he truly believed’ or swear on the holy icon ‘merely for outward display (προσχήματι)’; GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 4; I, 22; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 5; 20; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 7-8; pp. 23; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS I, 17; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 46-47; PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales*, I, 2; ed. BEKKER 1838, 604.

¹⁸⁹⁹ On Leo V’s personal proclivity for rage and his abuse of punitive power (especially after the 815), see GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 15; I, 24; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 13; 21; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 16-17; p. 25; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 14; 1, 20; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 50-51; pp. 42-43; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* II, 3-4; ed. THURN 1973, 16-17; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 19; PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales*, I, 6; ed. BEKKER 1838, p. 608.

¹⁹⁰⁰ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 15; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 42-45. On the portrait of the deceiving and ambiguous villain who affected the emperor with iconoclast faith, see GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 15; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 13; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 17; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* II, 4; ed. BEKKER 17; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 19-20; cf. THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 20; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 52-53. For the identification as the iconoclast John the Grammarian, who was originally an iconodule, see KALDELLIS 1998, n. 75; WORTLEY 2010, n. 15, p. 19. Specifically, he suggested iconoclast thought when the hymn *Is.40:18* was sung, the words of which were taken by iconoclasts as a proof against the worship of the icons. For the image of the demon whispering heresy in the ear, see above, p. 288. According to George the Monk, Leo V used enchantments and magic filters, imitated the lifestyle of Constantine Copronimus, and was corrupted (κατεφθαρμένοις) in the soul and in the body; GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 110, coll. 987-988; ed. DE BOOR (1904) 1978, vol. II, p. 782.

¹⁹⁰¹ The military victories puffed up his soul with conceit, and he started to appear arrogant and cruel; GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 15; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 13; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 16; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 14; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 42-43.

Next to those descriptions of the emperor's supernatural and exceptional evil nature, the sources referred also to lively stories in which the emperor started to behave in an apparent more 'human' manner. Leo V is a lover of singing: but while Theophanes Continuatus acknowledged some good qualities in him (he was '*endowed by nature with a good voice*')¹⁹⁰², Genesios and Skylitzes turned this passion into a reason of embarrassment. His self-esteem, his aspirations as a musician, and his hunger for honour (φιλότιμος), were indeed only presumptions since he couldn't keep up the rhythm and his voice was strident. When he sang the psalms in the church of Pharos '*his throaty croaking was instantly recognizable to passers-by*', and when he occasionally led the psalm-singing '*he opened himself up to be laughed to scorn by those who heard him*'¹⁹⁰³. People laughed not only at the imperial performance, but also at the words of the Psalms chosen by the emperor: he sang aloud '*For love of the Sovereign supreme they poured contempt...*', and the educated audience connected immediately the words with his actual misdeeds against the Church, since he was the one who had actually '*poured contempt*' upon the Church¹⁹⁰⁴. Furthermore, Kaldellis understood those verses as referring to the Festal Menaion and to the story of the three children in the furnace, punished by the impious ruler: this interpretation suggests that the audience was fully capable to amuse itself with a refined association between what it was sung and the biblical history. Even more seriously, then, Genesios affirmed that '*by this hymn*' and '*having slipped away from that love (that is, the love for God)*' '*Leo conspicuously brought divine justice upon himself*' and fulfilled the prophecy of his overthrow at the hands of Michael II¹⁹⁰⁵.

Leo V was also caught in a very human reaction when he was unable to restrain his feeling and control his body at the sight of Michael II (supposedly under arrest under the responsibility of the *papias*) sleeping untroubled in the bed of his custodian: he came into their room at night and threatened them '*in terrible wise*'¹⁹⁰⁶ by '*shaking (διανεύων) his head*' and by '*indicating his anger (τὸν θυμὸν συμβολαιωσάμενος) (...) by shaking his fist (μεγάλως τῆ χειρὶ)*' against the *papias*. The gestures that the emperor let slip out functioned also at a narrative level (a young eunuch hidden under the bed recognized the emperor '*by his purple slippers*'¹⁹⁰⁷, understood his anger, and warned Michael II about his imminent danger). But they also seem to handle the topos of the emperor moving out of control in a less stereotypical way, if compared to the kinds of descriptions aimed at merely expressing his mad and demonic condition (like when Leo acted both as '*spectator and executor*' at Michael's trial, and was '*overcome with passionate wrath or else delighted in savagery*')¹⁹⁰⁸.

¹⁹⁰² THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 25; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 60-61.

¹⁹⁰³ GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 16; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 14; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 18; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* II, 6; ed. THURN 1973, 18; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 21.

¹⁹⁰⁴ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* II, 6; ed. THURN 1973, 18; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 21.

¹⁹⁰⁵ GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 16; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 15; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 18.

¹⁹⁰⁶ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 24; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 60-61.

¹⁹⁰⁷ GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 19; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 17; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 21.

¹⁹⁰⁸ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS I, 21; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 54-57. See also JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* II, 7-8; ed. THURN 1973, 19-20; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 22. Leo was restrained in the end by

Taste for physical details and emphasis on the emperor's mortal dimension comes to the fore especially on the occasion of Leo V's violent death, occurred on Christmas Day of year 820. At dawn, during the holy service in front of the church of the palace, the emperor was suddenly attacked by a group of conspirators disguised as priests (the signal was the hymn sung by the emperor himself with his strident voice). Since they initially mistook the emperor for the leader of the priest, who resembled the emperor and was wearing a similar winter hat (he managed to flee away only by removing the cap and showing his bald head), Leo V managed to take refuge in the Church: here he held the Cross in his hands and used it as a material weapon to parry the strikes, then as a symbol to invoke piety when he was attacked simultaneously from different directions. Finally, wounded and cornered like a wild beast by a giant man, he invoked for a last time the power of the cross to seal '*an oath by the grace dwelling in the temple*': '*Now is not the time for oaths, but for murders*' boldly answered the giant, and then hit him '*yet again swearing an oath against divine grace*'¹⁹⁰⁹. The man cut off the emperor's hand at the wrist, and a fragment of the cross was severed together with the hand: the hand of the emperor, source of his power, remained therefore indissolubly tied with the symbol of the cross until the end. Leo was beheaded and, given the lack of time, '*the murderers pitilessly deposited his body in the sewage receptacle of the courtyard, where it stayed for a short while*'. The body was then dragged through the Skyla, mutilated and stripped naked in the Hippodrome (probably the covered one into the palace), and hung from a harness. Finally, it was carried through the streets and placed on a boat '*along with his wife and four children*'¹⁹¹⁰: the public act of violence against the corpse of the defeated emperor, performed as usual to reinforce the power of the newly-appointed one in front of the population, maintained thus also in this case the role of reminder of the mortal nature of the human being (as had happened before in the case of emperor Maurice). The murder of Leo V was seen as a highly sacrilegious action which turned this evil emperor into a sacrificial victim. The problem was not so much the murder of Leo V in itself. Michael II was the '*sword*' sent by the Lord '*in order that nail now be driven in with nail and evil cured with evil*'. Rather, the murder was '*not done in a fitting place,*

the pious and iconophile empress who ran '*in dismay and disarray, like a woman with Bacchic frenzy*' (a fury which in this case had a positive nuance). She '*stopped his impulse*' by reminding him that he should observe clemency on the sacred day when he was about to receive the communion; *ibidem*.

¹⁹⁰⁹ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, I, 25; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 60-63; GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 20; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 18-19; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 21-23; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* II, 11; ed. THURN 1973, 22; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 25-26. The emperor likely held the cross, even if another version mentions the chain that supported the censer. Slightly different, the version of Theophanes reported that the arm of the emperor was severed '*at the clavicle*' and the blow made '*the broken top of the cross flew off at a distance*'.

¹⁹¹⁰ Skylitzes added that the assassins were not scared '*because the imperial palace was guarded at all points by their own forces*'; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 24; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 27. More synthetic Theophanes Continuatus, for whom '*they dragged his corpse mercilessly and without regard through the Skyla into the (Covered) Hippodrome*'; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 1; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 64-65.

*but in a divine and pure one where only the Lord's blood is shed daily as ransom on account of our sins*¹⁹¹¹. Even worse, it was not followed by a proper expression of shame and repentance.

Michael II's misbehaviour and out-of-control gestures especially acquire a new value in the description of his villainy and rudeness: already before his ascent to the throne, when he was still a general under Leo V, Michael was used to speak at court with boldness and daring speeches (τολμηρία γλώσσης). He chattered inappropriately (λαλούσης παράσημα), uttered obscenities, his tongue was audacious and shameless (γλωσσηματίαν / γλωσσαλγίαν)', and he was unable to restrain himself in speaking. Michael II was affected also by a physical defect so evident that he was nicknamed 'the Stammerer (ὁ Τραυλὸς)': this speech disorder, who was evident every time he spoke with the emperor, became a weapon in the hands of his detractors, who promptly connected his hindrance with rusticity, ignorance, and lack of culture, due to his supposed humble origins. He was slow-minded and with a soul without logic. Michael's intemperance was explained also as the result of familiarity with the emperor, with whom he grew up. Even more seriously, he was not able to hide his thoughts and started to speak against the emperor and the empress. Leo V tried, therefore, to stop the impudence by sending to him Exaboulis, 'a man capable of understanding the character and nature of men', but to no avail. Only at the end the emperor lost his patience and put him in prison, unable to endure anymore the insolent speech and the threats of his old friend: 'one who rules over all', declared Theophanes Continuatus, probably referring to the old 'republican' model of good emperors who endured the mocking of the crowd, 'cannot bear to be worsted by any fool unless he indeed be master of his own anger as well as of men'¹⁹¹².

After he had violently taken the throne from Leo V, Michael II continued to show his rudeness (and his distance from the sacredness expected from the imperial role) in the very moment of his acclamation: just released from the prison, he hurriedly sat upon the throne where he was acclaimed and received the customary obeisance with the feet still chained in the guise of a slave¹⁹¹³. Then, by mid-day, when 'the word had spread everywhere', he moved to St Sophia to receive the crown from the patriarch and the acclamations: even if his feet were free, however, his hands were still 'unwashed' and he was

¹⁹¹¹ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 21; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 54-55.

¹⁹¹² GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 17; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 15-16; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 19; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS I, 21; II, 3; II, 5; II, 11; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 54-57; pp. 66-67; pp. 68-69, p. 80; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* II, 7-8; ed. THURN 1973, 19-20; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 21-22. For the supposed Jewish origin of Michael (which make him develop also divinatory qualities), see also JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 2; ed. THURN 1973, 25; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 28.

¹⁹¹³ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 2; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 64-67; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 24-25; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 27-28. Cf. GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 1; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 22; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 27. In the end the irons were removed: according to Genesios the keys were recovered from Leo's corpse, according to Theophanes Continuatus the chains were smashed by a hammer.

'perceiving no fear of God in his thoughts nor doing any of the things he ought to have done'¹⁹¹⁴. Despite being responsible for the death of his predecessor, 'he neither feared the people nor blushed with the fear of God'¹⁹¹⁵. He was fearless and bloodthirsty, and returned back 'like a champion from victory and not an executioner', passing 'through the broad street, whereas he ought to have hid himself and lamented'¹⁹¹⁶. Michael II, therefore, did not choose the right public *schema* and failed to take advantage of the power of ceremony to solve the problematic moment of tension. A penitential *schema* would have been indeed much more appropriate to save face in front of the members of the court and the population.

Once on the throne, Michael II's roughness, lack of reason, and inability to speak had consequences on his government. Despite the mild disposition toward the iconophiles, indeed, Michael's lack of education was seen as a serious problem for the authors: he was 'an utterly uncultured lout (παντελεῖ ἄγροικία)', explained Genesios, 'rather than an adornment to his imperial position', and later 'later he began to lose his reason (ἀλογιστεύων), and became two-faced (πρὸς διπλόην ἀποτραπεῖς)'¹⁹¹⁷. He 'spat upon Greek learning', despised divine learning, and even forbade youths to be educated and to surpass him in learning. The emperor was so slow in writing and reading 'that anyone else might more easily get through a (whole) book than he, in the sluggishness of his mind, through the letters of his own name'. He became therefore 'object of ridicule by divine men'¹⁹¹⁸. And since defective way of speaking and illiteracy prevented him to use properly his tongue and his voice, main organs of power in public speeches, he also lost much of his authority. According to Theophanes Continuatus, indeed, he was 'hated by all in any case' because the defective speech went along also with 'cowardice and weakness': 'because his soul was no less defective than his speech, he was detested and considered a burden by the many'. The hate spread also among the soldiers who rebelled in the early years of Michael II's reign under the leadership of Thomas 'The Slav'. Thomas also suffered a physical disability (he was crippled) and was furthermore old and of barbarian origin. In one version of the episode, however, he could still be accepted as leader and praised for his venerable appearance because of his

¹⁹¹⁴ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 2; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 64-67. The supporters of Leo V, being mere 'flatterers and men who showed affection', had retired 'to their holes like reptiles'; *ibidem*. For the hands filled with pollution of war, see also THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS III, 36; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 192-193.

¹⁹¹⁵ GENESIOS, *Regna*, I, 21; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 22; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 27. According to Genesios, Michael was further 'emboldened by many occurrences and predictions' which had prophesied him his imperial condition; *ibidem*. Pseudo-Symeon for his part seems to refer to a supposed sadness of the emperor, concluding the brief recount of the events with the biblical Psalm 29(30):6; PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales*, I, 14; BEKKER 1838, p. 619.

¹⁹¹⁶ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 2; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 64-67. Skylitzes added that he even showed himself 'exulting over what happened'; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 24-25; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 28.

¹⁹¹⁷ GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 14; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 35; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 42.

¹⁹¹⁸ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 8; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 74-77. See also the same in JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 4; ed. THURN 1973, 28; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 32.

courage and because *'the affability and wit esteemed among the military, which was somehow innate in him from childhood'* made him appear *'second to none of those of noble body'*¹⁹¹⁹. Genesisios opposed the unpopularity of Michael (hated *'by the entire army of the Anatolians'* because his defect of speech (διὰ τὸ τῆς γλώττης ἐλάττωμα) made him appear not brave enough) to the respect gained by Thomas for his courage and for his cheerful disposition¹⁹²⁰. Thomas, specified also Skylitzes *'spoke well, in a civilised manner. These are all things which the soldiers admires'*, and *'he was second to none in the nobility of his physical appearance'*¹⁹²¹. Thanks to his charisma and his speaking ability Thomas was able to frighten his enemies and to own to his cause a large number of different people¹⁹²². Another version of the story, probably related with the propagandistic slander of Michael II¹⁹²³, presented on the contrary Thomas as an arrogant and war-like *'wretched man (ὁ δειλίαιος, in Genesisios)'* who dared to rebel against his emperor. Thomas appeared here as a man of humble origins *'who lived among the Saracens'* and who chose, as his assistants, men characterized by a debased physical appearance. According to Theophanes Continuatus (followed by Skylitzes), he adopted a *'half-barbarous paltry fellow'* afflicted by *'idiocy and meanness of his mind (μετὰ τῆς ψυχικῆς φαυλότητος καὶ ἀνοίας)'* and *'by physical deformity (δυσμορφίαν σώματος)'*, whose *'madness of soul was made evident by the shape of his body (τῆ τοῦ σώματος διαμορφώσει τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς δηλοῦντα ἀπόνοιαν)'*. Thomas adopted another man, Anastasios, who was not better than the previous one in showing outwardly his inner unfitness. Genesisios described him as *'a very ugly man (αἰσχρὸν τὸ εἶδος), constantly drunk, and whose 'great stupidity (ὕπὸ ἐμπληξίας ἐσχάτης)'* made him also *'villainous at heart (μοχθηρότερον τῆ ψυχῆ)'*. He was *'a man dark in his skin (μέλανα τὴν χροιάν), dark in his soul (μέλανα τὴν ψυχὴν)'*, declared Theophanes Continuatus, and this ugliness could have played a part in the reason for which he was *'heaped up with insults'* by the populace when he approached the imperial city¹⁹²⁴.

¹⁹¹⁹ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 11; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 80-81.

¹⁹²⁰ GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 2; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 23; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 28.

¹⁹²¹ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 5; ed. THURN 1973, 30; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 34.

¹⁹²² An alliance with the Agarenoi helped him to receive the crown by the Melchite patriarch Job of Antioch; GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 2; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 24; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 29. According to Skylitzes, Thomas did not receive the crown by the patriarch: he was unwilling to wait and thus he *'proclaimed himself emperor, placed a diadem on his head and had himself recognized as sovereign at Antioch by Job who was at that time (chief) pastor of the church there'*; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 6; ed. THURN 1973, 31; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 35.

¹⁹²³ KALDELLIS 1998, n. 133, p. 31. For a consideration over the importance of reporting all the different reports circulating at the time on this character, see THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 9; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 76-77.

¹⁹²⁴ GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 3-5; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 25-27; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 30-34; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 10; II, 13-14; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 78-79; pp. 84-89; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 5-6; ed. THURN 1973, 29; 32; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 32-35. Theophanes Continuatus recounted that the first adopted son was not fit for the command but was made arrogant by some divinations, which predicted him his future imperial role. He started to ride his horse *'with insolence'*, rushed on *'in dispersed formation'*, and finally fell into a trap and was killed. His head was sent to the emperor, who in turn sent it to his father.

When the rebel army arrived at Constantinople, the emperor and his son Theophilos returned to be described in positive terms as the divinely appointed rulers who fought bravely to defend the empire from the usurpers¹⁹²⁵. They consequently returned to be described as correctly employing public ceremonies: Michael II ‘climbed to the roof of the church of the Theotokos and raised his battle standard (τὸ πολεμικὸν σημεῖον πήγνυσι)’, and then ‘ordered his son Theophilos to take up the wood of the Cross, which brought victory (τὸ νικοποιὸν τοῦ σταυροῦ ξύλον), and the revered cloak of the Mother of God, and, accompanied by the holy clerics and the rest of the citizens, to walk around the City on the walls chanting a litany and in this way beg for divine help’¹⁹²⁶. Skylitzes added that Michael also issued orders to the armed forces, and underlined the presence of the patriarch among the clergy who accompanied Theophilos’ procession with the Cross¹⁹²⁷. Remarkably, then, at the moment in which Michael II spoke from the wall to the deserter soldiers, his supposed stammering defect was not mentioned¹⁹²⁸. The sight of those ceremonial actions impacted the mood of Thomas: he fell in despair and doubted ‘as to whether he need do battle not only against visible but also invisible forces’¹⁹²⁹. After many defeats, he nevertheless continued his campaign and ‘came to such a pitch of boldness, possessed, as it seemed, by the demons with whom he was allied’¹⁹³⁰. He was finally betrayed by his companions and delivered to the emperor who humiliated him in the customary ceremony of the *calcatio colli* in which the defeated usurper cried loud the legitimate condition of the winner emperor: according to Theophanes Continuatus, Thomas recited tragically ‘Have mercy upon me, O emperor indeed!’, while Genesios more clearly quoted the words of the defeated man as ‘spar me, you who are the true Emperor (ἀληθῶς βασιλεῦ)’¹⁹³¹. Skylitzes (who wrote later in the eleventh century when, he stated, the *calcatio colli* was ‘no longer in use’) specified that during the trampling Thomas was ‘lay sprawled on the ground’ and that he made his speech while he was performing a shameful parade on an ass¹⁹³². In the end, Thomas was mutilated and his limbs were paraded in public, sealing the end of a rebellion which almost cost Michael II the throne. The ceremony, is remarkable, took place

¹⁹²⁵ GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 2; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 24; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 30.

¹⁹²⁶ GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 5; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 28; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 34-35. As noted by Kaldellis, a similar procedure was used to repel the Russian attack of 860; KALDELLIS 1998, n. 152 p. 35.

¹⁹²⁷ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 8; ed. THURN 1973, 34; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 38.

¹⁹²⁸ GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 6; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 28; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 35; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 15; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 92-93.

¹⁹²⁹ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 14bis; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 88-89.

¹⁹³⁰ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 18; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 98-99. The same in Skylitzes; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 12; ed. THURN 1973, 38; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 41. For the changes occurred in Thomas’ temperament as the events unfold, see THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 19; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 102-105; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 13; ed. THURN 1973, 40; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 43.

¹⁹³¹ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 19; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 102-103; GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 8; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 31; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 38.

¹⁹³² JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* III, 13; ed. THURN 1973, 40; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 43.

not in the city but in front of the army, the social force which gave him most of the problems and which needed more to be 'conquered' through a powerful display of victory over the defeated enemy¹⁹³³. When Michael II died, possibly for 'a urinary illness'¹⁹³⁴, his son Theophilos wore again the cloak of an emperor skilful in using his ceremonial appearance. He used it to deceive his subjects: at the very beginning of his reign, he summoned the murders of Leo V at the Magnaura, concealed in front of them 'the brutality of his soul', spoke 'softly, in a gentle voice' to convince them to reveal their deeds, and then castigated them, in accordance with the law but also against a milder and more moderate soul which would have been appreciated from an emperor¹⁹³⁵. Theophilos strived in many occasions to appear 'as fervent lover of justice and rigorous guardian of the laws of the state'¹⁹³⁶: when the empress was caught profiting from a merchant's ship, he organized a public process at the poop and openly declared her fail by repeatedly addressing the Senate¹⁹³⁷. He went out for long weekly processions on horse to the church of the Blachernae and allowed the population to approach him and to declaim their complaints¹⁹³⁸. And when a widow held his horse's bridle and made an entreaty 'kneeling and wailing' against the powerful Petronas for stealing her husband's horse, the emperor showed off his affability, suffered the 'woman's boldness of speech', and proved his impartiality by acting so that 'his righteous judgment and hatred of robbery was made manifest to all'¹⁹³⁹. Theophilos'

¹⁹³³ McCormick also recognizes how the setting of the ceremony, not staged in the capital's streets or in the Hippodrome but in front of the reunited troops, 'was clearly intended to impress upon them the completeness of Thomas' failure and perhaps to facilitate the mopping-up operations which lay ahead'; MCCORMICK 1986, p. 146. The same ceremony was performed for Thomas' adopted son Anastasios. The last rebels who had resisted in Heracleia were only paraded in the Hippodrome 'with their hands tied behind their backs' and then exiled; GENESIOS, *Regna*, II, 8-9; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 31-32; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 38-39; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 19-20; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 104-107.

¹⁹³⁴ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, II, 28; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, p. 123. The pain felt by the 'impious' emperor in the kidneys and the difficulty in urinating is recorded also in PSEUDO-SYMEON II, 4; ed. BEKKER 1838, p. 624.

¹⁹³⁵ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 1; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 124-127; GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 1; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 36; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 49; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 49; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 51-52. An interpolation present in George the Monk and Pseudo-Symeon set the trial in the Hippodrome during the races; GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 110, coll. 1007-1008 (not present in De Boor); PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales*, III, 2; ed. BEKKER 1838, p. 625

¹⁹³⁶ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 1; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 124-125.

¹⁹³⁷ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 4; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 128-131; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 4; ed. THURN 1973, 51; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 53-54. In the end, he set fire on the ship. Genesios specified that the emperor made it because 'he believed that Imperial dignity should be acquired by protecting the people, not profiting from them'; GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 20; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 53; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 69. The story had been seen also as a proof of the lack of Byzantine mercantile spirit, but it probably reflected nothing more than 'Theophilos' exalted view of imperial dignity', see KALDELLIS 1998, n. 317, pp. 69-70.

¹⁹³⁸ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 3; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 128-129; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 3; ed. THURN 1973, 50; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 52-53.

¹⁹³⁹ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 7; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 134-137. The emperor organized a meeting between Petronas and the widow (according to Skylitzes, this was a carefully organized spectacle in which the woman was hidden behind a curtain and suddenly produced in front of the general, who admitted his misdeeds), dismissed him, and then made the woman the heir of his property; *ibidem*; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 6; ed. THURN 1973, 54-55; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 56-57.

was also a lover of beauty (φιλόκοσμος)¹⁹⁴⁰ and paid much care for ceremonies, confirmed by the astonishing triumphs organized in the Hippodrome, by the intense building activity undertaken in and outside the palace¹⁹⁴¹, and by the ceremonial items introduced at the time at court. The Pentapyrgium, a precious piece of furniture set in the Chrysotriklinos, was used to display objects of the imperial treasury¹⁹⁴², and the famous mechanical devices experienced by Liutprand of Cremona (two golden organs, a golden tree with little *automata*-birds, and the movable throne) contributed to highlighting the imperial body in all its supernatural essence¹⁹⁴³. Furthermore, Theophilos have fond of music: like Leo V before him, he '*prided himself on being something of a poet/musician* (the word *melodos* had both meanings, specified Wortley)¹⁹⁴⁴ and composed music for hymns, which he prescribed to sing in church '*to the hearing of all*'¹⁹⁴⁵. Nor did he disdained to personally direct the choir in St Sophia, after giving a public *largitio* to the clergy¹⁹⁴⁶.

Those expedients seemed to work, and Theophilos was initially praised for being rightful, '*admirable in the good*', '*grave and austere*', and characterized by '*praiseworthy qualities through his natural advantage*', despite his '*many faults, among which was his arrogance*'¹⁹⁴⁷. Despite all those efforts, however, for Theophilos was impossible '*to be free of all evils*' and not to clung into the heresy '*which he had inherited from his father*'¹⁹⁴⁸. He returned back to perform harsh persecutions against the icons, against those who worshipped them, and against those who produced them: the famous painter Lazarus had his palms burned with iron disks, and icons were thrown down, publicly vilified, and replaced by depictions of beasts and birds '*which showed the beastly and slavish nature of the*

¹⁹⁴⁰ GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 110, coll. 1009-1010 (not included in De Boor edition).

¹⁹⁴¹ He restored or built anew the lower walls, a hospice, the palace of Bryas ('*in resemblance to Saracen abodes*'), the Karianos, the Sigma porticos annexed to the palace, the fountain of the Triconchos, the steps of white Proconnesian marble, several halls (like the Pyxites, the Eros, the Margarites), and three pavilions. He also adorned the hall of the Lausiakos and that of Ioustinianos; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 8; 9; 42; 43; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 136-143; pp. 200-211. See also JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 7; ed. THURN 1973, 55; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 57-58. The Trichoncos, the Sigma, the steps used by the factions, and the fountain called Saximodeximus are quoted also by an interpolation in GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 110, coll. 1025-1026 (not included in De Boor edition). He also exerted himself to create a courtly space with delightful gardens where he '*was gratified as was fitting*'; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 4; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 128-129.

¹⁹⁴² JOHNSON 1991.

¹⁹⁴³ GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 110, coll. 1009-1012 (not included in De Boor edition). Pseudo-Symeon specified that the birds of the golden tree functioned through a pneumatic mechanism; PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales* III, 4; ed. BEKKERI 1838, p. 627. For the functioning of the organs and the throne, see *De Cer.* II, 15; ed. and tr. MOFFATT 2012, pp. 568-571; p. 595; LIUTPRAND OF CREMONA, *Antapodosis*, VI, 5; ed. CHIESA 1998, p. 147; tr. OLDONI and ARIATTA 1987, p. 195. On the symbolic meaning of this throne and the sources which mention it, see TREITINGER (1938) 1956, pp. 134-135 with notes.

¹⁹⁴⁴ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 11; ed. THURN 1973, 63; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 66; see n. 48, p. 65.

¹⁹⁴⁵ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 16; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 154-155. For example, he put in music one hymn in which '*the Praise Ye of the fourth tone. This he adapted and arranged in the measure of 'Hark, Maiden' of the Eight Ode*'; *ibidem*.

¹⁹⁴⁶ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 16; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 154-155.

¹⁹⁴⁷ GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 20; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 53; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 69.

¹⁹⁴⁸ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 2; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 126-127.

emperor's mentality'. The *'magnificent and wonderful'* Theophilos became an *'harsh and severe'* being *'striving to outdo all the tyrants who had preceded him in cruelty'*¹⁹⁴⁹. Theophilos' good qualities were replaced with the traditional accuses of misbehaviour: his love for justice became a show (προσποιούμενος) of righteousness and strictness¹⁹⁵⁰, and *'he did not consider it beneath his dignity to conduct (the singing) with his own hand'*¹⁹⁵¹. He returned also to be characterized by a fury-like temperament and madness described in line with the previous literary trends: he was unable to suffer the *parresia* of the holy men who came at his presence, his madness and brutality clashed violently against the dialectical and rational speeches of those who defended the icons, he tried to win against his interlocutors through the deception, and then revealed the beast within by resorting to highly physical punishments¹⁹⁵². He was involved in magic and insane illusions, together with his patriarch John the Grammarian who became an authentic sorcerer at the service of the Devil. The career and superior education of the latter (who, admitted Theophanes Continuatus, *'shewed himself important, internally for his intelligence and fluent expression and externally for the wealth and dignity which adorned him'*¹⁹⁵³) made him the perfect target for those kinds of allegations¹⁹⁵⁴.

¹⁹⁴⁹ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 10; III, 13; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 145-149. The violence against Lazarus will not prevent him later to paint an icon of John the Forerunner and to re-place with his own hand the icon of Christ at the Chalké; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 10; ed. THURN 1973, 58-59; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 60-61.

¹⁹⁵⁰ GEORGE THE MONK, *Chronicon*; ed. PG 110, coll. 1011-1012 (not included in De Boor edition).

¹⁹⁵¹ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 11; ed. THURN 1973, 63; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 66.

¹⁹⁵² THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 11-12; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 144-147. The falsehood and lack of self-control in front of holy man's *parresia* stood out especially in the episode of the public trial against Theophanes and Theodore at the hall of the Lausiakos. In the beginning, the emperor uttered loud his usual blasphemies with a shameless mouth. Then the saint managed to undermine his confidence by reproaching him in his face, since a bad emperor cannot tolerate a bold speaking. Finally, he made the two holy men be beaten and tattooed on their foreheads with barbaric and worthless iambic lines; THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 14; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 150-153. For the image of the emperor who *'concealed the lion for the time being and played the part of the fox'*, and then tried to deceive Theophanes with a counterfeit Bible, see JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 10; ed. THURN 1973, 61-62; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 64-65. See also PSEUDO-SYMEON, ed. BEKKER 1838, p. 631.

¹⁹⁵³ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 9; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 140-141. When he was still abbot on the monastery of Sergius and Bacchus, he was also beloved by Michael II because of his common heresy and his eloquence (ἐπὶ λογιότητι); THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, IV, 7; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 220-221.

¹⁹⁵⁴ For John's ability in the divination with dishes (λεκανομαντείας), sorcery (γοητείας), and spells at the service of the empire (he casted *'some sort of spell'* on the three-headed bronze statue in the Hippodrome in order to hit three barbarian leaders who were threatening Constantinople), see THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, IV, 7; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 220-223; THEODORAE AUGUSTAE, 5; ed. MARKOPOULOS 1983, p. 261; tr. VINSON 1998, pp. 367-368; PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales* IV, 2; ed. BEKKER 1838, pp. 649-650; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* V, 8; ed. THURN 1973, 85-86; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 86-87. For the evil laboratory where he *'corrupted himself'* with monks and women and practised divinations, sorcery, and necromancy with the help of demons, see THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, IV, 8; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 224-225. Michael the Syrian also criticized the miserable state of the Chalcedonian church guided by *'a patriarch who was a sorcerer'*, and Satan's servant: he wrote magic formulas on crusts of bread, *'worshipped idols'*, and chanted *'the defiled mysteries of paganism'* *'behind the curtains of the altar'*; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, 13, 1; tr. MOOSA 2014, pp. 580-581.

Finally, the embarrassing and painful death of Theophilos had been described in connection with his rage. After he heard about the fall of Amorion, his heart began to burn (as if he was afflicted with fever) so that he drunk chilling water and died for consequent dysentery¹⁹⁵⁵. The diarrhoea *'emptied the substance of his body (...) and his soul was no longer able to stand but sought to fly off and depart'*. Before dying he managed to be brought upon a litter at the Magnaura: according to this version of the event, the emperor managed to call here for a universal assembly and deliver *'a pitiable oration, appropriate to the circumstances'*¹⁹⁵⁶ in front of his closest friend¹⁹⁵⁷ (*'the Senate and the rest of the eminent citizenry'*, according to Skylitzes)¹⁹⁵⁸. *'Let my entire people mourn for me, let the Senate lament me, and let all my household attendants cry aloud'*, declared the emperor according to Genesios, *'because although I am still in my youth and enjoy great happiness I am already to be separated from these things, and even more so from my young wife and my son'*¹⁹⁵⁹. The regret for his lost youth and the appeal to protect his family after his death are similarly reported by Theophanes Continuatus, who added the fact that the emperor recognized the death as a punishment for his own sins (*'At all events keep in mind that even as each man shall be unto his neighbour, so shall the same befall him in future'*) and that the audience was charmed and mollified¹⁹⁶⁰. Those present were *'deeply touched by the emperor's pathetic words'* and were persuaded to pray for the emperor and to guarantee their support to his family¹⁹⁶¹. Then as a last gesture of violence, he vented his excessive rage (ἀμετρία θυμοῦ) (*'for he was deranged (ὄποκεκλινημένος) and prone to seething anger (ὀργίλη τῆ ζέσει) as his mind was afflicted by his bodily disorders'*¹⁹⁶²) against Theophobos, a man accused of plotting against his son. When *'he knew that he was already dying'*, he commanded to behead his old enemy and to bring his head (*'a funeral offering, as it were, bitter and spiteful'*): he took it (holding it by the nose or, according to Skylitzes, by the hair) *'and said: 'Now neither are you Theophobos (God-fearing), nor I Theophilus (God-loving)'*¹⁹⁶³. Less obscure seems the words reported on the other hand by Pseudo-Symeon: 'You

¹⁹⁵⁵ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 34; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 188-189. The same, even if more synthetic, is GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 14; 18; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 49; 51; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 64; p. 67. The fact that Theophilos get ill because full of rage and psychologically strained at the new of Amorion's fall is reported also by JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 24; ed. THURN 1973, 79; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 80-81.

¹⁹⁵⁶ GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 18; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 51; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 67.

¹⁹⁵⁷ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 40; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 198-199.

¹⁹⁵⁸ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 24; ed. THURN 1973, 79; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 81.

¹⁹⁵⁹ GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 18; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 51-52; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 67-68.

¹⁹⁶⁰ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 40; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 198-199.

¹⁹⁶¹ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* IV, 24; ed. THURN 1973, 79; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 81.

¹⁹⁶² GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 8; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 42; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 56. For the many problems on the death of Theophobos (a 'very vexed issue'), occurred during a border skirmish with the Arab in 840ca or at the order of the ungrateful Theophilos, see KALDELLIS 1998, n. 242, p. 56.

¹⁹⁶³ THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, III, 38; ed. and tr. FEATHERSTONE 2015, pp. 196-197. Genesios reported only that *'the Emperor gave instructions that at the hour of his own death one of his household eunuchs should take Theophobos at night to the quarter of Pelagios and kill him there'*; GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 8; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 43; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, p. 57.

die, Theophobos, and I am relieved of the worry (ἄρτι, Θεόφοβε, καὶ σὺ ἀνεπαύης καὶ ἐγὼ ἀπεφρόντισα)¹⁹⁶⁴. While the above-mentioned speech at the Magnaura could be understood as an important part of a customary ceremony and confirmed the care of the emperor in ensuring the power for his descendants, this latter anecdote has a more theatrical taste. The image of the dying emperor holding the head of his enemy and uttering a sentence seems more similar to that of an actor playing a drama than an actual event. It was the appropriate ‘close’ for the life of Theophilos, the last iconoclast emperor. *‘The wretched Emperor’* concluded indeed Genesios, *‘ended his life with a fitting monument to his inhumanity’*¹⁹⁶⁵.

Magdalino defined the period between the seventh and ninth century as the ‘period when the ritual relationship between the people and the palace took definitive shape and reached its peak’¹⁹⁶⁶. As for our topic as well, we can follow many continuities of themes, epithets, and images attached to the emperor in the years following the restoration of the icons. Authors writing in the tenth-eleventh centuries testified both continuities and developments occurred in the narrative of their times: they took the sources at their disposal (most of which unfortunately lost), exacerbated certain traits of the previous imagery and gave new accents to certain themes, especially that of the human nature of the imperial being, developed through a highly developed taste for the physical details. Memorable sketches were produced: the images of Leo V singing out of tune in church, shaking his fists out of rage against those who wronged him, and raising the Holy Cross against the blows of his murderers only to have his hand cut together with the wood; those of the long-winded and stutterer Michael II unable to control himself in speaking and object of ridicule for his slowness in reading and writing; the contrast with Thomas the Slav, whose civilized appearance and manner did not spare him to be described as a *tyrannos* in the moment in which attacked the walls of Constantinople; and finally that of Theophilos, the emperor lover of beauty and justice who cannot control his anger and his fury temperament until his painful and God-sent death surrounded by his entourage.

In the ninth century, the Byzantine Empire entered his ‘Golden Age’ and emperors managed to secure a general political, economical, and even religious stability¹⁹⁶⁷. But the shocking public illnesses and

¹⁹⁶⁴ PSEUDO-SYMEON, *Annales*, III, 27; ed. BEKKER 1838, p. 646. A similar ‘funeral offering’, this time with positive meaning, will be offered by the pious Basil I: he prayed and made an invocation to God while flying three arrows to the head of the defeated Manichaean leader Chrysocheir. In this way he offered it to God *‘as a kind of sacrifice to the dead, on behalf of the countless multitudes whom Chrysocheir had destroyed in the many years of his rule’*; *Vita Basilii*, 43; ed. and tr. ŠEVČENKO 2011, pp. 156-159

¹⁹⁶⁵ GENESIOS, *Regna*, III, 7; ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN 1978, 42; tr. KALDELLIS 1998, pp. 55-56. *‘On account of the secrecy with which Theophobos was killed’*, continued Genesios, in an enigmatic sentence, *‘a rumor was set about among the Persians that is still current today, according to which he ‘never tasted of death’*; *ibidem*.

¹⁹⁶⁶ MAGDALINO 2015, p. 176, also for the building activities connected with the ceremonies.

¹⁹⁶⁷ OSTROGORSKY (1963) 1968, pp. 200 ff.

deaths of previous emperors like Justin II, Maurice, and Phocas, the mutilation of Justinian II and Constantine VI (the latter blinded at the hand of his mother), the humiliation of Nikephoros I's body by Krum, and the murder of Leo V in the Church, not to mention the evident heresy into which, in retrospect, the emperors who supported iconoclasm had stumbled, had left their mark in the way in which imperial body and gestures were felt by the audience. Emperors continued to rely on highly formal ceremonial, and continued to skilful employ the ceremonial and gestural weapons at their disposal, to underline the sacred and natural dimension of their bodies, to fight against political and religious opponents, and to gain legitimacy for themselves and their families. But the members of the audience could now look at them as human beings, and authors pleased them with stories full of vivid details and events in which the emperor looked and behaved as a man like them. Now more than ever, the emperor had come out as a mortal and flawed being who can be included in the narrative to amuse and to warn the members of the court and the contemporary emperors who read and listened to those stories.

Such a taste for lively details and the attention for the physicality of bodies and gestures continued to be developed in Michael Psellos. His *Chronographia* gathered together and treated with keen awareness the ideas developed over the centuries about imperial bodies, gestures, illness and death. It remains, therefore, a unique mine of memorable descriptions of emperors, empresses, and courtesans that is worth considering on its own.

5. MICHAEL PSELLOS' CHRONOGRAPHY: A CASE STUDY

Michael Psellos was one of the most erudite men of his time. He was excellently educated in the City and expert in liberal arts, theology, law, medicine, even occult sciences. He was also actively involved in the political life of his time: he followed a fast and brilliant career becoming the personal secretary of Constantine IX Monomachus, 'consul of the philosophers' in the just re-opened University of Constantinople, and then, after a period of temporary loss of prestige spent in the monastery of the Mount Olympus in Bithynia, chief member of the Senate under Isaac Comnenus. He tutored the son of Constantine X Doucas, the future Michael VII, and served as a Prime Minister when his pupil became emperor after the battle of Manzikert and the fall of Romanos Diogenes. He withdrew once again from public life when he was passed over in favour by the eunuch Nikephoritzes, and died probably some years after the ascent of Nikephoros Botaniates in 1078 or after 1081¹⁹⁶⁸. Psellos' *Chronographia* represents, therefore, an exceptional source covering the period from Basil II to Michael VII Doucas. It was based on previous sources but it also did not draw too much on common stockpiles and

¹⁹⁶⁸ D. DEL CORNO, 'Introduzione' to MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. I-XLIII.

repetitions, creating single-use stories based upon personal experience and, for the contemporary time of the author, like a kind of memoir or historical diary. From the reign of Michael V and until the abdication of Isaac Comnenus (a part written between 1059 and 1063), in particular, Psellos assumed a more distanced point of view on the events and expressed even his personal opinion. The second part, likely written when he was prime minister under Michael VII, seems to be characterized on the other hand by a more biased attitude in favour of the Doucas family¹⁹⁶⁹.

5.1. SCHEMA AND SCHEMATA, BODIES AND GESTURES

The educational background of Psellos made his work an interesting example to comprehend how, at this stage, the concepts of *schema/schemata* were developed. Scholar and then professor of philosophy, Psellos heavily contributed to the intellectual flowering of Byzantine literature and philosophy which followed the ninth-century first 'Byzantine humanism' in which pagan Greek authors and philosophers of the past were carefully studied and adapted to the dogmata of the Christian theology. Author of significant commentaries on Plato and Aristotle, Psellos returned to the earlier philosophical trend aimed at reviving Platonism (mediated through Neoplatonism) in the Byzantine culture, considering Plato as a model not only for the style but also for the content¹⁹⁷⁰. Psellos used also the concept of *schema* with awareness. It continued to entail its usual connotation of military formation¹⁹⁷¹ and of astrological¹⁹⁷² and architectural form¹⁹⁷³. In its latter meaning, it continued to refer to something eye-catching but ultimately empty: commenting over the mania developed by Romanos III for constantly gazing with the eyes (ἐβούλετο ὄρᾶν ὀφθαλμοῖς) the church of the Peribleptos (Περίβλεπτός, lit. 'looked at from all sides'), Psellos declared indeed that piety does not come from beautiful devices or from an artificial disposition (τὸ τῆς διαθέσεως ἐσχημάτιστον) but

¹⁹⁶⁹ SCOTT 2010, with bibliography.

¹⁹⁷⁰ After the Iconomachy, the Aristotelian system was ratified as the normative one and established as official philosophy in the Church; RONCHEY 2002, pp. 15-16.

¹⁹⁷¹ For example, MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 33; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, p. 46-49. In some cases, *schema* could also more generally refer to the position assumed by the soldiers. So the army of Romanos III fled in a chaotic manner, and everybody run away in the condition (ἐν ᾧ σχήματι) in which they were, on the saddle or on feet; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 9; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 80-83.

¹⁹⁷² Someone at court, for example, suggested to Michael V to wait for a favourable σχῆμα τῶν οὐρανίων – an expression already employed by Plotinus – to expel Zoe from the palace and take the power for himself, since it could determine the good result of a plan; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 18; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 204-205; n. 40, p. 381.

¹⁹⁷³ It was employed, for example, to refer to the endless and (in biased Psellos' point of view) exaggerated variations (ποικιλίας σχημάτων; περιεργότερῳ σχήματι ποικιλλόμενον; σχήματα τούτῳ βασιλείων αὐλῶν) proposed and added by Romanos III to the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos. He wanted to show his piety but ultimately he will cause the exhaustion of the financial resources of the State; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 14.13; III, 14.26; III, 15.34; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 90-95.

from a dignified intellect (νοῦς / ἡ εὐσχημοσύνη τῆς γνώμης), from the soul (ψυχῆ), and from the uniformity of the actions (ἡ τῶν πράξεων ἰσότης)¹⁹⁷⁴. Psellos continued to employ the term *schema* also to refer to the social and political condition of a person, whether monastic, imperial, or ordinary one. So the usurper Bardas Skleros was forced to become a member of the clergy by stripping down his civic *schema* (τὸ πολιτικὸν τῆς περιβολῆς σχῆμα) and any other outward precondition of usurpation (οἶδεν ἡ τυραννίς)¹⁹⁷⁵. The changing of *schema* entailed here strong political importance since it was supposed to make Bardas inoffensive and less dangerous, but it will be ultimately overcome when Bardas rebelled and attempted to seize the throne. The term continued to refer also to the posture assumed by the body. It seems that it is used in this meaning in the story of the meeting between Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas: while Skylitzes recounted that Skleros proposed an alliance against the emperor with a personal letter to Phokas¹⁹⁷⁶, Psellos seems to imply a more physical action. Skleros came before him with the *schema* of an inferior (μετὰ τοῦ ἐλάττονος προσεληλυθὼς σχήματος) leaving to him the honour of the first rank¹⁹⁷⁷. Given also the meaning of subjugation entailed in the term ἐλάσσων (comp. of μίκρος), it is likely that the subordinate political condition was expressed with a specific posture (both Ronchey and Sewter translated the expression as ‘in the guise of a vassal’). Michael IV also assumed a submissive and overawed guise (ὑφειμένω δὲ καὶ πεφοβημένω τῷ σχήματι) in front of Zoe, when he was still his lover¹⁹⁷⁸. The *schema* then clearly referred on some occasions to specific gestures made with the body’s limbs. When Psellos faked a supposed illness in order to withdraw from public life and retire in a monastery, for example, he performed the disguise by talking nonsense, choking up his voice, and making with the fingers the gesture (τοῖς δακτύλοις ... ἐσημάτιζον) of cutting his hair¹⁹⁷⁹. John the Orphanotrophon, drunk at the banquet’s table, proved to be still able to maintain his mind and his fearful attitude by scrutinizing every small gesture (σχηματίζοιτο) performed by his guests¹⁹⁸⁰. And when Constantine IX wanted to persuade Psellos to head the embassy to Isaac Comnenus, he reminded him that he had maintained with him the usual *schema* (μετὰ τοῦ συνήθους ὀμιλῶ σχήματος), kissing and embracing him

¹⁹⁷⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 15; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, p. 92-95. In some cases, it was licit to exceed (παρανομεῖν) a little in the exterior pomp (περὶ τοὺς ἐκτὸς κόσμους), but Romanos also did not care about the maintenance of the other churches; *ibidem*.

¹⁹⁷⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 6; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, p. 15.

¹⁹⁷⁶ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVI, 16; ed. THURN 1973, 335; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 317.

¹⁹⁷⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 12; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹⁷⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 19; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 98-99.

¹⁹⁷⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 197; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 144-145.

¹⁹⁸⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 14; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 130-131. After, he held an interrogatory in which he asked to them to give an account of their actions during the drinking.

(κατασπάζομαί τε καὶ συναγκαλίζομαι) as he used to do before becoming emperor¹⁹⁸¹. Finally, the term *schema* could suggest both the vocal as well as the performative elements of a ceremony: the official adoption of Michael VII was performed with the usual *schema* in speaking and acting (ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ σχήματι λέγεσθαί τε καὶ πράττεσθαι), that is, by using the same formulas and gestures¹⁹⁸².

Psellos paid great attention to both the psychology and the physicality of the main characters of the political scene. He vividly described the actions and the behaviour of emperors and members of the court, seen as political personalities but also as complex human beings contextualized in the space in which they moved. In line with the biographical tradition of Plutarch, his main concern was indeed for the lives (βίοι) rather than for the military deeds (over which is more focused for example John Skylitzes, who continued to offer a parallel source for the period until the reign of Michael VI). Those descriptions full of curious details and anecdotal occurrences reflected the perception that a member of the court, moving around the rooms of the palace, had of the bodies of the emperors and of the others 'dramatis personae', and testified the role which gestures and physical actions continued to fulfil in the political and social life of the time. They could be used as effective narrative devices to build up the plot of the stories in a sound kind of 'narrative historiography'¹⁹⁸³ and continued often to underpin the author's judgment, as a way to characterize the social status, the psychology, or the moral qualities of a character. As for the emperor, the judgment standards continued to be based on traditional values which praised values like self-control and rhetorical skills in public speeches and criticized the use of outward appearance for vacuous or frivolous purposes as well as the performance of out-of-norm, exaggerated, and out-of-control physical movements¹⁹⁸⁴. Already in the *Historia Syntomos* Psellos occasionally judged emperors of the past on the base of those characteristics. Nero remarkably appeared here not only as an emperor who enjoyed to engage in public spectacles. He was also a man used to singing and gesticulating (ῥῆδὰς καὶ χειρονομίας) without technique and musicality, and who 'felt no shame to sing aloud in the centre of the theatre and to accompany the melody with rhythmic foot-stamping and to follow the turns of the songs by gesturing with his fingers (κατακλῶν τοὺς δακτύλους, lit. bowing down the fingers)¹⁹⁸⁵. The old *topos* of the irascible emperor

¹⁹⁸¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 16; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 196-197.

¹⁹⁸² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 23; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 144-145.

¹⁹⁸³ For the originality of Psellos' narrative style and the 'sweep' toward a narrative in which events were presented in 'sequence more frequently made contingent on consequence', to indicate relations of cause and effect, see BOURBOUHAKIS and NILSSON 2010.

¹⁹⁸⁴ See also TINNEFELD 1971, p. 131 ff.

¹⁹⁸⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch. 21.30-34; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 14-15. Whether it was written by Psellos or not, this work reflected anyway the opinions of an author of the time.

is very much present in the figures of Tiberius Caesar and Gaius¹⁹⁸⁶, the foolish and hot-tempered Commodus¹⁹⁸⁷, Valens and Valentinian¹⁹⁸⁸. Rage could have a positive connotation, like when Vitellius was 'moved by a righteous rage' to kill Otho, who, in turn, was characterized by 'lack of nobility', 'mania for religious performance' (he was used to playing the *aulos* and lead the procession of the Aphrodisian rites so that 'he often shocked one of the powerful men')¹⁹⁸⁹. The self-control remained, nevertheless, fundamental: 'anger' declared the author through the words of Heraclius, 'did not suit an emperor. He should either change his mind in a friendly way or carry out his decisions lawfully and quietly'¹⁹⁹⁰.

In the *Chronographia*, the richness of physical descriptions seems to be due to the keen awareness of Psellos of the presence of a mortal and therefore fallible dimension in the imperial nature, which prevented the emperor to reach perfection but also bestowed on him a high level of complexity. No emperor seen by Psellos in his time was indeed totally free (*ἐλευθέρως*) to be a good ruler, whether because he was 'bad' (*κακοὶ*) in his own spirit (*παρὰ τὴν γνώμην*), because of bad companies (like in the case of Michael IV, a good man ruined by his family), or because of weakness in his customs¹⁹⁹¹. For this reason, the decision to write about contemporary events was a dangerous undertaking: the author could always be accused of creating a biased account (in the moment in which he would omit or manipulate certain facts to praise a ruler) or of being a lover of invective (*φιλολοΐδορος*) (in the case in which he would follow the truth)¹⁹⁹². The task of writing with historical impartiality (*ἰστορεῖν*) required to handle with the 'proximity of the contraries (*ἡ τῶν ἐναντίων γειτνίασις*)' and to consider the events concerning the rulers as a mixture (*ἀναμιξίς*) in which the worst and the better deeds (*χειρόνων τε καὶ κρείττωνων πράξεων*) were strictly interwoven¹⁹⁹³. None of the emperors before Constantine IX had been devoid of deficiency or flawless, none of them had been innocent (*ἀνάλωτος*, lit.: unassailable), declared Psellos, but it is important to write about both their good and bad actions¹⁹⁹⁴. Some rulers were good in their early years, some others when they were close to death. Some others tried to live in a wise manner but then gave in to incongruous lives (*τοὺς βίους*

¹⁹⁸⁶ One was a 'steadfast man but severe and inexorable in anger', the other was 'totally without control' in sexual behaviour and 'in a matter of punishment'; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.19.1-7; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 12-13.

¹⁹⁸⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.33; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Psellos continued to describe Valens as irascible and hated by God, with the heart of a beast, and reported once again the death of Valentinian as caused by a flash of anger; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.59.56; 60.67; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 42-43.

¹⁹⁸⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.23.52-60; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁹⁹⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.76.74-75; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 66-67.

¹⁹⁹¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 11; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 124-125. Ronchey translates *κακοὶ* as 'slaves'.

¹⁹⁹² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 22; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 266-269.

¹⁹⁹³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 25; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 270-273.

¹⁹⁹⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 26; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 272-273.

ἀκαταλλήλους). This situation should not be considered as surprising: just as the life of the common man (ιδιώτην) is never steady, neither is the life of the emperor. But if the common man is content with a natural disposition and a start of life good enough to lead an acceptable existence, the rulers were far more subject to the stress of the imbalances (τῶν ὀχλούντων), which agitated their lives as a rough sea. They were more easily targeted and condemned for every small weakness: the adherence to human sensibility (φιλανθρωπία) could be promptly read as carelessness (ἀνεπιστημοσύνη), the diligence for the government affairs could be seen as intrusiveness, and a frank reaction could be seen as the sign of an irascible and quick-tempered (ὀργή ... καὶ θυμός) nature. The imperial life was always under the eyes of everybody, and none of their actions could be hidden or safe¹⁹⁹⁵.

5.2. *ETHOS* AND *EIDOS*: BASIL II, CONSTANTINE VIII, AND THE BODY OF THE *TYRANNOS*

Ethos and *eidos*, inner disposition and physical appearance, are the key elements in many descriptions of the *Chronographia*. In some cases both of them were praiseworthy: Helen, the wife of Constantine VIII, was for example a woman pleasing to the eye and noble in her soul (καὶ τὴν ὄραν καλὴ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀγαθὴ)¹⁹⁹⁶. In most cases, however, their relationship was more complex, like in the case of the three daughters of Constantine VIII: Eudocia, the oldest one, had a submissive *ethos* (ἥθος), a soft mind (γνώμην) and a mediocre beauty (κάλλους μέσως) disfigured by smallpox. Zoe, the middle one, had a regal *ethos* (τὸ ἥθος βασιλικωτάτη) and a splendid *eidos* (τὸ εἶδος λαμπροτάτη), as well as a magnificent and venerable mind (γνώμην). Theodora, the third-born, was tall, had a quick tongue, but was uglier than her sister¹⁹⁹⁷. The Skleraina, the lover of Constantine IX, had an ordinary *eidos* (τὸ εἶδος αὐτῆ οὐ πᾶνυ θαυμάσιον) but also an exceptional *ethos* and fierceness of soul (ἥθος καὶ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς φρόνημα)¹⁹⁹⁸.

A multifaceted relation between *ethos* and *eidos* marked especially the characterization of Basil II. His *ethos* was subject to change since he spent a cheerful youth among banquets, drinking and sexual intercourses but then underwent a deep transformation in front of the rebellions broke out in the earlier years of his reign. Psellos assumed here the old idea for which military issues could affect the personality of an emperor (the grief felt after a harsh defeat in 1030 will lead also Romanos III to an

¹⁹⁹⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 27; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 274-275.

¹⁹⁹⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 4; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 60-61.

¹⁹⁹⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 5; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 60-63.

¹⁹⁹⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 60; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 304-305.

unusual changing of conduct (πρός ἀσυνηθέστερον βίον μετέστραπτο)¹⁹⁹⁹. He described in detail the changing in Basil's heart: his *ethos* became austere (ἥθος ἀπεξεσμένος), was not easily changed (οὐ ταχὺ μεταβάλλων), and the emperor became modest in his way of living (μέτριός τὴν δίαιταν) and easy to anger (δύσοργός)²⁰⁰⁰. The friendly attitude usually shown on the battlefield (when he suffered the insults of the officials with a smile and a relaxed attitude) was replaced by a grudge kept 'under the ashes' against those who improperly acted toward him (however, he did not change a benevolent attitude unless something serious happened)²⁰⁰¹. He became suspicious toward everybody at court, kept his eyebrow raised (σοβαρός τὴν ὄφρυν) and a lurking mind²⁰⁰². He shifted, therefore, to a more authoritarian (σοβαρωτέραν) rule and centralized in his hands the powers, the prerogatives, and the government's departments: he brutally (τὸν ἄγριον τρόπον) discharged the *parakoimomenos* Basil²⁰⁰³, acted his haughtiness (ὑπεροψίαν / ὑπεροπτικῶς) with his subjects and his brother, so that he instilled fear instead of granting favour²⁰⁰⁴. Even in the *Historia Syntomos*, where Basil is defined as 'the most excellent of all the emperors', Psellos confirmed that he used toward his brother a 'rather authoritarian language (ἀρχικώτερον διελέγετο)' and 'reserved absolute power for himself (τὴν μοναρχίαν ἑαυτῷ διηκρίβου)'²⁰⁰⁵. Psellos' negative stance towards authoritarianism is more clearly expressed later in the *Chronographia*, when he declared that the civic and military ranks more willingly obeyed (πειθομένους lit. 'were persuaded by') the empresses Zoe and Theodora than any other manly despots who peremptorily (σοβαρώτερον) commanded from their throne²⁰⁰⁶. Basil II, like his brother Constantine, was also a humble man: he did not have rhetorical skills, his speaking was simple, and he dictated official documents to his secretaries with a style far from being

¹⁹⁹⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 12; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 86-87. Skylitzes also reported that, after the rebellion of Bardas Skleros, the emperor 'relieved of anxiety, now applied himself more strenuously to affairs of the state', ending also the collaboration with Basil the *parakoimomenos*; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVI, 16; ed. THURN 1973, 335; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 317.

²⁰⁰⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 4; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 12-13.

²⁰⁰¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 34; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 48-51.

²⁰⁰² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 18; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 28-29.

²⁰⁰³ He also dismantled his initiatives, the benefits and the dignities he had bestowed, and even his works for the church of St Basil the Great; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 20; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 30-31. See also MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch. 106; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 106-107.

²⁰⁰⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 29; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 40-41.

²⁰⁰⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, 106; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 106-109. Basil II, however, left his brother outside the state affairs because he was a lover of pleasure, but allowed him to live in a residence near the City.

²⁰⁰⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 1; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 246-247.

polished²⁰⁰⁷. He even renounced to the outward pomp of the ceremonies, despised frivolousness (γλυκυθυμίας) and bodily ornaments (τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα κόσμων), and refused to make his body eye-catching (κατελαμπρόνετο) with jewels or clothes²⁰⁰⁸. Psellos had a positive stance toward this renunciation of the pomp in the context of the battlefield, where Basil displayed a body hard as a diamond resistant to cold and heat²⁰⁰⁹, and in relation to the care of the State, where frugality allowed him to spare a large amount of richness. More generally, anyway, it was seen almost like a personal whim of the emperor and a sign of his presumptuousness. Psellos lingered on Basil's disregard for precious things to emphasise his incapability of finding a 'middle path' between the exaggerations of those emperors who indulged in imperial privileges at the expense of the political affairs, and the complete renunciation of luxury. Furthermore, ceremonial appearance played an important part in the care of the State and in strengthening the power: Basil himself was aware of the danger involved in such a renunciation, since he imposed the same life-style to the men around him and deprived his pleasure-lover brother Constantine of part of his magnificent retinue. This, maliciously specified Psellos, was made for jealousy²⁰¹⁰, but it seems likely that the emperor was removing, in this way, a potential element of competition in the power.

As for Basil's *eidos* (τὸ δὲ εἶδος), it shone for natural nobility (εὐγένεια) and was built according to the physiognomy and the 'golden mean'. Basil had light blue eyes turning grey²⁰¹¹, arched eyebrow (ὄφρυς) that betrayed his human pride (τὸ ἀγέρωχον τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ὑπεμφαίνουσα), not too deep-set not too protruding, and a manly glare (αἴγλης ἀρρενωποῦ). His head was perfectly round, his neck firm, his chest not too introflexed and not too everted but well balanced between the two extremes (ἐμμέτρως ἔχον τῶν διαστάσεων), a canon which characterized all his limbs²⁰¹². Even if the single parts of his figure were well-proportioned (συνηρμοσμένην δὲ τοῖς ἰδίαις μέρεσι), he was short. But when he was on horseback his figure was incomparable: he seemed to be complementary to the saddle like a sculpture forged out in this very *schema* (ἔς τοιοῦτον σχῆμα). With the same *schema*

²⁰⁰⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 30; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 44-45.

²⁰⁰⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 22; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 32-33. Precious stones were rather thrown in the midst of the imperial treasure in the underground chambers of the palace; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 31; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 44-45. During public exits and audiences, he dressed a cloth dyed with a dark purple scattered with few pearls; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 31; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 46-47.

²⁰⁰⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 32; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 46-47

²⁰¹⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 22; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 32-35.

²⁰¹¹ This attribute characterized brave men since Aristotle; IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, n. 114, p. 352.

²⁰¹² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 35; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 50-53.

(μετὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σχήματος) he dynamically held the bridles and controlled the horse, when he ran down from a hill or jumped (πρός τε τὸ ἄναντες καὶ πρὸς τὸ κάταντες). The *schema* refers here both to the fixed and steady (ὄρθιος καὶ ἀκλινῆς) statue-like posture through which the emperor's body appeared when he was on horseback, as well as to the attitude more actively assumed by the body while the horse was in motion. Furthermore, another *schema* was assumed by Basil when he was taken by anger or struggled with the thoughts inside him (ἐς ἐννοίας ἀνακινῶν): on those occasions, he had the habit to roll up the locks around his fingers, a gesture which came spontaneous (ἐαυτὸν ἐχρήτο τῷ σχήματι) like that of inserting the fingers in the space between the folded arms and the bust, while bending the elbows outwards. The manner in which Basil spoke, already underlined in the context of the *ethos*, was included also in the *eidos*: he made continuous pauses, more like a rustic than an educated man (ἀγροικικῶς μᾶλλον ἢ ἐλευθερίως), and he laughed heartily (γέλως ... καγχασμὸν) making all his body shudder²⁰¹³.

After Basil, his son Constantine VIII took the power. In line with the above-mentioned concerns about the historical accuracy, Psellos declared his intentions to sketch a profile (χαρακτηριζέτω) of this emperor without adding or omitting nothing on how he actually looked like (μηδέν τι τοῦπεφυκότος ἢ προστιθεὶς ἢ καθυφείς)²⁰¹⁴. Psellos criticized harshly Constantine's soft *ethos* (ἥθους δὲ μαλακωτάτου) toward barbarians, his soul inclined to pleasure (ψυχῆς πρὸς πᾶσαν ῥεπούσης ἀπόλαυσιν), and his inclination for excesses (καταχρῆται τῇ γνώμῃ)²⁰¹⁵. He was impulsive (ὀξύρροπος) and unable to restrict his anger (θυμοῦ) so that he inflicted unjust punishments for which he repented once he came back to his senses. His natural munificence (εὐεργετεῖν) was unreasonable and not accompanied by equity (δικαιοσύνης), and he conferred benefits and richness to unworthy men who conquered him by adapting their *ethos*. As for the *eidos*, on the other side, Constantine was old but his body was strong²⁰¹⁶. He sat on the throne in a royal manner (βασιλικῶς) and astonished his audience with dialectical ability (ἐπιχειρῶν) and argumentative strength (ἐπενθυμούμενος), even if his education (γράμματα) was not supported by a proper erudition. He was naturally (φύσεως) very dexterous and graceful, and his elegant tongue brilliantly expressed the thoughts in his soul. He prided himself on personally dictating imperial letters: the sluggish fingers of the scribes had hard times to

²⁰¹³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 36; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 52-55.

²⁰¹⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 6; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 62-63.

²⁰¹⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 1; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 56-57. More positively, Michael the Syrian reported that Constantine 'was meek, lofty-minded and prudent in his administration'; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon* XIII, 5; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 590.

²⁰¹⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 2-3; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 56-57.

write the throng of concepts and words (τὸ πλῆθος τῶν τε ἐννοιῶν καὶ τῶν λέξεων)²⁰¹⁷. Finally, he had a massive body (εὐμεγέθης) which was anyway misused to support vices: his belly was naturally fit to receive food (sometimes he cooked for himself)²⁰¹⁸ and to fill the appetite of a voracious man (πολυβορώτατος)²⁰¹⁹. His strength supported him when he engaged as contestant in sports (γυμνοπαιδία), horses-races (ἵπποδρομία), and hunting which, once again in line with the traditional theme of the emperor devoted to passions unworthy of his role, were a real mania for the emperor²⁰²⁰. Even worse, he loved the stage (θέατρα)²⁰²¹: Skylitzes specified that he entertained himself with ‘actors (μίμοις) and comedy shows (γελωτοποιοῖς), passing his nights playing silly games (κοττάβοις)’²⁰²². In the end, his vices caused him a serious pain in the articulations which affected his public *schema*: his feet were reduced to such a miserable condition that no one could see him walk on his own, and he had to be carried on horseback²⁰²³. Completely absorbed in playing pawns and dice and neglecting the care for his imperial duties, Constantine died while he was gambling his reign (τὸ κράτος διαπεττεύοντα)²⁰²⁴.

A good physical appearance (*eidos*), therefore, did not always correspond to a superior inner being (*ethos*) and could be owned also by negative categories of characters. This was also the case of the *tyrannoi* who illegally attacked the divinely sanctioned power of the emperor. The *parakoimomene* Basil was not properly a *tyrannos* (he was a eunuch unfit for the throne, and took the reins of government instead of Basil until this latter was strong enough to depose him) but is remarkably

²⁰¹⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 6; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 62-65.

²⁰¹⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 7; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 64-65.

²⁰¹⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 9; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 66-67.

²⁰²⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 8; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 64-67. He also cared for the animals and for the well-functioning of the races devices, and intervened jauntily in the discussions over the sport, adapting himself to the customs of the common citizens (τὰ τῶν πολιτῶν ἔθῃ). During hunts, he withstood warm and cold and thirst and was able to use arch, spear and sword; *ibidem*. The love for horse-racing and hunting and other juvenile interests of Constantine are reported also in MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, 106; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 106-109.

²⁰²¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 8; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 64-67.

²⁰²² JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVII, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 370; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 349. Constantine’s indolence had serious political consequences since he did not promote to high offices men distinguished by birth, virtue, and experience, but rather ‘wine-sodden, servile eunuchs, bloated with every kind of disgusting abomination’; *ibidem*.

²⁰²³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 7; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 64-65. For the imperial *schema* affected by illness, see after.

²⁰²⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 9; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 66-67.

described as a man with a deep mind (φρονήματος ὄγκον), a handsome body (σώματος μέγεθος) and a form worthy of a *tyrannos* (μορφὴν τυράννου προσήκουσαν)²⁰²⁵.

Tyrannoi are often characterized by formidable bodies and awesome physical appearance. Those qualities, anyway, did not correspond to an equivalent superior inner being and were often not put to good use. So Bardas Skleros was remarkable in joining capability of decision (βουλευσασθαι ἱκανός), ability in action (καταπράξασθαι περιδέξιος), and wealth (the three elements traditionally required from an eligible *tyrannos*)²⁰²⁶. But on the battlefield he violated the rules by hurling against the rival without waiting²⁰²⁷. During the battle of Abidos the appearance of the young Basil II, mightily set in front of the army holding the sword and the icon of the Virgin²⁰²⁸, and of his brother Constantine, with the armour and the spear²⁰²⁹, strongly clashed with that of Skleros. He entered the fray like a violent wind or a stormy sea²⁰³⁰, without restraining the bit of the horse, with wild screams and holding high the hilt of the sword²⁰³¹. This description expressed the bravery of Skleros but also the violent and unrestrained attitude attached to the *tyrannos* who rose his sword high on his head like the executioner who, in iconography, stroke the mortal blow on the motionless martyr²⁰³².

The powerful appearance of the *tyrannoi* was also something ephemeral. This was dramatically revealed by the miserable spectacle of their defeated bodies. When the *parakoimomenos* Basil fell into disfavour, he became despondent (ἀθυμίας), his head was clouded, and he lost the mastery over himself (ἀκρατῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἐγεγόνει). As usual, the mind was strictly related to the body and also his limbs became paralyzed (τὰ μέλη παραλυθεῖς) so that he was like a living dead (νεκρὸς ἔμψυχος). In a short time he passed away, recalling the overturning of the mortal things²⁰³³. A similar fate befell the *tyrannos* Bardas Phokas, a noble man unable to keep a modest concept of himself (οὐδὲν σμικροπρεπὲς ἐννοησομένῳ περὶ αὐτοῦ) and notable for military preparedness²⁰³⁴. After striking

²⁰²⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 3; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 10-11.

²⁰²⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 5; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 14-15.

²⁰²⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 8; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 16-17.

²⁰²⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 16; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 26-27.

²⁰²⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 14; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 24-25.

²⁰³⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 16; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 26-27.

²⁰³¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 15; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 24-27.

²⁰³² See, for example, the scenes in the Menologion of Basil II.

²⁰³³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 21; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 32-33.

²⁰³⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 6-7; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 14-17). Skylitzes also reported that Skleros was 'loved by the whole army for having given the impression (φανεῖς) of vigour (ἐμβριθῆς) and dynamism (μεγαλοψύχως). He was therefore proclaimed emperor by the Roman army

a powerful blow against the emperor on the battlefield, his head was suddenly darkened and he slipped from the saddle. The rumours widespread at court suggested that Phokas was not hurled by a javelin but was given a poison which paralyzed his movements (περὶ τὴν κίνησιν ἀθρόον ἀναρραγέν), flooded in the cerebral lobes of his consciousness (τόν τε φρονοῦντα τοῦ ἐγκεφάλου τόπον κατέλαβε) and provoked the vertigo (τὴν δίνησιν) and the fall (τὴν κατάπτωσιν)²⁰³⁵. The view of this invulnerable and invincible (ἄτρωτος καὶ ἀνάλωτος) man falling from his horse was a pitiful spectacle which caused his army to flee²⁰³⁶. The defeated body of the *tyrannos* could be also employed in the context of a carefully orchestrated ceremony: when Skleros came in the presence of Basil II to sign the treaty of peace, he arrived at the imperial estate near Constantinople not on horseback but on foot. Even if he was still impressive for his height (εὐμεγέθης), he was flanked by two guards who supported both his arms (ροσῆει χειραγωγούμενος ἐκατέρωθεν)²⁰³⁷. It is true that this posture could entail different connotations: when John the Orphanotrophon arrived in the palace after the death of his brother (the emperor Michael IV), his nephew Michael (who had taken the power as Michael V) welcomed him by extending his arm so that he could lean on it (τὴν δεξιὰν ὑποσχὼν ἐπειρίσασθαι ταύτῃ ἐδίδου). With this contact, he gave him a kind of sanctification²⁰³⁸. In the case of Skleros, however, the posture was a *schema* of humiliation aimed at displaying the old general as a totally defeated man. ‘Here it is the one whom I’ve feared’ cried out Basil at this sight, ‘this man hold by his arm (χειραγωγούμενος) who advances as a suppliant!’²⁰³⁹. Skleros at the time still threatened the imperial power and received a fair proposal for the peace²⁰⁴⁰, which included his being considered second in dignity. The emperor expressed this condition immediately after: he stood from his seat,

and acclaimed by the Armenians; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVI, 2; ed. THURN 1973, 315-316; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 300.

²⁰³⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 16; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 26-27. Rumours stated that the command for the poisoning came from Basil, through the hand of Phocas’ cup-bearer; *ibidem*.

²⁰³⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 17; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 28-29.

²⁰³⁷ While Psellos explained the attitude with the old age of the man, Skylitzes, who recounted the same story in a slightly different manner, explained that he had lost his sight during the journey; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVI, 16; ed. THURN 1973, 335; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 317. That Skleros had lost his sight is stated anyway later by the same Psellos, when he defined Pulcheria as the wife of that Bardas Skleros whom fate had deprived of his eyes; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 15; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 262-263.

²⁰³⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 3; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 184-185. The gestures performed by Michael and his relatives are defined flatteries (κολακείας) by Psellos (who claims to have been an eyewitness of the episode), and are employed as narrative devices to express the ineptitude of John’s family.

²⁰³⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 27; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 38-39. The same in JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVI, 16; ed. THURN 1973, 335; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 317.

²⁰⁴⁰ The imperial proposal was carefully considered by Skleros through a syllogistic reasoning which took into consideration not the past or the present favourable situations but rather the future and the old age that was advancing; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 26; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 36-37.

kissed him and conversed with him about the events. He even drank from the same cup to assure his good faith and the sacredness of the treaty – a gesture which Skleros himself had previously employed with his soldiers to earn their trust²⁰⁴¹. Basil asked then some advice for an efficacious ruling, and those were focused once again on the authoritarian character necessary to keep the control over the subject: Skleros urged Basil to not to leave his person easily accessible (πρόχειρον), to keep secret the intents of his soul, and to limit the wealthy of his officials so to remove the condition for the raising of other *tyrannoi* as him²⁰⁴².

Finally, also George Maniakes, the *tyrannos* who rebelled under Constantine IX, was praised by Psellos because of his extraordinary strength, military ability, and tactical shrewdness. Those were the qualities required from a man meant to rule (τῷ στρατηγήσοντι). He had an astonishingly tall body, an outward appearance (εἶδος) not delicate or pleasing but stormy-like (οἶον εἰοικὸς πρηστῆρι), a leonine impulse (ὄρμημα ... λέοντος) and a feral determination (ἐπισκύνιον βλοσυρόν), a thundered voice and powerful hands which could shake walls and crush bronze doors²⁰⁴³. His fist stood against the enemy as a bastion²⁰⁴⁴. Moreover, Maniakes' hands were also the hands of a rebel, i.e. hands which dare to lay on the emperor both metaphorically²⁰⁴⁵ as well as practically: 'with this hand (ταύτη τῆ χειρὶ) I have repeatedly hurt the emperor of the Romans', cried out the 'outcast' barbarian who was boasting at the court of Constantine, showing his right hand (τὴν δεξιὰν ἐπιδεικνύς)²⁰⁴⁶. It was the fist of Maniakes that initially caused the rebellion: in front of the inexperienced and 'parvenu' ambassador of the emperor who did not follow the rules for public encounters²⁰⁴⁷, Maniakes was inflamed with anger (διαπυροῦται τῷ θυμῷ) and raised his fist (ἐπανατείνει τὴν χεῖρα). He did not hit him and just wanted to scare him (οὐχ ὡς πλήξων, ἀλλ' ὡς φοβήσων), but the ambassador took his gesture as a sign of rebellion (ὥσπερ ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ τοῦτον ἐντεῦθεν ἔλων τύραννον). He called the presents to witness Maniakes' haughtiness and enormous crime, so that this latter had

²⁰⁴¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 25; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 36-37. He also called them by name and praised them; *ibidem*.

²⁰⁴² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 28; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 40-41. He also urged Basil not to let any woman into the palace; *ibidem*.

²⁰⁴³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 77; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 8-11.

²⁰⁴⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 78; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 8-9.

²⁰⁴⁵ For MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 123; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 66-67.

²⁰⁴⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 135; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 80-81. The man was boasting about hitting 'certain men who were to become emperors'. Psellos claimed to have witnessed the scene and declared that, in front of such an arrogance and megalomania, he had almost come to the point of strangling him with his hands (two, this time); *ibidem*.

²⁰⁴⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 79-80; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 10-13. The ambassador did not communicate previously his arrival, and immediately began to insult Maniakes without any courtesy, calling him *tyrannos* instead of honouring him for his military successes; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 81; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 12-13.

no choice but to kill him and rebel against the emperor²⁰⁴⁸. The hot blooded temperament of Maniakes was reported also by Skylitzes: he insulted Stephen (Michael IV's brother in law who couldn't stop the flight of a multitude of defeated Africans in Sicily) and '*assailed him with excessive abuse and, raising his whip, dealt him several blows on the head*'²⁰⁴⁹. As usual, also Maniakes' body was a stunning sight for those in his presence: the soldiers sent against him were astonished and became spectators (θεαταὶ) rather than antagonists. When he headed his troops, he appeared so stunning (ἀστραπαῖος) that their sight swayed (τὴν θέαν ὑπετέμνετο) and instilled fear in everyone who saw him. Once defeated, anyway, Maniakes provided the usual miserable spectacle. He was wounded in battle and the loss of blood weakened his limbs and clouded his mind. He was no longer able to hold his horse' bridle and slipped from the saddle, pitiful vision (θέαμα ἐλλεινόν)²⁰⁵⁰. Those present contemplated astonished the size of his enormous body and then beheaded him²⁰⁵¹. His head was sent to the emperor, brought in procession, and hang in the Hippodrome, so that every citizen could see it from distance²⁰⁵².

Another action which qualified a *tyrannos* was the traditional illegitimate assumption of the imperial *schema*. This latter continued to refer to the general aspect through which the emperor was seen and recognized by his subject, a powerful instrument which could be used in critical moments: it can restore the hope of the soldiers, like when Romanos III in the aftermath of a defeat showed himself while adoring the icon of the Virgin and stopped the wander of the fugitive soldiers with his voice and with his *schema* (τῆ τε φωνῆ, τῷ τε σχήματι)²⁰⁵³. And when Constantine IX was ill, he forced himself to overcome his physical pain and to regularly appear in front of the City, so as to prove with his gestures (τοῖς σχήμασι) that he was still alive²⁰⁵⁴. The *schema* continued to refer also to the *insignia* of the power, and its usurpation continued to be an important step in taking the throne. The rebel

²⁰⁴⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 81; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 12-15.

²⁰⁴⁹ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XIX, 20; ed. THURN 1973, 406; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 382. This led to Maniakes' arrest and consequent rebellion; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XXI, 3; ed. THURN 1973, 427-428 tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 402-403.

²⁰⁵⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 84; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 16-17.

²⁰⁵¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 85; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 18-19.

²⁰⁵² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 86-87; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 18-21.

²⁰⁵³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 11; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 86-87. Ronchey translated here 'schema' as cloth ('abito'). Leo Deacon, referring specifically to the shining gold of the imperial armour, also reported that when he appeared to the Rus' army, also John Tzimiskes was impossible to miss, '*since the bright gold of the imperial insignia was gleaming incredibly*'; LEO THE DEACON, *Historia*, VIII, 5; ed. PG 117 coll. 851-852; tr. TALBOT and SULLIVAN 2005, p. 180.

²⁰⁵⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 106; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 46-47.

Bardas Phocas wore the diadem and the purple vest²⁰⁵⁵. And when Bardas Skleros came, as we have seen, in front of Basil, he was still wearing, whether intentionally or not (εἴτε σπουδάτος, εἴτε ἄλλως καταφρονήσας), the purple shoes as a leftover of usurpation (ὥσπερ μέρος τῆς τυραννίδος). Likely the gesture was intentional: according to Skylitzes, Skleros was fully aware of its power. When he earlier expressed his imperial ambition to the bishop of Nicomedia, indeed, he *‘did not waste words. He stretched out his right foot to show the scarlet buskin, saying: ‘It is impossible (ἀδύνατον), sir, for a man who has once publicly worn that boot voluntarily to take it off again’*²⁰⁵⁶. The exclamation, which reminded the words of Justinian’s wife Theodora, testified the fact that the assumption of the imperial *schema* was still felt as beyond the mere outward assumption of a dress and as an act that changed deeply the condition of the man who wore it²⁰⁵⁷. But Skleros did not assume the *schema* legitimately: when Basil saw him from distance (πόρρωθεν ἰδὼν), therefore, he became indignant (ἐδυσχέρανε) and closed his eyes (τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔβυσε), refusing to look at him until he removed the purple shoes and returned back to his private *schema* (ιδιωτεύσοι τῷ σχήματι)²⁰⁵⁸. High is also the scandalous raised at court by Theodora when she enjoyed bestowing her lover Michael the imperial *schema*: she dressed and covered him with gold (καταχρυσοῦν) like an idol (ὥσπερ ἄγαλμα), and in secret she allowed him to sit on the throne, with the sceptre and a headband²⁰⁵⁹. When a eunuch, in turn respectable for his *schema* and his rank (ἔκ τε τοῦ σχήματος ἔκ τε τοῦ ἀξιώματος), witnessed the scene, he almost fainted at the sight of this inconceivable spectacle (ἰδὼν τὸ καινὸν τοῦ θεάματος) and *schema* (τὸ σχῆμα)²⁰⁶⁰. The assumption of the imperial *schema* from a *tyrannos* remained also a theatrical *mise-en-scène* full of deceptions. When Leo Tornikios (a man with a decent *eidos* (εἶδος οὐ φαῦλος) and a deceitful *ethos* (τὸ δὲ ἦθος ὑποκαθήμενος))²⁰⁶¹ rebelled against Constantine IX²⁰⁶², he was instigated by some astute and liars Macedonians expert in hiding their

²⁰⁵⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 10; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 20-21.

²⁰⁵⁶ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVI, 3; ed. THURN 1973, 317; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 301.

²⁰⁵⁷ The supposed forgetfulness for the *insignia* of power is often demonstrated by defeated *tyrannoi* and overthrown emperors: famous remains the example of Nikephoros Botaniates wandering through the street with still the imperial dress on, while Alexius Comnenus was taking the City; ANNA COMNENA, *Alexiadis libri XV*, II, 12, 2-3; ed. and tr. LEIB 1937, vol. I, p. 101.

²⁰⁵⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, I, 27; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 38-41.

²⁰⁵⁹ She called him ‘her idol ((ἄγαλμά), ‘joy of her eyes (ὀφθαλμῶν χάριν), ‘flower of beauty (κάλλους ἄνθος) and ‘refresh of her soul (ψυχῆς ἰδίαν ἀναψυχῆς); MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 20; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 100-101.

²⁰⁶⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 20; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 102-103. In this case, Michael acted clearly not as a *tyrannos*. When Theodora managed to calm down the eunuch, indeed, she invited him to accept Michael since he was already the real and sole ruler. Later, he will then accept his full appointment; *ibidem*.

²⁰⁶¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 99; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 34-35.

²⁰⁶² Tornikios, as Skleros before him, had been previously tonsured and forced to become a monk in order to prevent him to strive for the throne. Also in this case, however, the preventive measure was ineffective.

intentions (κρύψαι λογισμοὺς ἀκριβέστατοι). They sent some imposters to spread the false news of the death of the emperor and the proclamation of Tornikios. Through this expedient (διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης μηχανῆς) and those falsehoods (τὸ πλάσμα) the mystifiers (οἱ καθηγεμόνες τοῦ πλάσματος) gathered many people who were already dissatisfied with the current emperor²⁰⁶³. The soldiers, then, staged the proclamation of Leo in Adrianople with all the devices (πλασάμενοι) allowed by the circumstances (he was dressed up in a sumptuous dress and raised on the shield). Leo for his part felt comfortable in the imperial *schema* (ἐν τῷ σχήματι καταστάς), like as if he had already the effective power and not like as if this was, actually, a theatrical rehearse and a counterfeit role (ὡς ἐπὶ σκηνῆς οἷον δραματουργῶν ἢ πλαττόμενος). He even began to rule in an authoritative manner (ἀρχικῶς)²⁰⁶⁴. Even more theatrical was the competition of insults and skirmishes staged in front of the walls of the City²⁰⁶⁵: the Macedonians dismounted from their horses, joined together in dance (χορείας εἰς τοῦμφανῆς συνιστῶντες), improvised mimed songs (αὐτοσχεδίους κωμωδίας) in derision of Constantine IX, and beat rhythmically their feet in time with the music (τὴν γῆν τῷ ποδὶ σὺν ῥυθμῷ καὶ μέλει ἐπικροτοῦντες καὶ κατορχούμενοι). The emperor in part saw and in part heard all those things (τὰ μὲν ἑώρα, τὰ δὲ ἤκουεν) and suffered both the insults and the obscenity of those gestures (τὴν ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων αἰσχύνην ἐπὶ τῶν παρ' ἐκείνων ὑφιστάμενος λόγων)²⁰⁶⁶. After several victories, Tornikios set another little spectacle to convince the Constantinopolitans to surrender. He brought forward the war prisoners and instruct them on what they had to say. They employed from distance (οἱ δὲ διαστάντες) pitiful cries and gestures (καὶ ταῖς φωναῖς καὶ τοῖς σχήμασι) and implored the citizens to surround without pouring fraternal blood, chanting (ἐπετραγώδουν) the faults of the emperor²⁰⁶⁷. Tornikios also met a pathetic death (in this case similar to the one of Michael V and his uncle)²⁰⁶⁸. Sheltered in a church together with his henchman John Vatatzes (who was characterized by a physical sturdiness and a powerful hand (σώματος φύσιν καὶ χειρῶν ἀκμῆν)) Tornikios ultimately lost his dignity: he cried out and abandoned himself to

²⁰⁶³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 103; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 40-43.

²⁰⁶⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 104; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 40-43. For the specific measures taken by Leo, who assigned to each one an adequate place, see *ibidem*, pp. 42-45.

²⁰⁶⁵ The besieged ones hurled invectives against the besiegers and the *tyrannos*, while the besiegers for their part insulted the emperor (at the time seriously ill) for his physical disability; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 110; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 50-51.

²⁰⁶⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 110; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 50-51. The passage reminds Herodotus's descriptions of the besieged who danced (κατωρχέοντο) and mocked Darius; IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, n. 312, p. 403.

²⁰⁶⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 117; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 58-59.

²⁰⁶⁸ See below, p. 348.

contemptible manifestations of fear and pain, while Vatatzes continued to show a proud and intrepid attitude even during the blinding²⁰⁶⁹.

5.3. *DOKEI* AND *EINAI*: FROM ZOE TO CONSTANTINE IX MONOMACHUS

Psellos made extensive use of drama terminology and often compared the world of theatre with that of the courtly ceremonies²⁰⁷⁰. Constantine IX, for example, performed a procession to celebrate the defeat of Maniakes because he acknowledged (ἔγνω) how important it was to celebrate a victory and he knew how to prepare sumptuous *mise-en-scène* (σκηναὶς πλάττειν) and how to extol himself in his deeds (μεγαλληγορεῖν ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν)²⁰⁷¹. The theatrical context continued anyway to entail mostly a negative connotation related to the idea of concealment, simulation, and deceiving. Psellos compared the history written without adhering to the truth to a theatrical spectacle: if he had omitted or manipulated the events related to his protector Constantine IX, he declared, he would have been accused of doing theatre (πλάττων ὡσπερ ἐπὶ σκηναῖς πράγματα) and not history²⁰⁷². Theatricality, simulation, and the old platonic contrast between being (εἶναι) and appearing (δοκεῖν), continued to characterize also the descriptions of unworthy characters, especially in connection with superficiality and frivolousness. Those elements were all included in the recount of the reign of Romanos III Argyrus²⁰⁷³. Since the very beginning, he was deceived by the trick organized by Constantine VIII to get rid of Romanos' first wife so to that he could marry his daughter Zoe: the emperor simulated (σκήπτεται) against him a fit of inexorable anger (ὀργήν) and the woman, without any suspicion that this was only a mask (προσωπεῖον), took the vows²⁰⁷⁴. Once on the throne, Romanos showed at first an *eidos* expressing all kind of virtues: his higher education was expressed by a delicate tongue (ἄβρός τὴν γλῶτταν) and he had a voice full of solemnity (τὸ φθέγμα ὑποσεμνος), a heroic stature (ἥρωος τὴν ἡλικίαν), and a face which expressed majesty (τὸ πρόσωπον ἀτεχνῶς ἔχων βασίλειον). Once again Psellos recognized the emperor's qualities only to overthrow them immediately afterwards: Romanos, declared the author, thought he knew more than what he actually knew. His interest in

²⁰⁶⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 122-123; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 64-67.

²⁰⁷⁰ For the use of terms taken from the dramatic context (like ἐπετραγῶδουν and ὑποκρίνομαι) in Psellos and in Greek literature in general, see IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, n. 45, p. 371.

²⁰⁷¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 87; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 20-21.

²⁰⁷² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 22; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 268-269.

²⁰⁷³ Skylitzes' point of view is different: Romanos was a good ruler, a pious and generous example of virtues, and a capable general, but he was ultimately the victim of the court and Zoe's influences; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVIII; ed. THURN 1973, 375-391; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 354-369.

²⁰⁷⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, II, 10; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 68-69.

military and cultural matters, positive and useful for the State in theory, was not followed by concrete actions and remained at the level of mere ambition and pretension (οἴησις καὶ προσποιήσις)²⁰⁷⁵. Everything was just mask and affectation (προσωπεῖον τὸ πᾶν καὶ προσποιήσις) devoid of truth, and it was possible to see (ὄρᾶν) the majesty invested in a *schema* of philosophy (σχῆμα μὲν φιλόσοφον περικείμενον)²⁰⁷⁶. The emperor hid therefore his superficial education under a deceptive *schema* (whose visual meaning is further stated by the verb ὀράω)²⁰⁷⁷. Also in religious matter, Romanos was eager to appear pious. He sincerely cared for divine things, but also in this case the affectation (προσποιήσις) prevailed over honesty and the appearance triumphed over the being (τὸ δοκεῖν τοῦ εἶναι κρεῖττον ἐφαίνετο)²⁰⁷⁸. When his soldiers saved him at the very last minute in a battle against the Arabs near Antiochia, for example, he turned his honest devotion into a theatrical display by exaggeratedly embracing, kissing and weeping on the icon of the Virgin²⁰⁷⁹. The ceremonies he organized were so staged, that they did not even trick the barbaric people, notoriously credulous and impressionable. Psellos overthrew for the sake of critique this old *topos* and claimed that barbarians who attended the triumphal entry and procession paraded (ἐπιδεικνύμενα) in Antioch were smarter (λογικώτερον) than the emperor: the whole setting was theatrical (θεατρικὴν τὴν παρασκευήν), it did not inspire a martial look (οὐκ ἀξιόμαχα), and was not enough therefore to impress the enemy's opinion (γνώμην ἐκπλήξαι)²⁰⁸⁰. The emperor himself was tricked, in turn, by the barbarians in the following battle: they galloped in a scattered way to give the illusion of a bigger number and struck the sight, the ears, and the soul of the soldiers who fled in terror²⁰⁸¹. Romanos was

²⁰⁷⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 4; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 74-75. He was concerned with disciplining the army but remained actually incompetent, was obsessed by the study of literature but remained only superficially learned; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 2; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 72-73. He also gathered around him unworthy philosophers and rhetors who, like him, claimed to cultivate various fields of studies but remained ignorant and superficial in most of them; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 2-3; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 72-73. He showed his apparent philosophical wisdom in academic debates; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 15; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 92-93. He handled military problems without any awareness of the real dangers and the actual situation; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 4; III, 7; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 74-75; pp. 78-79.

²⁰⁷⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 3; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 72-75.

²⁰⁷⁷ For the description of Romanos striking a pose of a philosopher as expressive of the critique of Psellos toward the emperors, see also TINNEFELD 1971, p. 126.

²⁰⁷⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 13; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984 vol. I, pp. 88-89.

²⁰⁷⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 11; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984 vol. I, pp. 84-85. For the irony which dominates the entire episode, a masterpiece especially for the description of the measures taken by Romanos to prepare his 'play war'; see TINNEFELD 1971

²⁰⁸⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 8; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 78-79.

²⁰⁸¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 9-10; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984 vol. I, pp. 80-83. Later, even the barbarian embassy was more honest than the one sent by Romanos (so aroused by his desire to fight that infringed the previously stipulated treaties); MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 8; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984 vol. I, pp. 80-81.

an unwary and credulous man: his sight was not long (οὐδὲ τοσοῦτον διαβλέπειν ἐδόκει), ironically commented the author, and he was not able to realize the old age or the necessities of her wife²⁰⁸². He was blind also in front of her intrigues schemed with her lover Michael: a thick fog (ὀφθαλμίας, lit. an illness in the eyes) veiled his gaze, and even when the affair became obvious²⁰⁸³ he closed his eyes (ἐπέμυέ τε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς), plugged his ears, and remained imperturbable (ἀφροντίστως) in front of the 'drama'²⁰⁸⁴. He rather feigned (σχηματιζόμενος) distraction in front of his wife's misbehaviour and passionate temperament²⁰⁸⁵, as if his reign had a supernatural guarantee of inviolability²⁰⁸⁶. Whether or not poisoned by Zoe (or, according to Skylitzes, by Michael's brother John the Orphanotrophos), Romanos died in a bath before the feast for the Resurrection²⁰⁸⁷. In the same night the empress, guided not by reason but by passion (οὐ λογισμῷ ἀλλὰ πάθει) and pushed to act quickly by John the Orphanotrophos, dressed her lover Michael with the imperial *insignia*, sat next to him on the throne in the same *schema* (ἐν ὁμοίῳ τῷ σχήματι, translated by Ronchey as 'pomp'), and commanded the people of the palace and the City to perform the customary act of submission and acclamation (προσκυνεῖν καὶ εὐφημεῖν). The audience praised the new emperor with a certain degree of hypocrisy and flatter (ψευδομένων / κολακευόντων), but also welcomed Michael with joy because they felt relieved by the death of Romanos²⁰⁸⁸. After having figured (ἐσχηματίσθη) this nocturnal proclamation (ἀνάρρησις), the day after the eparch and the senate were secretly summoned to pay their homage (προσκυνήσοντας): they came at dawn and were brought one after

²⁰⁸² The old age of Zoe prevented her to give birth, but Romanos was gullible with soothsayers and followed their suggestions to solve the situation through unguents, amulets (ψηφίδας), and other futilities; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 5; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 74-77. Even worse, Romanos began to avoid the marital bed and offended Zoe. He despised her imperial blood, and developed a loving greed in the softly courtly life; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 17; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 96-97).

²⁰⁸³ The sudden crash of the lightning and the long clamour of the thunder, wrote Psellos, flashed his pupils and resounded in his ears: a little he saw (εἶδεν) with his eyes, a little he heard by informants.

²⁰⁸⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 21; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 102-103.

²⁰⁸⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 23; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 106-107.

²⁰⁸⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 6; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 76-77.

²⁰⁸⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 26; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 110-113 (see below, p. 361). Skylitzes wrote that the empress 'fell madly and demonically in love' with Michael IV and that 'she used to have secret meetings with him and shady intercourse'; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVIII, 17; ed. THURN 1973, 390; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 368.

²⁰⁸⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 2; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 116-117. Psellos omitted the marriage which proceeded the imperial dressing, included on the other side by Skylitzes. According to this latter the patriarch Alexios, summoned immediately after the murder, found the emperor dead, the Chrysotriklinos already set up, while Zoe asked him to marry her to Michael. 'Alexios was astounded at her demand and stood there speechless, at a loss whether or not to comply' but then was convinced with gold to fulfil the request; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XVIII, 17; ed. THURN 1973, 390; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 368-369. The unfavourable light in which is presented the marriage, in line with the negative attitude of Skylitze toward Michael IV, could originated also from the employment of an ecclesiastical source, to whom Skylitzes alludes in the prologue; WORTLEY 2010, n. 84, p. 369, with bibliography.

the other (καθ' ἕνα) in front of the enthroned couple. They placed their head on the ground (ἐπὶ γῆς ἐτιθοῦν τὰς κεφαλὰς) in front of the empress – the only act of submission she received – and kissed (lit. held) the right hand of the emperor (τὴν δεξιὰν προσπτυσσόμενοι χεῖρα)²⁰⁸⁹.

Psellos showed a degree of hesitation in judging the character (τρόπος) of Michael IV. On the one hand, he took the throne through murder, adultery, and perjury (he had previously denied the affair with Zoe with a sacral oath on the relics)²⁰⁹⁰. Furthermore, Psellos blamed Michael for ingratitude toward Zoe: he initially simulated (ὑποκρίνεται) inclination (διάθεσιν) and a benevolent eye (εὐνοίας ... ὀφθαλμόν) for her²⁰⁹¹ but then he changed the *schema* of the generosity (τῆς ἐλευθερίας τὸ σχῆμα) and deprived her of the freedom and power (ἰσχύν) of the imperial retinue²⁰⁹². Zoe in turn deserved it: she had misbehaved toward her first husband and had shown off affability, adapting herself (μεθηρομόζετο) to the circumstances like a rhetor²⁰⁹³. On the other hand, Psellos placed Michael among the most illustrious emperors. He had a temperate *ethos*, was able to control his body and his juvenile passions through the reason (λογισμὸν), was vigorous in his gaze as well as in his soul, and had a fluent tongue²⁰⁹⁴. In contrast to Romanos III, Michael IV lacked in education but compensated for it with his intelligence, through which he could even win over professional rhetors²⁰⁹⁵. Furthermore, like Basil before him, Michael put aside amusements and delights at the moment in which he was faced with the duty to govern in a manly and dignified way²⁰⁹⁶. The weak point of Michael was rather his arrogant family, especially his powerful brother, the eunuch John the Orphanotrophon. Psellos claimed to have known him personally and provided a memorable portrait of this complex character in which good and bad qualities intermingled together. John had a ready and shrewd mind (τὸ φρόνημα) expressed by the lively gaze of his eyes, but was also a man able to manipulate his *eidōs*: he built up a threatening aspect (τὴν ὄψιν / τὸ εἶδος), restricted only to his

²⁰⁸⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 3; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 116-19.

²⁰⁹⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 21; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 102-105.

²⁰⁹¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 6; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 120-121.

²⁰⁹² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 16; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 132-133. Like Romanos before him, Michael also failed to attend the marital bed: his illness prevented him to have sexual intercourses and caused him embarrassment in appearing to her in this condition. Furthermore, the regret for what he had done to his predecessor led him to follow the advisement of some holy men to save his soul by avoiding this union; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 17; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 134-135.

²⁰⁹³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 16; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 132-135.

²⁰⁹⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 7; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 121-122.

²⁰⁹⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 8; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 120-123.

²⁰⁹⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 9; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 122-123.

look (τῆς θέας), through which he intimidated those around him and prevented harmful acts against him²⁰⁹⁷. His changeable (ποικίλος) soul was also capable of adapting (μεθαρμοζόμενος) to each type (ἰδέαν) of interlocutor: he displayed thousands of faces (πολυειδῆς τὴν γνώμην φαινόμενος) at once and feigned benevolence toward men whom he said he hated²⁰⁹⁸. The ability to adapt to any situation was nevertheless also praised as a characteristic of the political men: Psellos himself bragged about his own versatility (τῆ τῆς φύσεως ἐπιτηδειότητι) through which he won the esteem of Constantine IX. He could play every required role (παντοδαπὸς ἐγγόνειν) and could adapt himself (μεθαρμοζόμενος) to the emperor, who in turn was eager for those changings (ἐζήτει μεταβολάς)²⁰⁹⁹. As for John, then, he wanted to live a life befitting a great man (μεγαλοπρεπέστερον διαζῆν) and to strut around in a regal manner (βασιλικώτερον), but those high ambitions were thwarted by the roughness of his natural *ethos* (τὸ ἔμφυτον ἦθος), by the greediness (λιχναίαν) of his nature (ἢ φύσις), and by the vulgarities (ἀσχημοσύνην) in which he indulged when he got drunk. Even when he was dominated by drunkenness and euphoria (μέθης ἦττων καὶ γέλωτος), when indulged himself (χαρίτων), or when participated in banquets (συμποσίαις) and ceremonies (τελεταῖς καὶ πανηγύρεσιν), anyway, John never let his guard down, keeping steady the control and his leading position²¹⁰⁰. Finally, even when he assumed the monastic *schema* (μοναδικὸν ... σχῆμα) he did not follow the required *decorum* (εὐσχημοσύνης) and only pretended (ὑπεκρίνετο) to stick to the rules prescribed for this *schema* (τῷ σχήματι). He then showed his despise for those who did not follow a disciplined (εὐσχήμονα) way of life. John was, therefore, a singular mixture (παμμίγες τι χρῆμα) and the mutability of his behaviour were both praised and criticized. He behaved in an improper manner (ἀτόπως) with many members of the court, but he kept toward his brother the emperor a steady disposition (διάθεσιν) and a uniform attitude (ἦθος), which he never altered or overturned (οὐκ ἐξαλλάττων, οὐδὲ μεταβαλλόμενος)²¹⁰¹. Only when Michael IV fell ill and he feared for his position he began to assume also toward him a deceitful attitude and plotted to put on the throne the nephew (also called Michael). He first convinced his brother to appoint him as Caesar,

²⁰⁹⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 12; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 126-127. In this way he acted as a bastion (προπύργιον) for his brother the emperor; *ibidem*.

²⁰⁹⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 13; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 128-129.

²⁰⁹⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 197; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 144-145. The choice of Psellos to leave the palace and take the monastic *schema* was ultimately due to the quick changing of mood in the emperor (πρὸς τὴν παροῦσαν ὑπόθεσιν ἢ τοῦ κρατοῦντος ταχεῖα τῆς γνώμης μετάθεσις); MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 200; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 150-151.

²¹⁰⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 12-14; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 126-131.

²¹⁰¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 14; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 130-131.

with arguments more persuasive than truthful (πιθανωτέροις μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθεστέροις)²¹⁰². Zoe publicly adopted him (υἰοθεσία) with a splendid ceremony at the Blachernae, Michael IV confirmed his honour and his title, and then the onlookers acclaimed (ἐπευφήμησαν οἱ συνειλεγμένοι) and repeated the usual formulas and gestures (ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ σχήματι λέγεσθαι τε καὶ πράττεσθαι) for the appointment²¹⁰³. This ceremony marked the first step by which Michael V, one of the most deceitful emperors, ascended the throne. In him, the contrast between being and appearance was striking. He was decisively not like his father, a ship-carpenter of humble origin whose body was not suitable for the splendour of the ceremonial outfit. Nor the horse, nor the clothes, nor any element of the costume fitted well on him and he appeared like a pygmy who wanted to assume the appearance (μετασχηματίσασθαι) of Heracles but was betrayed by the *schema* (ἐλέγχεται μᾶλλον τῷ σχήματι) so that the dress produced on him the opposite effect²¹⁰⁴. The idea of a gap between body and *schema* was a particularly efficacious image in Byzantine mind: as such had been cunningly employed also by Liutprand of Cremona, who spent enough time in Constantinople to be familiar with the conventions of the Byzantine rhetoric and to be able to turn elements of a panegyric into its opposite²¹⁰⁵. Liutprand described the monstrous emperor Nikephoros II who proceeded on the streets with an obese and dwarf body which did not fit the ornaments of the forefathers, tailored on their bodies²¹⁰⁶. And when Liutprand met Nikephoros on horseback, he could not help laughing at the sight of the emperor sat on a big and uncontrolled horse like one of those dolls attached by the Slavs to the foals²¹⁰⁷. Michael V, on the contrary, stood out for composure (κατάστασίν), aristocratism (ἀρίστην), and order (τάξιν) in the *schema* (ἐν σχήματι). He was expert at pretending (προσποίησις) and at hiding evil intentions under the appearance of benevolence (ὕπ' εὐνοίας προσχήματι) and managed in this way to take the throne. Already his brothers used flatteries (ὑποτρέχοντες) toward Michael IV and pretended (δοκεῖν ὡς ἐπὶ σχήματι) to honour him while they were confining him outside Constantinople, but Michael V was nevertheless the master of deception. At the time in which he was Caesar, he was used to picturing himself (εἰδωλοποιῶν) in the imperial *schema* (τὸ σχῆμα τῆς βασιλείας) and to sketch in advance (προχαράττων) what he

²¹⁰² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 20-22; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 140-143.

²¹⁰³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 23; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 144-145. According to Skylitzes, Michael had only sworn loyalty and obedience to Zoe, while the adoption was performed after the death of Michael IV; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XX, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 416; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 391.

²¹⁰⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 26-27; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 146-149.

²¹⁰⁵ EVANS and WIXOM 1997, pp. 185-186 and notes.

²¹⁰⁶ LIUTPRAND OF CREMONA, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, 3; 9; ed. CHIESA 1998, p. 188; p. 191; tr. OLDONI e ARIATTA 1987, p. 220; pp. 223-224. Liutprand mentioned also the bad condition of the ancient dresses, threadbare rather than awe-inspiring.

²¹⁰⁷ LIUTPRAND OF CREMONA, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, 23; ed. CHIESA 1998, p. 197; tr. OLDONI e ARIATTA 1987, p. 230.

wanted to do hereafter. He concealed in his mind (πλάττων ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ) his feelings and assumed a *schema* of benevolence (τὸ σχῆμα ... εὐνοίας ἐπλάττετο) also toward his family who supported his ascent to the throne: he secretly plotted against John the Orphanotrophon and staged (κατεσκεύαζεν) his pretence (προσποίησιν) by playing submission (ἐκ τοῦ ἐλάττονος προσφερόμενος) and declaring his gratefulness²¹⁰⁸. John, however, had also changed his mind about his nephew and had tried to leave him with only the *insigne* (παρασήμον), the external setup (σκηνη), and the mere appearance (εἶδωλόν) of the rank of Caesar²¹⁰⁹. Even if Michael's duplicity (τέχνη) deceived almost everyone, indeed, John was smarter in the simulation (τὴν προσποίησιν), and they were both aware of the play and ready to fight by falsely showing off their benevolence (ἀντεσχηματίζοντο δὲ τὰς εὐνοίας)²¹¹⁰. In the end, Michael V won the struggle and took the throne. Duplicity and deceits were temporarily left aside at the very moment in which he received the mystic rite of the imperial investiture (τὸ τῆς βασιλείας μυστήριον), i.e. the moment in which he had to show his body of power in its sacral dimension²¹¹¹. Psellos did not even mention the incident reported by Skylitzes, according to whom at the very moment of receiving the diadem '*Michael was afflicted with vertigo and swimming in the head*' and '*almost fell over*', until he was revived '*with sweet oils, perfumed and aromatic substances*'²¹¹². Immediately after, then, the emperor returned quickly to his deceits: he flattered the empress and pretended to be her slave²¹¹³. Then, he tried to seduce (κατέθελγε) once again his uncle John by offering him to sit next to him, by searching for his gesture (νεῦμα) before speaking, and by proclaiming to be an instrument in his hand. He kept hidden the fraud of his soul (τὸ κλέμμα τῆς ἐκείνου ψυχῆς), but John, as usual, was aware of the cunning behind those words and those gestures. He knew well that the harshness of Michael's spirit (τὸ τραχὺ τοῦ φρονήματος) was hidden and nursed in the deep (ἔνδον ὑποκρύπτεται καὶ ὑποτύφεται) and perceived (κατεμάνθανεν) what was enclosed in Michael's inner being (τῆς γνώμης αὐτῷ τὸ ὕπουλον)²¹¹⁴. By nature and attitude (γνώμης καὶ ψυχῆς), indeed, Michael was the most changeful

²¹⁰⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 28; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 150-151.

²¹⁰⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 25; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 146-147.

²¹¹⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 29; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 150-153.

²¹¹¹ The ceremony included the customary procession (ἡ προπομπή), the entrance to the temple (ἡ ἐπὶ τὸν νεῶν εἴσοδος), the patriarchal oration (ἡ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως εὐχή), the coronation (ἡ στεφανηφορία), and everything that followed the rite (καὶ ὅσα τούτοις ἐπακολουθεῖν εἴωθε); MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 5; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 186-187.

²¹¹² JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XX, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 417; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 392.

²¹¹³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 5; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 186-187.

²¹¹⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 6; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 186-189. The succession of verbs compounded with ὑπο, noticed also Ronchey, underlines the deceitful προσποίησις (mise-en-scène); IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, n. 13, p. 380.

(ποικίλον) being ever seen on earth. The character of his soul (χαρακτήρ τῆς ψυχῆς) was multiform and much-twisted (πολύμορφον καὶ πολύστροφον), his tongue was antithetic (ἀντίθετον) to his heart (he declared the opposite of his thought and treated with affection and shared the table with men he hated and whom he had punished the next day). According to the circumstances, he could appear servile (δουλοπρεπῆς) in being and words (ὄν τε καὶ λέγων) and with a slavish soul (ἀνελευθέρα τε ψυχῆ). Then, he removed the *mise-en-scène* (τὰ τῆς σκηνῆς σκεδαννὺς), threw away the mask (εἶδος ἐποδούμενος), and became (ἐνεπίπλατο) suddenly a fury, fulfilling the revenge he had kept in his soul. He was dominated by anger (ὀργῆς) and was unstable (εὐμετάβολος) in front of every small incident²¹¹⁵. Psellos put forward against Michael also the traditional accuse of sexual misbehaviour (the personal retinue of young and emasculated Scythians would have allegedly put at his service to fulfil his inclinations) and of tyrannical tendencies: the emperor finally discharged John the Orphanotrophon and began to subvert and innovate the imperial politics according to his desires and without any moderation (ὕδεν τῶν μετρίων). He did not consider worthy of a gaze (τὸ βλέμμα) or of a word anyone of his functionaries, who trembled in front of his tyrannical eloquence and nods (τυραννικοῖς ὁμοῦ καὶ λόγοις καὶ νεύμασι) and were subjugated to his authority²¹¹⁶. He also shifted the traditional privileges of dignitaries and aristocracies to the middle and professional classes of the City, who expressed their gratitude with visible manifestations of joy (φαινομέναις εὐνοίαις) and by decorating the streets where he walked²¹¹⁷. Blinded by his pride, the emperor thought that this support was personally bestowed to him (and not to his political body and his imperial role), became arrogant (ἐπαρθεὶς) and schemed to take the power alone without Zoe²¹¹⁸. He did not listen to the advice of his dignitaries²¹¹⁹: he sent Zoe to the Island of Princes without any semblance of *decorum* (οὐδὲ μετ' εὐσεβοῦς σχήματος)²¹²⁰ and then staged a comedy (προσωποποιεῖται τὴν πρᾶξιν / εἰσάγει σκηνήν) by means of which he thought he had guaranteed himself the throne²¹²¹. The 'tyrannos' (so Psellos called at this point Michael) rejoiced and refrained only from dancing

²¹¹⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 9; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 190-193.

²¹¹⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 15; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 200-203.

²¹¹⁷ Skylitzes reported that the passionate ceremony through which the people welcomed him (specifically during Easter) pushed Michael to take action; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XX, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 417; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 392-393.

²¹¹⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 16; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 202-203. He felt toward Zoe an obsessive aversion; *ibidem*.

²¹¹⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 18; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 206-207.

²¹²⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 17; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 204-205. The empress was accused of poisoning and other ignominious and mendacious forgeries (πλάσματος); *ibidem*.

²¹²¹ He made known the supposed intrigues of the empress to the senators (who acclaimed him for mere opportunism) and sent among the population some men in charge of winning the popular approval.

(ἐπορχούμενος) and jumping on the ground (τοῦ ἐδάφους ὑπεραλλόμενος)²¹²². But the plot turned early against him. The population sided with the empress, and the social classes of Constantinople (without distinctions of race, condition, or age) lost their congenital harmony (συμφυοῦς ἀρμονίας) and were shaken like the limbs of a body (κατὰ μέρη)²¹²³. The popular riot (Psellos claimed to have been a direct witness) blew up in the streets and changed the usual *schema* (τὸ σύνηθες σχῆμα) of the City²¹²⁴, until Zoe was hastily summoned back to the court and exhibited (δεικνύουσιν) from the Kathisma. Yet still, the empress did not change the monastic *schema* (οὐδὲ μεταλλάττει τὸ σχῆμα / τὸ σχῆμα μεταβαλεῖν) and was not wearing the purple dress²¹²⁵: a part of the mob, therefore, did not recognize her, while those who recognized her abhorred the emperor's conduct (γνώμην) even more²¹²⁶. Michael's effrontery in abasing the empress' appearance and his underestimation of the crowd caused his downfall. The population acclaimed Constantinos Cabasilas, a man excellent for both his *ethos* and *eidos* (τὸ δὲ ἦθος τοῦ καλλίστου γένους, ἥρωϊκὸν δὲ τὸ εἶδος)²¹²⁷, and Zoe's sister Theodora: this latter changed her monastic *schema* for a sumptuous dress, was lifted on a horse and, surrounded by the army, was led to St Sophia where she was acclaimed unanimously by the population and the aristocrats²¹²⁸. Michael recognized his defeat²¹²⁹ and fled together with his uncle Constantine to the monastery of Stoudion: here he laid the imperial purple and assumed the attitude of a petitioner (τό τε σχῆμα μεταβαλὼν, ἰκέτου σχῆμα μεταλαμβάνει καὶ πρόσφυγος)²¹³⁰. Psellos himself found the two men under siege of the angry mob and described the pitiful spectacle: Michael had

²¹²² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 23; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 210-213; *ibidem*, n. 55, p. 383.

²¹²³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 25; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 214-215.

²¹²⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 30; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 220-221. According to Emma Strugnell the riot, reported also in Skylitzes, was 'symbolic of popular repression. Zoe's confinement certainly provides the initial impetus for the revolt, however the rioters did not stop with her restoration but went on to seize the imperial gold and destroy the tax rolls'; STRUGNELL 2006, p. 132.

²¹²⁵ Michael even asked for a formal statement that she would keep this *schema* (ὡς ἔχει σχήματος).

²¹²⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 32; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 222-225. Skylitzes, on the other hand, reported that Michael brought Zoe back into the palace 'stripped off the monastic habit and clothed her with imperial robes. Looking out from the imperial box at the Hippodrome, he attempted to address the people (saying) that he had brought back the empress and that everything was the way they wanted it to be'; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XX, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 419; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 394.

²¹²⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 36; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 228-229.

²¹²⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 37; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 228-229.

²¹²⁹ Skylitzes recounted that Michael made a last attempt to keep the power by closing himself into the palace. He was convinced by his uncle John who proclaimed 'that he should not so readily abandon the entire throne and retire' but 'should put up a brave resistance and either triumph completely or die a great-hatred and imperial death, as befitted an emperor'; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XX, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 419; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 394.

²¹³⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 38; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 230-231.

grasped the altar, while Constantine stood to his right. The two men had completely changed their *schema* and their souls (μεταβεβλημένω καὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν) and were dishonoured (κατησχυμμένω παντάπασιν)²¹³¹. In this miserable *schema* (σχήματος) they moved close to Psellos, who temporarily deposed his rage and assumed a sympathetic attitude by asking Michael the reason why he had staged the drama (ἐπετραγώδησε) against the empress²¹³². Michael showed his remorse by shaking slowly his head, sighing, and pouring a tear. Then he took the responsibility for his actions and accepted the divine judgment. He embraced once again the altar, asked for the monastic *schema* (τὴν τοῦ σχήματος), and the mystic change of dress (τῆς μεταμφιάσεως τὸ μυστήριον) was performed for both the men. The theatrical scene (τὴν σχηνὴν ἀπεθαύμαζον) and the choir of misfortunes (τὴν τῶν παθημάτων χορείαν) astonished Psellos, but they were only the proemium of a worse tragedy (χειρόνων τραγωδιῶν)²¹³³: Michael and Constantine were dragged in derision through the streets in a procession which completely overthrew their imperial role²¹³⁴, and then they were blinded. Constantine, who had a proud and firm character (τὸ ἥθος), suffered decently the tragic *mise-en-scène* (τὴν τραγωδίαν): he restricted the stream of his soul (πρὸς τὸ ῥεῦμα τῆς ψυχῆς ἀντιφερόμενος) and nobly faced his misfortune by staring at the audience, without moving, without changing his colour, and without complaining²¹³⁵. Michael, for his part, exhibited the whole time the same disposition of soul (διάθεσις τῆς ψυχῆς) and expressed his fear lamenting and begging God and those present with the hands raised. When he saw the blinding of his uncle and pictured what the executioner was going to do also to him, he beat his fists and gave them to his forehead (τὼ χεῖρε κροτῶν, μάλλον δὲ ταῖς χερσὶ τύπτων τὸ πρόσωπον). He gloomily roared (μυκώμενος γοερῶς) and died for the pain²¹³⁶. The whole spectacle culminated with the public kiss and embrace between Zoe and Theodora. The gesture was decided by Zoe to declare her acceptance of her sister as a co-ruler (even if in a second position as for the honour and the *schemata* of authority (τοῦ σεμνοτέρου

²¹³¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 39-40; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 230-233.

²¹³² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 41; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 233-233.

²¹³³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 43; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 234-235.

²¹³⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 47; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 238-239.

²¹³⁵ According to Skylitzes, the first order to kill Michael and his uncle came from Theodora, stirred up by the population and 'filled with wrath and determination'. The punishment was performed at the Sigma and Michael himself asked that his uncle was blinded before him since he was 'the cause and the instigator of all the evils that had taken place'; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XX, 2; ed. THURN 1973, 420-421; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 395.

²¹³⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 48-50; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 240-243.

... σχήματος)) and to seal the harmony between them. The gesture saved those present from the embarrassment caused by the uncertain moment²¹³⁷.

Once on the throne, the two sisters adopted the same imperial *schema* (σχῆμα δὲ βασιλείας) of their predecessors to express their continuity with the past, even if Theodora's throne was arranged in a position slightly flexed to underline the prominence of Zoe²¹³⁸. Both the empresses' character (ἦθος and φρόνημα)²¹³⁹ and appearance (μορφή and σώματα) were complex²¹⁴⁰, but under their rule it seems that the crown gained some *decorum*. The courtly environment continued anyway to be ruled by flatteries: dignitaries competed with each other over wearing the most sumptuous stage costumes (ὥσπερ ἐν σκηνηκοῖς σχήμασι μεταμορφουμένων)²¹⁴¹. Even the competition between the candidates for the hand of Zoe was played through bodies and *schemata*. Constantine Dalassene had an incomparable *eidos* (εἶδος) but his *ethos* (ἦθος) was considered too severe and thus unpleasant²¹⁴². Constantine Atrokline was a man with a beautiful *eidos* (τὸ δὲ εἶδος ἀξιωματικὸς καὶ λαμπρός). At the times of Michael IV, he managed to get in Zoe's good grace by adapting his *ethos* (ἦθος μεταμορφώσας) to her preferences²¹⁴³. In the end, the fortune smiled at Constantine Monomachos, a well-born, wealthy, and magnificent (κάλλει διαπρεπῆς) man, beloved by the empress and by everyone for his beautiful face (πρόσωπον), pleasant speech, and manners²¹⁴⁴. He was sumptuously welcomed back from his exile with a royal setup (βασιλικὴ σκηνή) and a retinue (δορυφορία), and then proceeded to the palace to marry Zoe among the acclamations²¹⁴⁵. The patriarch Alexius managed to handle the embarrassing situation (both Constantine and Zoe were already married) with a clever dexterity in ceremonial gestures: he did not crown the couple with his own hand (αὐτὸς δὲ τὴν χεῖρα τοῖς στεφανουμένοις οὐκ ἐπιτίθησι) but waited for them to be

²¹³⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, V, 51; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 242-245.

²¹³⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 3; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 248-249. Psellos described in detail the general ceremonial appearance through which the empresses' bodies were displayed at court and the disposition of the participants.

²¹³⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 4-5; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 248-253.

²¹⁴⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 6; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 252-253.

²¹⁴¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 7; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 252-255.

²¹⁴² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 12; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 256-259. Constantine also was forced by Michael V to take the monastic *schema* (μετασχηματίζει) in order to extinguish his desire to rule. He changed it (εἶχε τοῦ τὸ σχῆμα μεταβαλεῖν) when he was called back to the court, taking the empress as an example (τὸ παράδειγμα); *ibidem*.

²¹⁴³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 13; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 258-261. For this reason, Michael IV removed him from the court with a pretext (σχῆματι); *ibidem*.

²¹⁴⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 15-16; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 260-265. He managed to keep his position under Romanos III but then was exiled by the jealous Michael IV; *ibidem*.

²¹⁴⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 19; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 266-267.

married and then embraced them. This behaviour, commented Psellos, was appropriated not so much for a member of the Church (ἱερατικὸν) but rather for a courtesan and opportunist (κολακικὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν)²¹⁴⁶.

The reign of Constantine IX was dominated by ceremonial splendour and theatrical set up. He worked hard to fast his power by presenting himself as a munificent and honoured ruler. The City, complained Psellos, was in such ecstasy that the realism of the perception (τὸ αἰσθανόμενον) was reduced²¹⁴⁷. Psellos was nevertheless keen to transmit a positive image of his protector: Constantine was clever in assuming different faces (ῥᾶστα μετεποικίλλετο) according to the interlocutors but without trick (οὔτε κατασοφίζόμενος). He never acted tyrannically: nobody ever saw him strutting about (ἀλαζῶν), frowning the eyebrow (βαρῦς τὴν ὀφρῦν), talking verbosely or holding a grudge, and he was benevolent towards everyone²¹⁴⁸. His natural cheerful attitude was physically expressed by an easy smile (εὐκίνητος ἦν πρὸς μειδίαιμα) and a merry face (ἱλαρὸν εἶχε τὸ πρόσωπον). This was not only in the moments of ease, when this kind of behaviour was expected, but also when he was required to display (ἐδείκνυτο) more seriousness. At the very same time, the ruler was also easy to deceive. His subjects were well aware that he liked men with a foolish *ethos* and disliked a brooding attitude, and adapted themselves (μετεποιήθησαν) to his character (εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς γνώμης ἰδέαν) talking about serious problems in a joking manner and with wits²¹⁴⁹. When they were outraged in front of the affair of the Sklereina, the emperor's lover who managed to weasel her way into the court and to obtain a written statement of friendship from the old empress, the senators faked their approval and uttered aloud the hyperbolic epithets usually employed to mislead (κολακεύειν ἢ ἐξαπατᾶν εἴωθεν) an empty and frivolous soul (ἐλαφρὰν καὶ κούφην ψυχὴν)²¹⁵⁰. Constantine IX was a 'viveur' who always wanted to be entertained (ψυχαγωγεῖσθαι). He loved disharmony and

²¹⁴⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 20; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 266-267.

²¹⁴⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 29; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 278-279. Those able to maintain clarity of judgment, on the other side, were kept quiet by the bestowal of honour.

²¹⁴⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 31; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 278-281.

²¹⁴⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 33; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 280-281. Constantine favoured those kinds of men mostly because he looked at the palace, reached after so many troubles, as a safe place where to rest, like a harbour after a storm; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 34; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 282-283. This comment was in line with the old charge against the emperors who considered the power as a personal good, instead of ruling for the general health of the State. See also MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 47; VI, 72; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 294-295; pp. 316-317.

²¹⁵⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 58; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 302-305. When the Sklerena was proceeding in procession with Zoe and Theodora, she was addressed by one of the courtiers (τῶν τις περὶ τὴν κολακείαν) with the famous Homeric quote 'οὐ νέμεσις'; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 61; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 306-307; *ibidem*, n. 167, p. 401.

deformity (τὸ διημαρτημένον) and the company of men with speech disorders²¹⁵¹ who made him laugh (κινῆσαι πρὸς γέλωτα), and on whom he bestowed great wealth and honours²¹⁵². This was the case of Romanos Boilas, a buffoon (ὁ ὑποκριτῆς) or ham actor (ὁ σκηνοῦργός)²¹⁵³, a half-mute (ἡμίφωνον) whose tongue swayed from aphasia to unrestrained loquacity²¹⁵⁴. The emperor became increasingly sensitive to his foolery (φλυαρία) and kept him always at his side, forming (πλάττει) and remodelling (ἀναπλάττει) himself as if he was made of clay²¹⁵⁵. Romanos displayed (ἐπιδεικνύμενος) his natural deficiency and his ability in playing the comedy (τὴν τέχνην ὑποκρινόμενος) so well that he became even commander of the guard. Psellos expressed all his disappointment for the scandalous behaviour of this man: he dared to perform a birth from Zoe's womb²¹⁵⁶, and took advantage of Constantine's spontaneity (ἀπραγμάτευτον τῆς γνώμης) to visit him any time he wished. He kissed his chest and face (καὶ στῆθος καὶ πρόσωπον), talked to him without permission, sat on the imperial bed, and held his sore hands, hurting him while giving him pleasure²¹⁵⁷. The relationship established between the emperor and the buffoon was mutual (they had an assiduous symbiosis (τὴν προσεδρεύαν)), and the emperor adapted his soul (μεθαρμοσάμενον τὴν ψυχὴν) to him: what the emperor wanted the buffoon made, and what the buffoon made the emperor wanted, happy to be mocked (παιζόμενος) and aware of the play (τῆς ὑποκρίσεως), even using his ingenuity as a part of the spectacle²¹⁵⁸. The emperor gladly volunteered to the buffoon's jokes and was the supporting actor (θεραπευόντων) and the accessory (πάρεργον) of his comedies (τῆς ὑποκρίσεως). They often had a purpose, like when he staged (τὴν σκηνὴν ... πλάττεται) a dream in order to introduce at court an old eunuch. All the members of the court (and Psellos among them) were able to understand the play (τὴν ὑπόκρισιν), but nobody could report the player (τὸν ὑποκριτὴν): they were trapped between the imperial incapability (ἀλογίᾳς) and the cheating under their eyes, and were forced to laugh to

²¹⁵¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 138; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 84-85. He also enjoyed watching people who inadvertently fell in the pool set in the middle of a verdant garden; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 201; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 150-151.

²¹⁵² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 47; VI, 29; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 276-277; pp. 294-295.

²¹⁵³ Ronchey translated more properly the term with 'guitto', which refers to bad comic actors involved in low-level shows, and which also conveys the negative connotation in terms of lack of dignity and *decorum*.

²¹⁵⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 139; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 84-85.

²¹⁵⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 140; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 84-85.

²¹⁵⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 144; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 90-91.

²¹⁵⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 140; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 86-87.

²¹⁵⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 141; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 86-87.

things about whom they would have rather cried²¹⁵⁹. Things became serious when Romanos lost his control and became a dangerous enemy capable of attempting to the emperor's life. He felt in love with Constantine's lover, was no longer unable to cover (ὑποκριθείη) his passion, and attempted to kill the emperor to seize the throne and the woman²¹⁶⁰. The plot was discovered and Romanos himself confessed the *mise-en-scène* (παῖσαν σκηνήν). Constantine, however, played under the buffoon's rules and staged a farce-tribunal (δικαστηρίου σκηνήν) at the end of whom Leo performed once again his comedy (τὸ δρᾶμα ὑποκρινόμενος): he kissed the hands of the emperor, laid his head on his knee, and then he put forward a justification for his act²¹⁶¹ which was promptly accepted by the emperor among the general amusement and the laughs of the court. The following banquet included a clown (ὁ δραματουργός) as a guest of honour²¹⁶². A similar story was already reported in a fifth century's fragment transmitted by the Suida and attributed to Priscus of Panion: here the buffoon Zercon the Moor entertained the court of Attila thanks to his physical deformity (κακοφύϊαν σώματος), his mixed language of Latin, Hunnic, and Gothic, his stammering (ἐκ τῆς τραυλότητος τῆς φωνῆς), and his general appearance (ὄψεως) ('he was *short, hunchbacked, with distorted feet and a nose that, because of its excessive flatness, was indicated only by the nostrils*'). Attila could not stand the sight of him and remained unperturbed, but Bleda was pleased by the amusing things he said and the strange movements of his body as he walked (βαδίζοντι καὶ περιτῶς κινοῦντι τὸ σῶμα). This buffoon also run away and was rewarded with a wife who was a well-born attendant of the queen²¹⁶³.

²¹⁵⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 142-143; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 86-91.

²¹⁶⁰ According to Skylitzes, this *'sharp-tongued individual'*, which *'seemed very urbane and quick-witted'* aimed at the throne since the beginning. He became inseparable from the emperor, becoming *'counsellor, agent, attendant and performer of every kind of service'*, and advanced through the ranks as *'an ingenious and complex fellow with his eye on the throne'*. He even collected around him those senators *'who were at odd with the emperor'*, and cleverly avoided any accuses of plots by feigning to test those who did not agree with his proposal; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XXI, 26; ed. THURN 1973, 473-474; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 441-442.

²¹⁶¹ He declared that he wanted only to receive some imperial ornaments, a diadem of pearl and a necklace, and a place next to him on the throne.

²¹⁶² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 145-149; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 90-97. According to Skylitze, when Leo was discovered, his supporters were harshly punished. As for him, anyway, the emperor *'kept his distance from him for a short while, but then he was pardoned and resumed his former position'*; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XXI, 26; ed. THURN 1973, 473-474; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 441-442. No sense of humour was displayed on the contrary by the empress Theodora and Constantine's sister Euprepia. Their complaints pushed Constantine to initially send Leo to exile. Then, after only ten days, he recalled him with great pomp; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 150; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 96-99.

²¹⁶³ *SUIDAE LEXICON*, ed. ADLER 1935, Z, 29; PRISCUS OF PANION, *Historia*, fr. 13; ed. and tr. BLOCKLEY 1983, p. 289.

Zoe and Theodora were also a main target of the courtly flatteries, especially when later they indulged in a mindless waste of money for benefits, absent-minded activities²¹⁶⁴, and superstitions²¹⁶⁵. The members of the court took advantage of Zoe's weakness of mind and pretended (ὑπεκρίθη) to fall suddenly on the ground as if they were stroke at her view. The scene was played (ἐπαίξετο) to earn a rich reward. But sometimes the bipolar character of the empress could lead her to condemn those who were too verbose in their thanksgivings²¹⁶⁶. After the death of Zoe and Constantine, Theodora was deceived by some monks who imitated the aspect and the attitude (τῶ μὲν σχήματι μιμούμενοι, ταῖς δὲ γνώμαις ὑποκρινόμενοι) of angels, modelled themselves to the divine (οἱ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον μεταπλαττόμενοι), and imposed on themselves a superficial layer of sanctity (νομοθετούμενοι καταπλάττεσθαι)²¹⁶⁷. Even worse, the empress chose Leo Paraspondilia to be his assistant. This man was inept for his role, lacked wisdom and was not elegant in his speaking. However, he was good at staying still and keeping his eyes on the ground. Emperors, bitterly commented Psellos, preferred indeed to promote men with a strait-laced appearance (εἰ σεμνοὶ εἶεν), instead of men remarkable for their eloquence and education. Even during public speeches, Leo relied more on gestures than on words: the appearance of his eloquence (τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἕξεως) consisted in using his hand (with which he was skilled) more than his tongue, with which he was unable to express his doctrine (τὴν ἐπιστήμην) well. His discourse (τῆς διαλέξεως), indeed, was unclear and unpleasant (ἀσαφῶς καὶ ἀγλευκῶς). The other members of the court considered him a vulgar man (φορτικὸς) who lacked the aptitude to live in a society (τοῦ πολιτικοῦ ἥθους): he was not graceful (χαριέστατος), couldn't speak correctly, his *ethos* was rough (τὸ τραχὺ τοῦ ἥθους), and was avoided by many. Those qualities, explained Psellos, could suit the monastic environment but not the corporeal being living in a social and political community (μετὰ σώματος βίος, ἄτε πολιτικώτερος), where men had to continuously model (ἀρμοδιώτερος) themselves on the present conditions and where the souls had to use the sensitive faculty of their bodies²¹⁶⁸.

Finally, the critiques moved by Psellos to the fickleness of Constantine's character and to the theatrical atmosphere of his court are justified, once again, by the mortal and human dimension of the imperial

²¹⁶⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 62-63; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 306-309.

²¹⁶⁵ Zoe even conversed and took predictions with her life-like icon; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 65-66; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 310-313.

²¹⁶⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 157; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 106-107. The statement could refer also to an alleged contempt for the formal culture which she shared with her uncle Basil II; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 64; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 308-309. See also MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 158; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 106-107.

²¹⁶⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VIa, 18; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 172-173.

²¹⁶⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VIa, 6-7; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 158-161.

being. Constantine IX, declared Psellos, was the more human among all men (ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐγγερόναι φιλιανθρωπότερος)²¹⁶⁹, and unlike other emperors he had a certain awareness of his flawed humanity. He was able therefore to partially control the weakness which resulted from the mortal dimension of his being and to balance the good and the bad elements of his reign²¹⁷⁰. The emperor remained seen once again as a man affected by the unavoidable passions and human flaws: men indeed are not perfect, declared Psellos, but have nevertheless to face the problems of society in a political manner (πολιτικῶς), accepting the imperfections and limits of their nature²¹⁷¹.

5.4. THE TWO FACES OF ISAAC COMNENUS.

In her last days, Theodora followed the choice of the court and adopted as son and emperor Michael VI Brigas, an old and inept functionary²¹⁷². Despite the support of the civil faction, the new emperor lost the throne shortly after, also because of his inability to show respect to the military faction in the ceremonial context. The day in which the army came to Constantinople to ask for a promotion, indeed, the emperor did not act properly in front of the soldiers who had bowed their head at his command. He did not call them one by one, as it would have been appropriate (δέον καθ'ἕνα), and did not speak magnanimous words. Rather, he began to accuse them of infamy. This insult (Psellos defined it a δρᾶμα) was so serious that the soldiers rebelled and acclaimed their leader Isaac Comnenus²¹⁷³, the emperor-soldier (στρατηγός ἀτοκράτορας). He interrupted the successions of emperors sustained by the civil faction and embodied the expectations of the army²¹⁷⁴: he had the *genos* and the *eidos* of a *tyrannos* (οὐ τῷ γένει μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ τυραννικῷ εἶδει), a dignified character (τῷ γενναίῳ τῆς γνώμης), a firm soul (τῷ σταθιρῷ τῆς ψυχῆς), and his sight alone aroused reverential fear²¹⁷⁵.

²¹⁶⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 203; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 152-153.

²¹⁷⁰ 'The ability to exercise control over his own weakness would, theoretically, make him a better leader of men as well as a better ruler for the empire', recognized McCartney, but 'interestingly, as Psellos shows us in the narrative, this, in fact, was not to be the reality'; McCARTNEY 2006, p. 90.

²¹⁷¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VIa, 8; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 162-163.

²¹⁷² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VIa, 20-21 ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp.174-177. Skylitzes reported that he was also mocked by the population with witty jokes for his old age; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XXIII, 2; ed. THURN 1973, 482; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 450.

²¹⁷³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 3-4; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 180-183. Michael the Syrian, who called him 'Michael the Aged', recounted that his 'meekness and faith' pushed the Turks to ferociously harass the Roman kingdom; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, XV, 1; tr. MOOSA 2014, p. 605. According to him, anyway, Isaac Comnenus was a 'mighty, arrogant and avaricious' man, who 'waged war against the capital' and then 'wrested the government by force'; MICHAEL THE SYRIAN, *Chronicon*, XV, 2; tr. MOOSA 2014, pp. 607-608.

²¹⁷⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VIII, 6; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 184-185.

²¹⁷⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 5; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 182-183.

He made people tremble with a single glance, the furrow of his brow being more efficacious than any lash²¹⁷⁶. And when he was in the middle of the fray he suffered the strikes of the enemies without swaying and remaining stable in his barycentre²¹⁷⁷. Psellos was sent to open the negotiations when the rebellious army reached Nicomedia and provided a detailed and first-hand description of the embassy and of Isaac's carefully arranged appearance for political purposes. At the time Isaac, it is true, was still a usurper: Psellos did not dare to call him directly *tyrannos* and limited himself to declare to his supporters (who claimed that their leader was ruling *de facto* and did not need a proclamation as Caesar) that the imperial name was not fitted to his current *schema* (σχήματι). Isaac, he declared, would only have obtain the imperial *schema* rightfully (βασιλεύσεις ἐπὶ κρείττονι σχήματι) if he had refused the title of *basileus* and allowed the emperor to officially adopt him: 'change your condition/*schema* (μετάλλαξαι τὸ σχῆμα)', exclaimed Psellos to persuade him to take to power more wisely and legitimately²¹⁷⁸. Nevertheless, Psellos described Isaac by emphasising his emperor-like qualities²¹⁷⁹ and his ability to use the ceremonial in a tense situation. Isaac assumed different *schemata* in different settings (meaningfully called σκηνή, a term which could refer to the tent of the general but could also evoke a theatrical setting) during a series of meetings which followed each other over the span of three days.

The first day the envoys were appropriately welcomed by the officials of the army: while still on their horses, they received pleasing epithets and were kissed on the faces and hands²¹⁸⁰. When they entered in the general's tent, Isaac was sitting on the throne surrounded by a small retinue of guards and surprisingly greeted them with a style more appropriate to a general than to a ruler (βασιλικότερον, ὄσον στρατηγικότερον): he rose up slightly (ὑπεξάνεστη γοῦν ἡμῖν βραχύ τι) and exhorted them to take a seat²¹⁸¹. The day after, Psellos and his companions were escorted in a much bigger tent: now the organizers chose to underline the ceremonial *taxis*, expressed mainly through postures, gestures, and a perfect arrangement of the soldiers. Outside the tent, the guards stood one next to each other in concentric rings, in reverence (ἐν φόβῳ), and turned toward the commander of the bodyguards,

²¹⁷⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 8; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 188-189.

²¹⁷⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 13; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 194-195.

²¹⁷⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 29-30; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 212-215. During the narration, Psellos occasionally referred to Isaac with the title of *basileus*, while it is rather his appearance which is defined from time to time as 'tyrannical'.

²¹⁷⁹ This was the main aim of the description according to Robert Scott, for whom the story was different from a very similar one in Anna Comnena's *Alexiad* where Alexius Comnenus confronted some rebels. Anna modelled her description very close to that of Psellos, sometimes *verbatim*, but inverted the narrative to highlight Alexios's greater peril and deeper strength; SCOTT 2010, p. 261.

²¹⁸⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 20; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 200-203.

²¹⁸¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 21; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 202-203.

the *dux* John, who was presiding the entrance²¹⁸². This latter ordered the ambassadors to wait outside, entered the tent and then, after a little while and without uttering a word, he suddenly raised the curtains²¹⁸³. Multiple human circles surrounded the throne, each one composed by different ranks and different ethnic groups terrible for appearance and attitudes (φοβεροὶ καὶ τοῖς εἶδεσι καὶ τοῖς σχήματι). Struck by the unexpected vision (τῷ ἀπροσδοκίῳ τῆς θέας) and the majestic spectacle (πάντα τυραννικὰ), Psellos and his friends remained amazed on the threshold and listened to the thunderous acclamations until they received the signal of access (τὸ τῆς εἰσόδου σύνθημα) and gradually moved forward inside the tent. Isaac was sitting in a stunning throne, the feet sustained by a footstool and his limbs embellished with a dazzling dress (τὸ σῶμα ἐσθῆς λαμπρὰ καθωράιζεν). His unnatural immobile posture, noticed Psellos, was kept with an effort revealed by the blushing of his cheeks, while his fixed eyes revealed his determined mind²¹⁸⁴. Isaac – from now remarkably called βασιλεὺς – began then to move and made a sign to the envoys to come forward (τῆς εἰσόδου τὸ σύνθημα): he invited them with the hand (τῆ χειρὶ καλέας), specified Psellos, and indicated them with a slight nod of the head (βραχὺ τι τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐπινεύσας) to go round the left side of the room. Beyond the ceremonial role, those gestures were performed also for a practical purpose, since at the moment in which the envoys get near the emperor, Isaac relied no longer on his body and began to speak directly to the envoys and to ask about their mission²¹⁸⁵. When Psellos moved back to the centre to utter his public speech, he received once again from distance the imperial command to start (τὸ σύνθημα τοῦ λέγειν λαβών)²¹⁸⁶. At the end of the speech, when everyone was still rumouring over the words uttered – and, vainly remarked Psellos, over the way in which the words were uttered – Isaac imposed the silence with the hand (τῆ χειρὶ τούτους κατασιγάσας), made his own remarks²¹⁸⁷, and raised from the throne leaving the assembly²¹⁸⁸. Isaac returned back to a friendly attitude during the final banquet. The envoys once again admired his excellent *ethos* (τῶν κρατίστων ἡθῶν) and he dismissed the previous tyrannical demeanour (τοῦ τυραννικιοῦ ... συνηθέστερος) to

²¹⁸² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 22; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 204-205.

²¹⁸³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 23; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 204-205.

²¹⁸⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 24; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 206-207.

²¹⁸⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 25; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 208-209.

²¹⁸⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 26; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 208-209.

²¹⁸⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 31; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 214-215.

²¹⁸⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 32; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 216-217.

become more approachable²¹⁸⁹. At the end of those three days, the envoys returned back to the emperor in Constantinople, and shortly after they brought back to Isaac the imperial guarantees: he received them without the impressive *schema* in which they have previously seen him (οὐκ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ σχήματι προκαθημένῳ ᾧ πρότερον ἐωράκειμεν), but in a smaller and less haughty manner (ἀλλ' ἐν ὑφειμένῳ τε καὶ ἐλάττονι)²¹⁹⁰.

In the meanwhile, Michael VI was deposed – according to Psellos because of the intrigues of some members of the Senate and some agitators who instigated a riot and forced him to change his *schema* (τό σχῆμα μεταβαλεῖν) into a monastic one²¹⁹¹. The news was initially brought to Isaac by a frenzied man who, likely deliberately (ἐξεπίτηδες, οἶμαι), acted as if (ὑποκρινάμενος) he was out of breath. He reported having personally seen (ἰδεῖν) the emperor changing the *schema* (τόν τε μετασχηματισμόν τοῦ κρατοῦντος) and deposing the *insigne* (μετακεκοσμημένον τῷ λοιπῷ σχήματι)²¹⁹². After receiving the same news from a more reliable source, Isaac went to the City. He was welcomed by the population with a solemn entrance involving candles and incenses like a heavenly epiphany, but since he was cautious over the good fortune, he was neither lured nor exalted²¹⁹³.

Once in power, Isaac revealed two different kinds of attitude which changed according to the context. When he sat on his throne to deal with the State's business, to receive an embassy, or to threateningly shout against the barbarians, he appeared like a sharp and hard man (ἀποτόμῳ καὶ σκληρῷ παρεγίγνετο), impossible to accommodate. But if any of those who were present on those occasions had seen him in the domestic environment with his trusted men, they could have been convinced to be in front of an exceptional double (δυσὶ παραδόξοις). He was like a chord which, even if equally tensed, can give a vibrating or a dull sound. Psellos, who claimed to have personally witnessed both his ways of being (ἀμφοτέρων τῶν καιρῶν συγκεχωρημένων), defined them as the one of the tension and the one of the relaxation (τῆς τε συντονίας καὶ τῆς ἀνέσεως), and declared that it was as if the ruler had two faces (διπλοῦς τις ὁ αὐτὸς καταφαίνεται). The distance between them was

²¹⁸⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 33; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 218-219.

²¹⁹⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 34; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 220-221.

²¹⁹¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 35-36; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 222-225.

²¹⁹² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 37; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 226-227. Psellos defined the unwinding of those events with the theatrical words ἐκτραγωδεῖ τὴν σχηνήν; *ibidem*. Michael VI died shortly after, in the *schema* of a private citizen (ἐν ιδιώτου σχήματι); MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 47; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 234-235. The changing of *schema* of the emperor is mentioned also by Skylitzes, who recorded the involvement of the patriarch Michael Cerularius in the event; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XXIII, 12 ed. THURN 1973, 498-500; tr. WORTLEY 2010, pp. 462-465.

²¹⁹³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 40-41; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 230-231.

so marked that it seemed impossible that, once relaxed, he could go back to tense up, or the opposite. He could soften his lofty expression, but then his brow furrowed and he covered the flair of his soul (τῷ τῆς ψυχῆς φωστῆρι) like a cloud: so much he could change his aspect (τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῷ μεθιηρμόζετο)²¹⁹⁴. This variability of character was seen as usual as a highly positive quality for a political man: also Psellos's friend Constantine Lichudi (a man with a hieratic attitude and a superior character (πολιτικὸν καὶ γενναῖον φρόνημα ἱερατικῷ βίῳ κατακεράσας)), was praised because he could change according to the interlocutors and could communicate with any social category. Even when he dressed the precious *schema* (κοσμήσας τῷ σχήματι) of the patriarch after the death of Michael Cerularius, he could assume both a solemn (μεγαλοπρεπές) and a courteous (εὐπρόσιτον) attitude to inspire trust to both, respectively, the military and the civil classes²¹⁹⁵. As for Isaac, he handled with his guests mostly in a dignified *schema* (τοῦ κρείττονος ... σχήματος)²¹⁹⁶. He put on the 'face' of the tension every time in which he wanted to gain respect through the fear: sat on the throne, surrounded by the Senate and without uttering a word, he emulated perfectly the attitude (ιδεάν ἀκριβῶς μιμησάμενος) of Senocrates²¹⁹⁷. He appeared as if he was devising exceptional thoughts in his soul (τὴν ψυχὴν οἷον ἀνελίξας εἰς ἐνθυμήσεις). With this attitude, he instilled fear among the senators, who in turn expressed their feeling in a physical manner: a part of the audience was paralyzed (ἐπεπήγεισαν) as if stroke by a lightning, remained fixed in the same position (σχήματος) and almost lifeless. Some made cautious gestures (ποιῶν ἡρέμα ἐδείκνυτο) and silently joined the feet, clasped their hands on the chest, and bent their neck (ἔνευε) toward the floor. Everyone, full of fear, held the body around the soul. When finally Isaac lifted his head (ἐπαναπέσειε) toward the onlookers, they remained breathless²¹⁹⁸. At this point also Isaac used gestures to unveil a humble attitude respectful to the eloquence: he kept his speech concise (βραχυλογώτατος) to the essential²¹⁹⁹, left to Psellos and his peers the cult of the word (φιλολογεῖν), and limited himself to make just a wave (νεῦμα), a movement of the hand (χειρὸς κίνησις), or a bending of the head on a side (καὶ κεφαλῆς ἐπὶ θάτερα κλίσις ἀποχρῶντα) to express (ἐλογίζετο) what he wanted²²⁰⁰.

²¹⁹⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 46; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 236-239.

²¹⁹⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 66; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 262-265.

²¹⁹⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 50; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 240-241.

²¹⁹⁷ For the use of this image, see IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, n. 144, p. 435.

²¹⁹⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 47; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 238-239.

²¹⁹⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 48; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 240-241.

²²⁰⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 49; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 240-241.

The *ethos* could nevertheless change through years: Isaac later sharpened his natural *ethos* (προσέθετο τῷ ἐμφύτῳ ἦθει) and became haughtier (σοβαρότερος). He treated with condescension his relatives and humiliated his brother John, by depriving him of his special honours and by forcing him to dismount from horse in front of the door of the palace. John, for his part, had a good *ethos*, and did not take umbrage: he kept his deference toward the emperor and provided a model for others to correct their manners²²⁰¹. The more approachable attitude of Isaac, however, did not disappear. He often went down from his throne and engaged himself in physical activities, especially when later in his life he went crazy for hunting (ἐπτόητο περὶ τὰ κυνηγέσια). He spent his days outside the wall of the City chasing bears and boars with hounds and falcon cranes²²⁰². After one of his hunting trip, he felt ill: forced to bed, he warmly greeted the visits of Psellos and talked friendly with him about his illness²²⁰³. When he felt better and was brought back to the Blachernae, then, he became more relaxed (ῥάων): he began to talk in a most informal manner (γλωττηματικώτερον ὁμιλήσας) and played around (χαριεντισάμενος) more than usual, staying up late at night remembering the old times and the famous mottoes of the emperor Basil II²²⁰⁴.

5.5. THE MORTAL DIMENSION OF THE IMPERIAL BODY: ILLNESS AND DEATH OF ROMANOS III, MICHAEL IV, CONSTANTINE IX, AND ISAAC COMNENUS

We have seen how the mortal nature of emperors was usually revealed by their bodies. When they lost control of themselves for a fit of rage, for a physical or a mental illness, or when they finally faced their last fate like any other human being, their gestures out-of-control were very different from those performed in the ceremonial context of the court, where they have to make clear their superiority and their connection with a supernatural level of existence. The power was nothing in front of the death, and this had always to be taken into account by the emperor, a being easily prone to indulge in the temptations of the court life and forget his own mortality. Those ideas remained impressed in the authors writing after the Iconomachy: commenting over the reign of Justin II (and probably recalling the above-mentioned succession speeches), the *Historia Syntomos* repeated that *‘those emperors who were proud of the beauty of their luxuries and the diadem on their heads did not realise, as he often*

²²⁰¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 71; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 270-271.

²²⁰² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 72-73; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 270-273. The aristocratic nature of those activities and their belonging to the imperial propaganda are well testified by the eleventh-twelfth century enamelled round plates in the frame of the Pala d'Oro (Museo della Basilica di San Marco, Venice).

²²⁰³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 74; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 274-275.

²²⁰⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 76; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 276-277.

said, that these garments (περιβλήματα) were no more than stones and the threads of silkworms'. They 'had forgotten how they were born. The same (Justin II) used to say that the emperor should distinguish himself not by triumphs, but by good habits; neither should he demonstrate imperial power by punishments, but by benefits'²²⁰⁵. In the narrative of the *Chronographia* the mortal dimension of the emperor came to the fore. Not everyone had the fortune of the empress Zoe, who besides the inevitable signs of the physical worsening due to her old age (her hands trembled and her shoulders were bent)²²⁰⁶, marvellously maintained an unwrinkled and barely altered face when she died, showing no striking changing but only some light symptoms²²⁰⁷. There were cases in which the imperial mortal body came to ask the due with pain and physical disfiguring, turning the *schemata* traditionally conferred to the emperor into the unintelligible and out of control gestures of a moribund man. So Romanos III, whether for natural causes or because he was poisoned by the wife²²⁰⁸, suddenly contracted a strange and severe disease (νόσημα) which made his body broken, bloated, and purulent. Since the body was still felt as connected with the soul, so the physical illness caused changings in his *ethos* too: Romanos developed suddenly all at once a number of vices (τὰ δυσχερῆ), which included a rough character (ἥθους), a restive spirit (γνώμη), and an inclination for wrath (θυμὸς), anger (ὀργή), and loudly speaking (κραυγή). Even if in his youth he was a cozy and friendly person, he became difficult to access (δυσπρόσιτος), suspicious to everybody and unapproachable (δυσπρόσοδος): he lost his smile, the grace of his soul, and the sweetness of his character. Despite the evident bad condition of his body, Romanos did not neglect to attend the customary imperial processions (τὰς βασιλείους πομπάς): in those occasions, the shining golden garbs and ornaments were like a lethal burden for his invalid body (ἐν ἀσθενεῖ σώματι) and exhausted him so much that he struggled even to return back to the palace²²⁰⁹. Psellos claimed to have seen (ἐθεασάμην) many times those pitiful spectacles and remarkably compared the emperor to a cadaver (βραχὺ τι τῶν νεκρῶν διαφέροντα). He even lingered in details that contributed to express this idea: the face (τὸ

²²⁰⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.72.27-31; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 58-59. See also MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.82.17-18; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 72-73. Heraclius was also used to 'compare the emperors who liked to show off (καλλωπιζομένους) with meretricious females'; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch.76.76-77; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 66-67.

²²⁰⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 158; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 106-107.

²²⁰⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 160; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 108-109. A more painful death, accompanied by vomit and diarrhoea, fell on her sister Theodora; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 19; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 174-175.

²²⁰⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 26; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 110-111. According to Skilitzes the emperor 'was afflicted by a chronicon disease (νόσῳ δὲ χρονία βάλλεται)' which caused 'his beard and his hair fell out' and those at court suspected that he was slowly poisoned by John the Orphanotrophos and his wife (who wanted to get rid of him 'without attracting suspicion' in order to raise up to the throne her lover Michael); JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XVIII, 17; ed. THURN 1973, 389-390; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 368.

²²⁰⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 24; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 106-109.

πρόσωπον) was bruised, the colour was not better than the one of a corpse dead for three days and ready for the burial, his breath was gasping, and he couldn't walk for more than few steps. His hair was almost entirely fallen and ruffled as that of a dead body (ὡσπερ ἀπὸ νεκροῦ σώματος). Everybody, commented Psellos, understood from this look that he had not a chance²²¹⁰. His death finally came while he was attending the preliminary ceremonies for the feast of the Resurrection: Romanos apparently felt better and decided to go for a bath in the palace. All the physical details used by Psellos to describe the emperor in good health (he vivaciously climbed the stairs, rubbed and wet his body, and lightly swim on the edge of the water with delighted sighs) were narrative devices through which the author subtly suggested that the illness of the emperor was the result of poison. Immediately after, however, some members of the court entered the swimming pool and pushed his head under water. The narration of Psellos is at this point unique in lively describing the loss of control and rationality of the dying emperor. His body, wrote Psellos, was at first brought afloat by the air which still filled his lungs, and rippled as a crazy (ἀλόγως) cork. Romanos recovered a little his breath and, aware of what was going on, stretched his hand (τὴν χεῖρα προτείνας) searching for help. Romanos' sounds and gestures (<τῆς φωνῆς> καὶ τοῦ σχήματος, that is, translated Ronchey, the weeping and the flailing) aroused the compassion of one of those present, who grabbed him from the armpit, draw him out of the pool, and put him on a couch in a miserable state (ἀθλίως κατέθετο). At this point, the fate of the emperor was clear to all and the empress came quickly, feigning her grief but actually verifying with a glance (διὰ τῆς ὄψεως) the situation before leaving. Romanos made a low and raspy groan and turned the eyes hither (τῆδε κάκεῖσε περιεβλέπετο). He was no longer able to use his voice and tried to express the will of his soul (δηλῶν τὸ βούλημα τῆς ψυχῆς) with gestures and nods (σχήμασι δὲ καὶ νεύμασι). Yet, nobody could understand him and he limited himself to close his eyes and gasp more heavily. Suddenly, vomiting a gush of black and thick matter and giving two or three wheezes, he died²²¹¹. The emperor lost not only the control of his body and gestures: his entire *schema* became unrecognisable. During the following funeral cortège (τὴν ἐξόδιον ταύτη πομπήν) Romanos' body was placed on a costly bier to receive the customary honours²²¹². The author, who had the opportunity to take a close look at the corpse (ἀθρήσας τὸν κείμενον), claimed to have been unable to identify

²²¹⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 25; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 108-109.

²²¹¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 26; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 110-113. Skylitzes more clearly, claimed that the men who put the emperor's head under water were 'Michael's henchmen'; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XVIII, 17; ed. THURN 1973, 389-390; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 368.

²²¹² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 3; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 118-119. The choice of the term ἐξόδιον (+ πομπήν) is shrewd: it concealed a bitter reference to the triumphs which Romanos had designed for the end of his campaign in Syria. Furthermore, it also recalled the 'exodus' or final part of a drama that characterized the entire reign of this emperor; IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, n. 16, p. 369.

him for certain (οὐπω ἀκριβῶς ἐγνώκειν): neither the colour (οὔτε ἀπὸ τοῦ χρώματος) nor the *schemata* (οὔτε ἀπὸ τοῦ σχήματος, in this case indicating the features of his body), but only the *insignia*, indicated that this dead corpse had once been the emperor. His thin hair stood on the skull like a burned field corn, and the lineaments (τὸ πρόσωπον) were disfigured (διέφθαρτο), not so much melted out (οὐχ ὡς ἐκτετηκος) but rather as if they were swollen (ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξφθηκός). The colour (τὸ χρώμα) was completely altered (ἠλλοίωτο). With this detailed description, Psellos more openly declared here the hypothesis of the emperor's poisoning: the body was swollen and blue like that of someone who had been intoxicated. The dead corpse acted then also once again as a reminder of the mortality that the emperor shared with all human beings. This sight was so pitiful that the population, even those who had suffered from his misbehaviours, did not exult but rather followed the bier in grief²²¹³. Skylitzes even added that Michael IV, after the proclamation, '*sent letters throughout the inhabited world making it know to all that the emperor Romanos had paid the debt of his mortality* (τὸ φυσικὸν ἀποδεδωκὸς χρέος)'²²¹⁴.

Things got worse with Romanos III's successor, Michael IV. This man had a beautiful body (σῶμα παγκάλως), a perfect face, a glowing colour, and bright eyes (το ὄμμα λαμπρὸς)²²¹⁵, but was affected since youth by a serious disease. This disease, likely epilepsy, was variously defined as *μανίαν, κακὸν, νόσημα*, or, remarkably, τὸ ἀσχημάτιστον πάθος. It caused a periodical turmoil of the cerebral functions (πάθος περιτροπή τις τοῦ ἐγκεφάλου ἐν περιόδοις) which had strong effects on his body. Suddenly, without any premonitory symptoms (προγινομένης τῆς σημειώσεως), he got agitated (ἐτετάρκατο), rolled the eyes (τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔστρεφε), and collapsed on the ground beating the head against the floor. For a long time he jumped in the grip of convulsions (κατακεκλόνητο) and then he gradually returned in himself and recovered his normal gaze (πρὸς τὸ σύνηθες βλέμμα)²²¹⁶. Those attacks, specified later the author, did not damage his mind (διάνοια)²²¹⁷ which remained steady enough (λογισμὸς ἔρρωτο) to allow him to care for the State and his imperial duties²²¹⁸. The disease was initially even a good curtain for the plot (προκάλυμμα πρὸς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν) organized by Zoe against her first husband: Michael appeared to Romanos III as innocuous, disabled (πτώματος), and unable to any sexual intercourse with his wife Zoe. The other members of

²²¹³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 4; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 118-119.

²²¹⁴ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XIX, 1; ed. THURN 1973, 392; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 370.

²²¹⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 18; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 96-99.

²²¹⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 22; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 104-105.

²²¹⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 18; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 136-137.

²²¹⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 19; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 136-139.

the court initially thought that the disease was a deceit (πρόσχημα) and a cover for his intrigue (προκάλυμμα τῆς ἐπιβουλῆς). But any suspicion disappeared when he continued to fall under the attacks after he took the power²²¹⁹. The cerebral disturbances became even worse: the shame of being seen while he was taken by convulsions led him to neglect Zoe's bed²²²⁰ and to limit the ceremonial exits. He did not feel safe among the people, and when he decided to organize a meeting (χρηματίζειν), or on any other occasion which required his public display, everything was carefully set up to prevent embarrassment. Purple curtains were hung at his side, and in the very moment in which his eyes twisted a little (παρατραπέντα τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν), his head nodded (τὴν κεφαλὴν κατασείσαντα), or any other signs characteristic of the coming of the attack appeared, those appointed for the task immediately closed the curtains and assisted him. When he was more exposed, during the outward processions on foot or horse, a group of guards encircled him ready to save him from the sight when he suffered an attack. All those preventative measures did not spare him embarrassing moments. There were occasions in which he was seen (ᾧπτο) falling down from the horse. When this happened the multitude could look at the imperial body twisted on the ground and felt sorry for it²²²¹. Furthermore, another illness struck him later in the years, the oedema, which caused his body to become showily (προδήλως) and abnormally swollen. He tried in many ways to avoid the disease (ἀποτρόπαια τοῦ νοσήματος ἐποιήσατο) through expiatory practices (ἰλασμοῖς χρησάμενος), purifying rites (καθάρσεις), and the building of a new wonderful church²²²². He manifested his piety (εὐσέβειαν) by welcoming monks in the palace and giving them all the honour, washing their feet, embracing them, and kissing them passionately²²²³. Furthermore, he even enjoined the contact with the lepers during the many visits paid to the leprosy. He even put his face on the lepers' sores and, once again, kissed them, embraced them, and ministered to their bath, as a slave in front of his masters²²²⁴. Those shows were powerful visual instruments which evoked the imagery of Christ who washed the feet of the apostles and cleansed the leper: they could have been employed by the emperor also to appear humble in the eyes of the people after the murder of the previous emperor. In the end, anyway, it was clear that the measure of his life was full to the brim and the decomposition

²²¹⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, III, 22; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 104-105.

²²²⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 17; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 134-135

²²²¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 18; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 136-137.

²²²² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 31-32; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 152-153.

²²²³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 34; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 156-157. As once Nikephoros II Phokas, he even wore their rags, sleeping on a straw mattress on the floor with a stone as a pillow; *ibidem*.

²²²⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 35; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 156-157.

of his body was progressing (διαλυομένης αὐτῷ τῆς συνθέσεως)²²²⁵. Once again, the illness of the emperor was not only a physical reminder of the mortal dimension of the emperor but could also have political consequences and strike his moral reputation as much as his body. The idea that physical sufferings were given by God as a punishment for sins was still rooted in the Byzantine mind, and some members of the court began to whisper that the emperor was punished in this way for the murder of his predecessor. He was also accused to perform occult rites before taking the throne in which visions of the air spirits promised him the power, asking in return to deny God. It was this, they claimed, that twisted and shook him inside, and this was the reason that the emperor tried to expiate his fault with penance acts²²²⁶. The hypothesis, firmly discharged by Psellos, was supported by Skylitzes, who gave a negative point of view over this emperor. Here the description of Michael's epilepsy was a way to demonstrate Michael's impiety and loss of divine favour. While indeed Psellos specified that the disease affected Michael since his youth, Skylitzes presented it as a punishment sent by God for his sins during his rule. After the falling of a brilliant star *'the emperor became possessed by a demon* (ἐλήφθη ... δαίμονι); *those close to him, using fine phrases* (σεμνολογοῦντες), *called it a madness-causing disease* (μανικὸν ... νόσημα) *but it endured to the end of his life. He received no relief either by divine might or from doctors but was grievously tormented and tortured* (ἐλεεινῶς κατατεινόμενος καὶ βασανιζόμενος)²²²⁷. Skylitzes then reiterated the concept in many passages in which he called the illness a *'demonic disease* (τῆς δαιμονίου νόσου εἰργόμενος)²²²⁸ and declared that Michael, *'still afflicted by the demon and, finding no relief'*, relied on good actions in the attempt to recover²²²⁹.

The disease of the emperor could also bring serious political consequences since it could make difficult for him to properly deal with the enemies of the empire. When Michael IV's health condition was so desperate that every movement caused him pain and it was uneasy for him even to dress up, the Bulgars (previously controlled with ease) took the occasion to rise under the powerful Dolianus. Psellos suggested through a dramatic terminology that this was not a real rebellion: the Bulgars put in

²²²⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 31-32; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 152-155.

²²²⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 33; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 154-155.

²²²⁷ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum* XIX, 2; ed. THURN 1973, 393; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 371.

²²²⁸ JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XIX, 5; ed. THURN 1973, 395; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 372-373.

²²²⁹ Among the actions, Skylitzes included the fact that *'he sent two pieces of gold for each priest in all the themes and the islands, one for each monk. He also stood godfather at the baptism of newborn children, giving each one a single piece and four miliarisia, but none of this did him any good. In fact, the condition worsened and in addition he was afflicted by dropsy'*; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XIX, 18; ed. THURN 1973, 405; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 381. Only in the end the regret felt by Michael toward Romanos is recognized as an honest feeling; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XIX, 29; ed. THURN 1973, 415; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 390. Skylitzes employed the *topos* of the divine wrath against the unworthy ruler and the old connection between epilepsy and demonic possession; SKLAVOS 2006, pp. 116-117.

scene (σχηματίσασθαι) the revolt as on a stage (ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς)²²³⁰. Also when Alusian, a Bulgarian hostage, heard about the revolt and decided to flee from Constantinople, he managed to do it by dressing up (μεταμφιέννυσι) from head to shoe and assuming the *schema* of a mercenary (σχηματισάμενος κατὰ τὸν μισθοφόρων τρόπον)²²³¹. The Bulgars limited themselves to some raids to the Roman camps, but then the heat of the soul (ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ζέσις) and the zeal for beautiful gestures (ὁ περὶ τὰ καλὰ ζῆλος)²²³² rose the spirit of the emperor and strengthened him enough to personally engage in a military campaign. Psellos described the difficulties faced by the emperor, who contrasted the weakness of the body with the vigour of his soul: during the night he was surrounded by medics, but during the day he jumped on the horse, stood proudly on the saddle, and properly controlled the bridles, providing an astonishing spectacle²²³³. Yet, during the final triumph (Psellos claimed once again to have witnessed it) the population welcomed a weak and fatally deformed body: Michael swayed on horseback as if he was on a hearse, his fingers grasped the bridles like the finger of a giant (so much was rotten his organism), and his face (πρόσωπον) did not keep any resemblance with his old features (ἴχνος). He ultimately managed to perform a magnificent spectacle involving the usual parade of the prisoners at the Hippodrome. He showed to the Romans, commented Psellos, that the will can raise the dead and the fervour for good actions can win the passivity of the body²²³⁴. Finally, when he felt the death approaching, Michael decided to leave the palace and to withdraw to a monastery. Here he bowed down on the floor to beseech and to propitiate God. The monks took him in custody, sang hymns and changed his imperial vest and the crown with the monastic dress and headgear²²³⁵.

Like Michael IV, also Constantine IX (who, as we have seen, was described both in his virtues and his vices) had originally a beautiful aspect: nature made him a model of beauty and his limbs were perfectly harmonized for proportions and for colours. His hands and fingers were endowed with a superior strength which made him superb when he rode a horse or when he run, and made him agile

²²³⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 41; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 164-165.

²²³¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 46; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 170-171.

²²³² So is translated the general τὰ καλὰ by Ronchey; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 41; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 166-167.

²²³³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 42-44; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 166-169.

²²³⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 50; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 174-177.

²²³⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 52; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 178-179. He renounced to the sceptre, therefore, and defeated any human affection – even for Zoe, who was sent away without neither even allowing her to visit him; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, IV, 53; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. I, pp. 178-179.

in his gestures and in his feet²²³⁶. His *ethos* was tempered according to this *eidos*, and Constantine had also an elegant tongue and a seductive way to smile²²³⁷. He was able to hold back his choleric temper. People around him thought that he had a natural placidity (τὴν πραότητα), but Psellos was a good observer and could see from slight physical signs that he put much effort to achieve this condition, like a charioteer who held the bridles of a spirited horse: on those occasion indeed the blood burst (ἔξανθῆσαν) into the eyes and the body suddenly jumped before he quickly dominated himself with reason (τῷ λογισμῷ). He also blushed when he occasionally abandoned himself to a haughtier tone²²³⁸. This beautiful and strong body was gradually destroyed by gouty arthritis (τὰ ἄρθρα νοσήσαντα), a disease which worsened over the years. Even if in some moments the traces of his original condition glimpsed as through a clouded sun²²³⁹, he developed a malformed and malfunctioning physical appearance which struck the eyes of those who looked at him during public appearances. During the siege of Leo Thornikos, Constantine was affected by an attack so strong that his hands became completely disarticulated (τάς χεῖρας αὐτῷ πάντα διαλελύσθαι) and his feet contracted in spasmodic pangs were no longer able to walk. Furthermore, a crushing diarrhoea melted and exhausted his whole body from the inside. Constantine was no longer able to take a step or to preside (καθίστασθαι) over a public meeting. The population of the City believed that he was dead and began to consider the possibility of surrounding to the rebel. Constantine had therefore to force his physical condition (παρὰ φύσιν ... κατεβιάζετο) and to compel himself to address (ὀμιλεῖν) the crowd at regular intervals, at least from distance (ἢ καὶ πόρρωθεν ὄρᾶσθαι), confirming with his gestures (διαβεβαιοῦσθαι τοῖς σχήμασι) that he was still alive²²⁴⁰. He proved his presence also to the enemy by sitting with the imperial dress and together with the empresses on a high and visible place in front of the palace of the Blachernae. He was short of breath, emitted short groan, and his vision of the besiegers was reduced to the section which was immediately in front of him²²⁴¹ – no longer thus with the wide visual that he had before, when he gave orders to the troops and dominated the battlefield with his sight²²⁴². The emperor tried to convince the besiegers to leave, but they mocked instead his physical disability (τὴν τοῦ σώματος αὐτῷ προσονειδίζοντες πάρεσιν) and related it

²²³⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 125; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 66-69.

²²³⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 126; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 70-71.

²²³⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 164; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 112-115.

²²³⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 124; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 66-67.

²²⁴⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 106; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 46-47.

²²⁴¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 109; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 48-49.

²²⁴² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 93-95; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 28-29.

once again with a supposed lack of morality by calling him ‘rotten’ (ἐναγῆ) and lover of infamous licentiousness (πρὸς οὐχ ὀσίας ἀποκλίναντα ἡδονάς)²²⁴³.

With the years the illness worsened and in the time span of a year the same nature which had given him charm and grace undone completely his strength and his beauty. Suddenly the essential elements of the body (τοῦ σώματος ἀρχαί, that is, specified Psellos, the elementary combinations of the humors, τὰς στοιχειώδεις συστάσεις) broke up and went confused. The feet were the first to suffer from the flow of the gout (τὴν τῶν ῥευμάτων ῥύμην), then the interstices of the bone joints and the hands, then the disease spread rapidly until the tendons and the spine, shaking him like a violent wind²²⁴⁴. The sickness is variously defined by Psellos as κακὸν or as ἀκίνησία, this latter term remarking how serious was felt the lack of movement due to the illness. Constantine remained almost paralysed (κλινήρης) and needy of help for any movement (ἕτεροκίνητος). The intervals left free from the illness became shorter, and the rheum (ῥεῦμα) spread to the hand, the arms and the whole body, so that every limb were deprived of their energy and lost their harmonious coherence (τὰ μέλη τῆς ἀρμονίας μετέστησαν). This caused him clumsiness and enervation (ἀρρυθμίαι καὶ ἀτονίαι): the fingers, which Psellos was used to see (εἶδον ἐγὼ) so well shaped, lost their *schema* (ἀπαρνησαμένους μὲν τὸ οἰκεῖον σχῆμα), this latter a term that Ronchey translated as ‘form’, but most probably referred specifically to the movements and the ability to make gestures. His hands were twisted out- and inwards (ἀντικαμφθέντας δὲ <εἰς> εἰσοχάς τε καὶ ἐξοχάς) so much that he was no longer able to grab any object. His feet were deformed and shrank, while the knees protruded like the elbows and were no longer able to sustain him in walking or standing. Constantine was immobilized in the bed and had to be sheathed (ξυναρμοζόμενός) and composed with bandages (ξυμπλαττόμενος) to sustain him in public meetings²²⁴⁵. Psellos described in detail the pain suffered by the emperor in his everyday movements. He was in bed and struggled to find a comfortable position to rest (οὐκ εἶχε δὲ ἐφ’ ὅτῳ σχηματισθεὶς ἀποχρώντως ἐπαναπαυθεῖν τῆ κλινῆ): his attendants rotated again and again his miserable body (σωμάτιον) and then bandaged him with various devices, so that he could maintain himself in position (ὅπως ἂν ἐπὶ τοῦ σχήματος ἐκείνου στηρίζοιτο)²²⁴⁶. The outdoor processions, an unavoidable obligation which the emperor had to pay to his citizen, were as usual the occasions that caused him the worst problems and required the more complex devices to hide his weakness: the floors were covered with carpets to prevent his horse to slip, a team of footmen

²²⁴³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 110; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 50-51.

²²⁴⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 127; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 70-71.

²²⁴⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 128; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 70-73.

²²⁴⁶ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 130; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 74-75.

fastened him on the saddle and kept him upright, and he was sustained on the way by strong grooms who flanked and pushed him by both sides as if he was a bag²²⁴⁷. Constantine breathed with difficulty and the reins of his horse hung loose, but despite the many difficulties, he did not leave behind his usual *ethos*: he could still compose his face gracefully (ἀλλὰ τὴν τε ὄψιν χαριέστατα διετίθει) and occasionally he could even move on his own (καὶ τότε δὴ μόνος μετεκινεῖτο καὶ μετετίθετο). The tricks worked so well that the onlookers could not figure out that he was suffering and that he was physically immobilized²²⁴⁸. Finally, his facial expressions were also damaged by the disease. When he spoke the tongue hurt and even the most slight sign made with the eyes (ἡ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν νεῦσις) caused the rheum to start so that he had to maintain himself completely immobile and glassy (ὄθεν παντάπασιν ἑαυτὸν ἀκίνητον ἐδίδου καὶ ἀρρεπῆ)²²⁴⁹. Psellos reflected carefully over the events which happened to his emperor. He underlined the strong endurance displayed by Constantine, who never blamed God and never allowed those around him to complain over his fate. He rather philosophized over his *pathos* and asserted that this was a misfortune (τὴν συμφορὰν) happened as a right punishment (καταδίκην) and as a brake on his nature (μᾶλλον δὲ χαλινὸν ταύτην τῆς ἰδίας κατωνόμαζε φύσεως). As we have seen, indeed, Constantine was an emperor aware of his mortal nature, and he was therefore afraid of the instincts and the impulses caused by the physical pain (ὄρμας), which did not give up with reason (μὴ λογισμῷ εἴκουσιν). So even if his body was afflicted, declared Constantine, the rebellious movements of the soul remained nailed down (αἱ δὲ ἄτακτοι τῆς ψυχῆς πεπήγασιν ἔννοιαι). Considering only from this, commented therefore Psellos, it would be possible to consider Constantine as a saint²²⁵⁰.

Finally, also the fever contracted by Isaac Comnenus during a hunt quickly brought this excellent ruler to lose control over the body. Unlike Cato, who was said to have suffered any illness remaining motionless and unperturbed (ἄστροφόν... καὶ ἄτρεπτον), Isaac became restless. He tossed and turned himself in many positions (ὁ δὲ ἐξ ἐναντίας ἐκεῖνφ διεποικίλλετο τῷ σώματι καὶ ἐστρέφετο), gasped thickly, and could not find a moment of rest²²⁵¹. He found a temporary relief when he was brought back at the Blachernae, but then he relapsed into the illness, which caused him even

²²⁴⁷ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 129; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 72-75. Constantine was carried around by his men even when he was in the palace; *ibidem*. Skylitzes only briefly mentioned that the emperor suffered from gout and from another illness which led him to die; JOHN SKYLITZES, *Synopsis Historiarum*, XXI, 30; ed. THURN 1973, 477; tr. WORTLEY 2010, p. 445.

²²⁴⁸ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 129; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 72-75.

²²⁴⁹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 130; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 74-75.

²²⁵⁰ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VI, 131; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 74-77; IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, n. 358, p. 405.

²²⁵¹ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 75; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 274-277.

more suffering and difficulty in the movements²²⁵². The emperor displayed his noble temperament especially when he went out from the Blachernae to the Great Palace walking and mounting on his horse without help, upright as a cypress and supported by his own body²²⁵³. When he was breathing his last, the emperor summoned Constantine Doucas and proclaimed him as his successor. He declared that he had always felt that the imperial *schema* fitted better to him (προσήκοντα μᾶλλον τῷ σχήματι). This man was indeed always able to maintain the right countenance and prudence, to avoid haughtiness, and to assume an attitude of obedience²²⁵⁴. Also on this occasion, he stood in front of the emperor with rosy cheeks, a glance full of respect, and the hands wrapped into the fold of the dress²²⁵⁵. *Schema* and *schemata*, *ethos* and *eidos*, *dokei* and *einai*: Psellos touched all the themes related to gestures and physical appearance and developed them to a new level made of lively descriptions and thoughtful reflections on their role and their function as well as their social and political consequences.

CONCLUSIONS: UNDERSTANDING EMPEROR'S GESTURES AND BODY IN BYZANTIUM

*'Although you are in the body from the human race, yet you hold the place of the divine throne. And the light of the glory of your God-loving rule has suffused everything below – you who are crowned from heaven, you the boast of all Christians by the power of the divine sign of the Cross'*²²⁵⁶.

This research had set itself the objective of clarifying how the gesture functioned in Byzantium and which kind of rationale was behind the gestures performed by the emperor in politics, through an analysis of a variety of different sources that, according also to Aldrete, could have a 'cumulative force' when considered as a whole²²⁵⁷. At the end, the topic of the research had been proven to be wider and more multifaceted as expected. Talking about gestures has meant having to talk about bodies, public behaviour and education, about theories and reflections on the relationship between body and soul,

²²⁵² MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 77-78; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 276-279.

²²⁵³ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 80; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 278-281.

²²⁵⁴ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 85; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 284-285.

²²⁵⁵ MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 89; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 288-291. For the following acclamation and the proper subjugation of Constantine Doucas, see MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographia*, VII, 90; ed. and tr. IMPELLIZZERI, CRISCUOLO, RONCHEY 1984, vol. II, pp. 290-291.

²²⁵⁶ PSEUDO-SEBEOS, *Historia*, 46, 152; tr. THOMSON 1999, vol. I, pp. 118-119. Those were the words addressed to the emperor Constantius II by bishops and nobles at the Council of Dvin in 649.

²²⁵⁷ ALDRETE 1999, p. XXII, also on the danger of this approach of quoting sources out of context or of not taking into account the sources' inherent biases.

between 'natural' body and social and political body, and about performance and power. The ultimate aim of systematically tackling the topic and outlining an appropriate view to describe it has resulted first of all in the need to clarify what a gesture is and the different ways in which gesture had been treated, in social sciences and historical research, whose suggestions and theoretical tools have then pointed the path in the labyrinth. The indispensable red thread has turned out to be the concept of *schema*: a preliminary investigation of the semantic density of this term has made it possible to trace its use in the Greek society since the fifth century BC (i.e. its important role as a physical, visual, and denotative device of the body and as a philosophical category of perception), and its successful absorption and enrichment in the Christian theological system of the early centuries. In this way, a far more complete and wide-ranging nuance has emerged than its usual translation as 'dress' or 'insigne'. The concept of *schema*, complemented by ideas developed in the art-historical field, has been proven useful in overcoming the methodological quarrel between Buc and Althoff, by reconciling the gap between perception and representation, between the body as an abstract concept on an ideal level and the material and physical body, i.e. between norm and ideal on one side and practice on the other side²²⁵⁸. What has emerged is indeed a middle-way between an 'ontological' body owned by a physical being able to perceive, to move in time and space, and to influence the reality with his action, and a 'construct' or conceptual body, present as an ideal (positive or negative) image in the minds of the members of a community, burden with specific traditions and values and then reflected in the images and words of artists and authors. An approach that does not distinguish those two kind of bodies but considered them as closely linked and constantly influencing each other had been proven useful in dealing with the topic. So, the physical gesture could be moulded and changed not only by the activities of other bodies with whom it interacts or it is confronted, but also by the ideal gesture (present in the rhetorical and ideological dimensions of judgments, values, and evocative images), through education and through the narrative, where certain values were attached to a specific imagery and certain ideal were promoted through the main characters. The ideal body, on the other hand, is constantly changed by the attempts, the trials and errors experienced from time to time in the strategies and political practices performed by the physical and 'performative' body.

This interplay could be seen therefore as giving new flesh to the concept already of Mauss and post-structuralist scholars, for whom the development of the body from its 'natural' state to its 'construction' is dependent from the context of the culture and society that defines it as well as regulated and manipulated by the discursive strategies of the political power. Giddens' theory of structuration and the concept of performativity has made it possible to further explain the mechanism

²²⁵⁸ BRUBAKER 1989a, p. 80. In the artistic field theories (reflections on art), perceptions (how the object is seen) and practice (the artefact) has long been investigated as interpenetrating and supplementing each other; BRUBAKER 1989a, p. 69.

underlying the correlation between the two elements. The body has in fact proven to be a process, a 'hermeneutical recursion of oppositions' (for example, between surface and interiority) 'which are themselves in perpetual reconstruction', while the socially-given techniques practically instantiated by the body have to be considered both as resources *for* bodies as well as rules (which constrain as much as enable) *on* the bodies²²⁵⁹.

A general analysis has been conducted first of all in the realm of the functions and evaluations of the body and body movements in Byzantine society, mentality, and culture, which had then been proved necessary to provide the context and to understand the specificity of the imperial body. I addressed first the meaning borne by the materiality of the body and the set of historical conventions which constrained its possibilities²²⁶⁰, as well as the *habitus* that was mirrored by the body and that reproduced the society which it comprised²²⁶¹.

We have seen thus how in the early centuries gestures and postures established as 'proper' in the pagan culture remained important components of the *paideia* and of the ethical prescriptions for a Christian way of life, while they simultaneously gained a deeper theological dimension. In the dialectic between conservation and innovation, 'stability and tradition were the mainstream of the Byzantine mentality'²²⁶², and despite the 'dramatic changes' occurred in the early centuries, the innovations introduced by the new dominant imperial religion 'resonated with established practices'²²⁶³. Yet, the persistence of classical themes and images that characterized mentalities has not to be considered as merely undermining the free and creative impulse in literary and artistic fields²²⁶⁴, but has rather to be recognized as not static²²⁶⁵. Pagan material was re-conceptualized in the context of a new system of values and cultural beliefs, and Christian re-interpretations were imposed to pagan gestural patterns conferring a new meaning to the old forms. As a final example of this process, I would like to remember the story reported by Malalas in the sixth century in which Constantine found the image (ἐκτύπωμα)²²⁶⁶ of a winged god at the Sosthenion's temple: in this occasion, the emperor looked through the eyes of his new Christian faith and declared that it represented an angel in the *schema* of

²²⁵⁹ FRANK 1991, pp. 47-48. Frank is following here Giddens to propose a 'structuration theory of the body and society' that could be well applied to the gesture and body in historical research.

²²⁶⁰ BUTLER 1988, p. 521.

²²⁶¹ FRANK 1991, p. 68.

²²⁶² KAZHDAN 2007, p. 12.

²²⁶³ VALANTASIS 2002, p. 6, referring to the Jewish and Roman religious practices.

²²⁶⁴ KRUMBACHER (1907) 1970, p. 30.

²²⁶⁵ 'L'esperienza letteraria', well synthesized Maltese, 'era intimamente fedele alla propria identità, ma mai immobile su sé stessa'; ALBINI and MALTESE 1984.

²²⁶⁶ The word seems to refer to an image in bas relief, most probably a statue (as also confirmed by the following expression τῷ ἐκτυπώματι τῆς στήλης). In the early seventh century John of Antioch declared on the other hand that the Argonauts saw in the wood a fearful image (φοβερὰν εἰκόνα) and then depicted on a table (γράφαντες ἐν εἰκόνι) the image (ἐκτύπωμα) they have seen; JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Historia Chronica*, fr. 26.3, 5-8; ed. and tr. ROBERTO 2005, pp. 64-65.

a monk (ἀγγέλον σημεῖον σχήματι μοναχοῦ)²²⁶⁷. It is likely that also in this case the author used the term *schema* to refer not to the clothes but to the posture and the gesture of a monk (shortly after he used it to refer to the posture (τῷ σχήματι) of the statue of Orestes, who raised the right hand above his head and pointed with the finger the mountain and the temple from which he was fleeing)²²⁶⁸.

Christians build up their identity and carefully cultivated their public image, behaving and performing the gestures expected from their social position, their faith, and their role in the community, also following the models described in historical and hagiographical accounts. In Byzantium, like in Rome, the *habitus* (or, in this case, the *schema*) made the man, and ‘the language that a man’s body spoke through its deportment’ continued to function as ‘a language that his contemporaries could read, even against his will’²²⁶⁹. The concerns about the power of non-verbal communication and outward appearance to transmit identities, inner dispositions, and social values, which characterized the Greek and Roman society, affected therefore also the Christian communities. The self-presentation of the individual was nevertheless something beyond the idea of standardization of social categories. Different models were developed in the narrative to define different ‘gestural categories’, but the way in which men and women displayed themselves and interacted was shaped by the complex theological values attached to the body. Gestures and behaviour gained a new meaning especially because of their relation with the ideas of a human being made by a divine and mortal nature, of a body deeply bounded by the soul, and of the rational use of the body as an instrument of salvation. To choose the right way of moving became a duty and a moral imperative accorded to a specific ‘ethic of gesture’ similar to the one developed in the Western Latin Empire²²⁷⁰. Given the ever-present possibility that physical appearance might be actively manipulated and used as a persuasive and deceiving mean, Christians were especially required to use their bodies truthfully, showing the condition of their souls which was felt as deeply influencing their outward appearance (with the sole exception of the saints, who proved to be able to exploit and manipulate their body and their *schemata* to achieve their purposes thanks to an exceptional self-control on their souls). Through its gestures, thus, the body had

²²⁶⁷ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 4, 9 (13); ed. THURN 2000, 55-56; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 38; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, pp. 100-101. The statue was set up by the Argonauts to honour the δύναμινς (the ‘manifestation’ or, stated more properly the German translation, ‘die Macht’) of the divinity who prophesized to them the victory over Amycus. Constantine turned the temple into a Church for the archangel Michael. See also JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 41, 9-12; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 33.

²²⁶⁸ JOHN MALALAS, *Chronographia*, 5, 37 (67); ed. THURN 2000, p. 110.72 ff.; tr. JEFFREYS et al. 1986, p. 75; cf. tr. THURN and MEIER 2009, p. 159. This *schema* will be differently interpreted by the Syrians. Angered because Orestes did not turn toward the god and flee from them, they gave to the statue’s *schema* a different interpretation, calling it the ‘The Runaway’; *ibidem*.

²²⁶⁹ GLEASON 1995, p. XIII.

²²⁷⁰ SCHMITT (1990) 1999.

to make visible the virtues it has internalized, a condition achieved through many efforts but at the same time natural as a second nature.

Furthermore, a proper understanding and knowledge – that is, the rationale – of gestures and postures was felt as crucial for the *homo byzantinus*. They could be used as rhetorical tools to strengthen or substitute words (even to provide a visual summary of a theological concept) during a public speech, in everyday life, or during the most decisive moments in the life of the faithful. Doctrine and beliefs indeed were not all that mattered, since ‘orthopraxis was also important, and the liturgy and the material apparatus of worship induced a shared *habitus* that was reinforced by the moral regulations enshrined in canon law and preached in countless homilies’²²⁷¹. In the context of the Orthodox Christian liturgy, each sign had a hidden divine meaning and every physical, visual, and material detail had a specific purpose: also gestures were, therefore, subject to an exegesis which allowed the faithful to actively participate in the event, to increment his faith, and to make a step further toward the heavenly world. This especially after the sixth century, when the Byzantine rite acquired a ‘greater splendour and theological explicitation’²²⁷² and a greater role as ‘channel toward God’²²⁷³. Gestures had thus to be trustworthy, meaningful and rational, and thanks to their connection with the characters of the biblical tradition (Moses, Christ and Satan *in primis*), they were powerful and evocative. As such, they could be employed both as literary devices in the narrative as well as political weapon in the actual practices of society.

The individual has emerged in this part as being not only limited by the behavioural patterns expected from him. He was also a creative and generative ‘player’ who actively displayed and moved his body, changing and influencing, in turn, the social system. A ‘practice-oriented’ perspective that looks at the active and transformative power of the individual agency and the interrelation between this latter and the structure, is necessary for a more comprehensive and dynamical view of the topic. It allows to understand how the individual used his body to negotiate his authority and his place in the society, and to give reasons for the ambiguity and for the different meanings that can be applied to the same action. Pagans and Christians, citizens and foreigners, actors and preachers, priests and saints, everybody played with their bodies and with their public images to transmit a message, to strengthen authority and social relationships, and to avoid any kind of exclusion or ‘stigma’. This ‘art of using the human body’²²⁷⁴ was achieved through experience and by imitating or manipulating the *schemata* provided by education and by written texts. Biblical and classical works, as well as contemporary narrative literature, used *schema* and *schemata* as efficacious literary devices to reveal and underline the bad or good ‘selfhood’ of characters, but in so doing they also charged them with values and

²²⁷¹ CAMERON 2014, p. 110.

²²⁷² TAFT 1992, pp. 28-29.

²²⁷³ MAYENDORFF 1984, p 25.

²²⁷⁴ MAUSS (1936) 1989.

provided visual patterns and models of behaviour that influenced in turn the practices of the society. The way in which rhetoric and ideology participated in the process of 'making up people' in Late Antiquity had already stated by Peter Brown and, more recently, by Theresa M. Shaw, for whom also the 'rhetoric of appearance and lifestyle' in a text can 'create and confer new identities', 'establish or perpetuate the contour of ideal behaviour', and provide 'the classifications by which behaviour and conformity can be measured'²²⁷⁵. Ideology and rhetoric cannot be disconnected from practical reality. They were strictly interwoven: from ideology and rhetoric came the guidelines followed in physical performances, and only through texts the tradition could become, to use a Giddens' definition, a 'source of the injection of moral meaning into the reversible time of day-to-day life'²²⁷⁶, so that 'the finitude of individual existence is interpolated within a dimension of moral timelessness'²²⁷⁷. The reading of certain texts can be seen thus among the types of circumstances which tended to influence the 'penetration' of the social actors in the system reproduction, and among the 'modes of articulation of knowledge' which influence the social interpretation. No less than the discourses of social sciences in 'modern' societies, they helped social actors to develop and communicate a 'knowledge' (or 'reflexivity') over the rules, the tactics, and the functioning of their actions and their behaviour in society. In this way, they produced works 'about' social processes as well as 'materials which in some part constitute them'²²⁷⁸. 'Texts are not innocent', declared also Averil Cameron, and this 'especially in matter of identity' since 'Byzantine discourse was powerfully prescriptive, creating identity and proscribing difference'²²⁷⁹.

The ideas emerged in the first part of the research has been helpful in the analysis of the specific case of the emperor, who stood out as the most outstanding and meaningful type of gestural category. Here I tried to define the specific features and developments which characterized the use and perception of his public body and gestures, and to outline the problems and arguments developed around his *mise en scène*.

²²⁷⁵ SHAW 1998, pp. 485-486 (with bibliography). The word 'making', widespread in late '90s studies on social aspects of religious behaviour and ideology, is a particularly appropriate one 'because it communicates an understanding of the 'constructed' or historically contingent quality of the phenomenon, personality, or idea examined'; SHAW 1998, p. 485 (quoting Mary Douglas).

²²⁷⁶ GIDDENS 1984, p. 194. On the role of writing as a form of collation and storage of information, with whom the tradition became a 'discursive phenomenon' open to interrogation, see GIDDENS 1984, pp. 200-201.

²²⁷⁷ GIDDENS 1984, pp. 194-195.

²²⁷⁸ GIDDENS 1984, p. 2; pp. 90-92. On the practical impact of social sciences and their role in the history of ideas, see GIDDENS 1984, pp. 348-354.

²²⁷⁹ CAMERON 2014, pp. 59-60. Handling the 'hot topic' of the Hellenism and Byzantium, Cameron stated how literary theory and the discursive construction of identity had an active influence in forming cultural consciousness and differentiation in Byzantium; *ibidem*. Anyway, the self-presentation mattered too, when it came to identity, whether the 'Byzantines' called themselves Christians or Orthodoxes, Hellenics or Romans; CAMERON 2014, pp. 64-65.

The survey has first of all shown the power of the imperial body, gestures and behaviour to visually evoke in the minds of the audience (those who looked directly at them and those who read and heard their descriptions in written accounts) images and memories associated with the historical and biblical imagery, as well as the good or bad values that were attached to them by authors eager to praise or to criticize the main players on the political stage according to their religious and political bias.

Those images and values were inevitably based first of all upon those present in classical antiquity: the history of Rome provided models which remained deeply absorbed in the mind of the highly educated social and political elites, and Christian authors who addressed or described those in power mastered and moulded them to suit the contemporary issues and needs of the new religion, occasionally giving them a new meaning. History writing was indeed 'a form of rhetoric, or persuasive speech' aimed not only at preserving memories but also at edifying and educating the readers in 'what ought to be sought and what ought to be avoided'²²⁸⁰. And Christian authors continued to exploit the effectiveness that stories and anecdotes, especially those entertaining or peculiar, could have on the reader's mind in making their message even more memorable²²⁸¹. The narrative contributed therefore to build up the *habitus* and the practices of the authorities. They identified themselves with the values and the ideals of the Roman *paideia* ('the *habitus* dies hard!', properly emphasized Gleason)²²⁸², pursuing a public appearance characterized by harmony, self-control, and *decorum* to avoid blame or to strengthen their position²²⁸³. So, the traditional republican view of the emperor *primus inter pares*, who received his power from his subjects and who had, therefore, to act friendly, respectfully, and in an exemplary manner toward the senatorial order, remained present in the imperial imagery and intermingled with the eastern influences which looked at the ruler as a sacred, superior, and inaccessible being, chosen by God for the salvation of his people. This compresence of an 'autocratic reality' and a 'republican façade' was already established in the late Roman society, where despite the developments toward an absolute direction marked by *superbia* (the disdainful bearing of an exceptional king distanced from his subject), the virtues of *civilitas* (the respectful attitude of a citizen in a society of citizens), *moderatio* (restraint) and *comitas* (the friendly treatment of inferior people) remained much appreciated characteristics of the 'good' emperor²²⁸⁴. The newly adopted concept of a Christian kingship with its

²²⁸⁰ BLOCKLEY 1981, p. 8 (referring to Eunapius' view over the didactic function of history).

²²⁸¹ History was efficacious in teaching moral virtues because it entertained, declared Agathias in the proemium of his work; see FRENDO 1988, p. 148. See also ROHRBACHER 2002, pp. 150-151; NEVILLE 2018, pp. 17-18.

²²⁸² GLEASON 1995, p. 166.

²²⁸³ A common 'language of persuasion' and an accepted code of political behaviour were the distinguishing marks of the governing class of the late Roman Empire (the civic staff of the imperial government as well as the provincial elites). High education and literary culture enable them to look at each other as friends and 'men of *paideia*'; BROWN 1992, p. 8; pp. 30-41; p. 56.

²²⁸⁴ WALLACE-HADRILL 2011, pp. 32-48. It was 'enacted in all seriousness' to evoke the traditional feeling toward the republican past and to underline the importance of the upper classes as a base of consent of the ruler; *ibidem*. Mathews defined those modes of conducts as 'relics of the past from distant days when an emperor's reputation

set of biblical and Jewish traditions enriched however this substrate with an even more multifaceted narrative. The emperor had now to train his body not only to cultivate the rhetorical bodily technique required from his role as orator. He also had to emphasise his special relationship with the clergy (whose members now became the recipients of his friendly attitude) and with God (by propitiating the divinity through deeds and gestures, *in primis* the sign of the cross, used both as a material tool as well as a physical sign traced on air or on the forehead).

The emperor built up therefore through the centuries a rich repertoire of images, gestures, postures, and behaviour that he actively and strategically employed as political instruments in the 'theatre of power'. He had to embody different roles in a physical and visual manner, by changing different kinds of *schema* and performing different *schemata* according to the part he had to play. He had to choose an attitude that could pile on the emotional response of the audience, to connect his person with historical and biblical models and to convey ideological and political statements. But also and mostly, the emperor had to appear as an exceptional *exemplum* of good and pious Christian displaying his qualities and moral virtues and the relation between his body and his soul. Whether he was sincere or not, we will never know. But what we could say is that the emperor was not to be perceived as merely representing a role. He had to present himself as possessing an 'embodied habitus'. As Judith Butler and gender studies of the early 1990s taught us, indeed, the discourse could bring to light the identity, and social actors could make a script (or in this case an 'ideal') real through the repetition of acts and gestures within a specific cultural context until the performance comes to include also the mode of belief. A 'good' kind of authority, like gender, could be seen by the audience as a performative 'act' related not to the essential truth of the body (i.e. to what one *is*), but rather to the social conventions, through repeatedly re-enacted performances (i.e. on what one *does*). Those acts were built by imitating the dominant conventions that had been built around the ideas of good or bad authorities (historical or biblical) in the narrative²²⁸⁵. To play the part of the good emperor in Byzantium was therefore, a strategic social performance made by gestures that had to touch the 'right chords' and be tailored to the mentality and the imagination of the audience. But those gestures had also to include the more serious requirement to possess and display an identity characterized by a good *habitus*. Only in this way the emperor could actually strike and persuade the audience that he was actually worthy to instantiate the role he wanted to present, i.e. only in this way his body and gestures could be performative on the social order and in political events.

had stood or fallen on the quality of his relation to the Senate and the people of Rome'; MATHEWS 1989, pp. 234-235.

²²⁸⁵ Gender, explains Butler, is 'a stylized repetition of acts', and 'the appearance of substance is (...) a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief'; BUTLER 1988, pp. 519-520. Of course, the case of gender is something much more deeply embodied physical *habitus* that have to do with general social constructions and meanings, but the act of 'performing an emperor' shared with it the concept of impersonating an 'ideal'.

The perspective of salvation history made imperial behaviour even more performative and gave an enormous force to the gesture that the emperor (who also shared with the audience the same evaluations and fears) must follow or avoid. Now, more than ever, the emperor had therefore to prove to be worthy of his role and to have a soul strong enough to control his mortal nature and his passions, so as to avoid the inevitable divine punishment (which struck the achievements and the bodies of bad rulers and *tyrannoi*), contribute to the good functioning of the State, and achieve the salvation of the souls of his subjects²²⁸⁶. The problem of the sincerity and manipulation remained however very present: members of the audience could always be aware that bodies and gestures could be leveraged and manipulated to communicate, maintain, and negotiate authority. This was a dangerous game as it was in Roman times, when ‘the ruler and the elite keep each other under mutual observation’ and the ruler was ‘vulnerable as any other player’, without full control over his court²²⁸⁷. His gestures and outward appearance were carefully screened and judged as the symptoms of his moral qualities and capacity to rule. And the authors, aware of the functioning of the body as political instrument, kept in mind the emotions and the historical knowledge of the audience²²⁸⁸ to build up descriptions and efficacious parallelism with historical and biblical models, also by emphasising certain aspects of the physicality and the behaviour of the ruler. To assume a role, for the emperor, was therefore not a mere operation of performance: he had to identify his public image with the aspects and the symbolic and expressive meanings assigned to his role according to the cultural models ~~to his role~~, but he also has to take in count and let his image be shaped by the interaction with the audience.

Among the distinctive features of the imperial body, has especially emerged an emphasis in the distinction between political and natural body which had provided a parallel Leitmotiv strictly connected with our topic. Descriptions of imperial gestures and behaviour could reflect political theories and ideas about the fact that the emperor owned a double nature: a supernatural and almost divine one, superior to the one of the common man and manifested when he embodied his political role, as well as a mortal and fragile one that he had in common with every human being, being mortal, subject to passions, and fallible.

A possible explanation of this emphasis on the human and mortal body had been already put forward by Leppin, who had also investigated imperial behavioural patterns, mainly by the perspective that

²²⁸⁶ Brown for his part underlined the discontinuities and the new ‘imaginative model’ followed by the emperor of the fourth century. It was based upon the compassion toward the poor and upon a mystical identity whereby he shared with his subjects the common frailty of human flesh. It was the personal devotion of individual ruler, and not the *paideia*, which held to bring felicity to the empire, and the emperor was no longer obliged to show gentle courtesy to a select group of men of *paideia*, as natural leader of community, since all classes were equal to him, recipient of compassion; BROWN 1992, p. 134; p. 154.

²²⁸⁷ WALLACE-HADRILL 2011, pp. 99-101.

²²⁸⁸ SCOTT 2010.

ecclesiastical historians of the fifth century had on the monarchical order, the legitimacy of the power, and the effects that emperor's actions had to direct divine grace or punishments toward himself and the empire (i.e. in the perspective of the salvation history)²²⁸⁹. The parallel built between emperor and David had also been recognized here as a way of defusing the sensitive question of imperial fallibility. This is undeniably correct, as we have seen, but it has been also interesting to pursue an analysis of this issue from a broader perspective and to see how the theme has continued to further evolve and gain new nuances in the following centuries.

The theme could be followed in the Greek culture since Aristotle, who had first questioned the rule of a single man for the fact that even the most virtuous individual always had '*in his soul the passions that are attributes of humanity*'²²⁹⁰. The '*emotional element* (τὸ παθητικὸν)' which every human soul necessarily (ἀνάγκη) possessed made indeed his decisions less valuable, since '*the individual's judgment is bound to be* (ἀναγκάσιον) *corrupted when he is overcome by anger* (ὑπ' ὀργῆς κρατηθέντος) *or some other such emotion*'²²⁹¹. The dichotomous conception of a royalty made of a mortal and a political body could also be traced back to Aristotle, who distinguished between the friends of the *princeps* from the friends of the principate²²⁹². This concept affected not only the political theology in the Western Middle Ages. Byzantine authors were also aware of the problem and made a distinction between the individual man and the role he embodied in the exercise of the power. Rather than the two 'bodies', natural and political, of Kantorowicz' theory, however, it would be better to speak in Christological terms about two 'natures'. To the political and superhuman one belonged the official gestures performed in ceremonial occasions, portrayed in official art, and described in panegyric sources, where he hid his identity behind a steady, motionless, and meaningful posture untouched by human emotions, so to promote his relationship with God and his role as His representative on earth. Liz James, who first attempted to apply the 'theory of the two bodies' to the Byzantine world, claimed for example that the empress' private and individual body as a woman had been replaced by a constructed public persona to set her apart from other women and reinforce her power²²⁹³. However, the mortal nature of the emperor could also come to the fore. To keep the balance between ideal and humanity was indeed not easy, and a discrepancy was always possible between role

²²⁸⁹ LEPPIN 1996, pp. 9-10.

²²⁹⁰ ARISTOTLE, *Politica*, III, 6.3 (1281a35-37); ed. and tr. RACKHAM 1959, pp. 220-221.

²²⁹¹ ARISTOTLE, *Politica*, III, 10.5-6 (1286a1636); ed. and tr. RACKHAM (1932) 1959, pp. 256-257. To leave the government to a man is therefore like to add 'a *wild animal*' to the government of the law, ruled instead by God and by reason; ARISTOTLE, *Politica*, III, 10.4 (1287a29-34); ed. and tr. RACKHAM (1932) 1959, pp. 264-265.

²²⁹² KANTOROWICZ (1957) 1966, pp. 427-428. The precedent to this idea included also Plutarch (who distinguished between the friends of Alexander (φιλαλέξανδρος) and the friends of the king (φιλοβασιλεύς)) and the Neopitagoric philosophers; *ibidem*.

²²⁹³ JAMES 2001, p. 133; pp. 165-166. This image of the empress was a 'powerful form of action, a presenting and re-presenting, a being something, an embodiment of power of being present, a force just through presence'; JAMES 2001, p. 139.

and image on one side and what happened in the reality on the other. The emperor was indeed vulnerable to illness and death and could always be lured by the vanity and the hypocrisy of the world to indulge in human passions like anger or general misbehavior. This mortal dimension became part of the official ideology promoted by the court: the emperor was constantly warned that human glory (the *doxa*) and the splendor of the court was an unstable thing doomed to fade, like a dream²²⁹⁴ or like a ball inflated with air²²⁹⁵. This condition was addressed in the political theory and it was publicly declared at the moment of the emperor's death in the speech uttered to his successors. It could be even exploited in the ceremonial context, where the emperor could justify mistakes or mend misconducts by including his mortal, humble, and therefore fallible nature in his official *schema*. By removing the crown, walking barefoot, or bending his body, he turned upside down his grandiose official image in the effort to achieve consensus in particular threatening moments.

Discourses about gestures, about mortal or divine nature in the imperial body, unconsciously or consciously impacted on the individual, on the way he views himself and on how he views the world, and how to react in different contexts. As well explained by Bourdieu, indeed, the *habitus*, even if taken for granted, could always be open to critical reflection and discussion, could always be questioned, subverted and unsettled, could always be noticed and made explicit, especially by underlying the dissonance between *habitus* and external conditions. It is this very condition that made one 'suddenly conscious of that which was previously pre-reflective', and made him develop changes in the *habitus* to include or to avoid or to change what is noticed and reflected about. The 'practical consciousness' thus has the power to awake the political consciousness, and this relationship between language and experience appear clear especially in 'crisis situations in which the everyday order is challenged'. Those situations call indeed for an extraordinary discourse capable of giving systematic expression to the 'gamut of extra-ordinary experiences that this, so to speak, objective epoch has provoked or made possible'²²⁹⁶.

In front of discrepancies, yet, audience could respond not only with explanations and justifications and political theories aimed to restore the coherence of the imperial role, but also with indignation, irony and disenchantment. The body was indeed not only a useful and powerful political weapon. It was also the emperor's weakness. After the end of the sixth century, it started a process, which will reach its peak after the Iconomachy in the ninth century, for whom the imperial mortal body and human

²²⁹⁴ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*, V; ed. and tr. NALDINI 1990, pp. 354-355.

²²⁹⁵ This metaphor was used by George of Pisidia when he had to address Heraclius and his entourage with a subtle association; KAEGI 2003, pp. 322-323; n. 34, p. 323.

²²⁹⁶ BOURDIEU 1977, p. 170. Bourdieu called spoke here about the unquestioned and taken for granted, *habitus* of *doxa*' and the 'universe of (orthodox and unorthodox) discourse and argument, '. Only the latter is thus open to critical reflection and discussion. No society, he claimed, is indeed smooth and harmonious as to prompt no questioning at all, while 'what goes without saying and what cannot be said for lack of an available discourse, represents the dividing-line between the most radical form of misrecognition and the awakening of political consciousness; *ibidem*.

dimension came to be emphasised and lively described outside the official propaganda even more in detail. The same mortal nature showed off through specific gestures and postures carefully staged in the ceremonial context could be used as a mean of critique by resentful members of the court. They proved in many occasions to be still highly aware of the ‘theatre of the court’ and the visual expedients employed by the authority, while the pitiful and public death of emperors like Maurice and Phocas, the mutilation of Justinian II, and the murder of Leo V, had dramatically revealed the vulnerability of the imperial body, working also as a powerful *memento mori* for the members of the audience. Between the half of the ninth and the eleventh centuries especially, those themes and those ideas made a ‘turn’ toward an even stronger emphasis on the human dimension of the imperial being. Lively stories, vivid recounts of imperial gestures and physical actions, filled the pages of the authors who had to recount the history of the empire.

Furthermore, this awareness enabled the attempts to explain the unavoidable bad behaviour of rulers not only as driven by the Providence eager to punish sinner people but also as the consequence of their unescapable fallible dimension. Odd, irrational, and out-of-norm gestures, could reveal the incapability of the ruler to control his body when taken by passions or when struck by an illness (usually sent as a divine punishment). Hence, bad emperors could be described acting under the control of their passions, devoting themselves to pleasures, with an exaggerated or deviant sexuality (an ‘ubiquitous strategy’ used also in ‘ancient discourse on mime and pantomime’²²⁹⁷), and moving irrationally like an animal or like a demon-possessed. It was a strong subversion of the imperial body, which came to be dominated by the disorder and the irrationality, mirroring the ruler’s lack of control on his soul and, therefore, his being unworthy to rule. The emperor was indeed a man ‘*subject to the same afflictions as every creature which bears the likeness of God*’, but he had also to control himself so as not to question ‘*His image endowed with utterance and soul*’²²⁹⁸. The presence of a mortal dimension in the ruler also allowed the author to blame his sins, his flaws, and his mistakes, without questioning his legitimacy and the imperial institution. He could build a ‘safe critique’ addressed not to the emperor in his official role conferred by God, but rather to the man who could act as impious, heretic, sinner, or even mad and demon-possessed. And for this reason Justin II, despite his mental illness, lost his power but not his title. Finally, the emperor, like any other human being, was doomed to fall and die. His body could be kept away from corruption and honoured, like in the case of Constantine, but mostly it carried the physical decay of illness and death. This was a serious topic which could not be avoided by authors, and they could choose to emphasise the pain suffered as a

²²⁹⁷ WEBB 2008, p. 21.

²²⁹⁸ JOHN OF NIKIU, *Chronicon*, 83, 51; tr. CHARLES 1916, p. 89. John enriched in this way the old anecdote of Theodosius’ anger against the population of Antioch and included those words in a letter allegedly sent by Macedonius (here generally described as a monk coming from the desert).

divine punishment and to linger in morbid details. God's chosen one always remained a human being, with his vices and his blemishes, with his urges, passions and, ultimately, with a fragile body.

In this complex situation, however, we don't have to overlook also the 'organic individuality' and 'personal style' which can never be entirely removed from sociological discourses²²⁹⁹ and which was also involved in the practices of the policy. The body is by its very nature an 'interface' between biological and social, cause and meaning, collective and individual domains, while the individual is an 'irreducible, unique being' who is both 'object and subject, product and actor, structure and meaning'²³⁰⁰. Even if political discourses and narrative could be embodied and turned into a physical *habitus*, and even if the emperor had to follow the behavioural rules expected from him and his status, indeed, his personality and ability (in other words, his agency) played also a part. A clever ruler who wanted to strengthen his position and his legitimacy knew that he had to learn the rules, the mechanisms, and the judgments behind certain gestures and behaviour. He took historical accounts as models to guide his moral actions and conduct, and could always decide whenever to follow them or not at his own risk. Valentinian, for example, proclaimed Ammianus Marcellinus, failed to imitate earlier models because '*he did not know*' the example or '*pretended not to know* (ignorans minimeque reputans afflicti solacium status)' that certain things, though possible for one holding the supreme power, are not permitted²³⁰¹. The emperor was always potentially weak, it was a condition inherent in his being a mortal and human creature: his power and position could always be questioned, and it was up to him to legitimize his position with the tools at his disposal. He could show and prove his power and legitimacy through works of art or panegyrics, but he had also to define and re-define his image in front of an audience (both the ruling class and the population) who was not as gullible as he could hope for, but was potentially aware of the tricks and the game at play. Not always the same mechanism functioned, and gestures had always to change and be adapted to the situation: the basic element remained fixed but they were remixed and re-defined according to the context and the necessities (i.e. the words remained the same but the language changed).

Finally, a last brief remark could be made on the effective power that the knowledge of how the imperial body worked in the mechanism of the politics could have on an individual's career, in the perspective of social promotions. The case of Psellos is striking: he was a man of culture who knew the court well and was able to provide the most complete reflection on the argument. He described

²²⁹⁹ BOURDIEU 1977, p. 86. In Bourdieu point of view, each individual system of disposition could be seen as a 'structural variant' that expressed the differences between positions inside or outside the class, while the 'personal style' could be seen as a 'deviation' in relation to the common style of a period or class; *ibidem*.

²³⁰⁰ BERTHELOT 1991, p. 398.

²³⁰¹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *Res Gestae*, XXX, 8, 6-9; ed. SEYFARTH 1978, vol. 2, p. 153; tr. ROLFE 1950, vol. III, p. 363.

emperors who were unable to effectively use their public appearance and were thus responsible for the crisis of the empire. He clarified the dangers of a theatrical appearance devoid of *ethos* or of an *ethos* without a proper *schema*. And he defined with great perspicacity how a man could (and must) realise in himself the *bios politikos*. No doubt he had to place this sensibility at the service of the power to promote his position at court, as evidenced by its almost miraculous public career. This sensibility, and not mere opportunism, enabled him to play a leading role in politics and survive for a long time (almost thirty years) in the midst of a period characterized by frequent and traumatic successions to the throne, helping him to understand not only how to use the visual imagery to draft effective indictments or praises, but also to understand when an emperor was losing favour and how to please even the most difficult personality. When he compiled his *memoir*, he refined even more his skills, and made this knowledge available to his friends and collaborators. We could go further and argue that this operation helped to create a new awareness in the officials and members of the court which may have led to a new imperial conception of disenchantment with the autocracy, and to the need for later emperors to find means to 'freshen up' their *schema*.

This work had shown therefore how complex and dynamic was the 'theatre of power', how much efforts and care was required of the emperor to choose and stage the right *schema* and to perform the right *schemata*, in order to fulfil his role and the numerous expectations of the audience and to overcome contemporary problems, to face tense moments and keep his authority. His gestures indeed were performative and defined, transmitted and consolidated the impression of his role and the different layers and facets of his public image. Christian heir of the pagan Roman rulers, mortal being who shared a special relationship with the divine, supernatural creature but also a *primus inter pares*: the emperor belonged to a very unique gestural category. Even the most apparently 'out of norm' description or apparent contradiction were then not incidental elements. They were all significant expressions that reflected the compresence of different imagery and different way through which it was possible to stage and then to read a publicly staged imperial body.

I hope to have also make a step further in considering rhetorical strategies and actual practices as not so distant and disconnected as they may appear, and to have shown how useful could be for the research to not consider the content separated from the form and the fact separated from its representation. To recognize the cultural and literary background of written descriptions does not detract from their historical importance and does not prevent to read them as reflecting actually performed actions. Rather, the tradition and the imagery attached to them gave them strength and made them efficacious weapons, in the narrative and in the performances staged in front of an audience. Most skilful emperors were able to choose the right *schema* for the situation by picking it up from the repertoire at their disposal, manipulating it, and even distorting it for their own political

purposes. The emperor has to be considered therefore not only as a statue to behold, a *'divinely crafted image of piety* (εὐσεβείας θεότευκτον ἄγαλμα)²³⁰². Only the *tyrannos* was a 'hollow statue of an emperor (*inane imperii simulacrum*)²³⁰³, while the ideal king was a beautiful statue (ἄγαλμα) to which it was important to give movement (κινούμενον) and the breath of life (ἔμπνοον)²³⁰⁴. He had to be a *'statue endowed with reason*²³⁰⁵, there is, with a body sustained and stimulated by good moral virtues and a strong soul. He had to be wise, rational, and make good use of the body and the mind provided to him by God. And if he made mistakes or acted irrationally (as any other human being) he had to find the most effective way to show off his mortality and his humility in order to keep intact his authority. His gestures and postures were not motionless and frozen in conventional and timeless shapes. The emperor was the most active player in an ever-changing and fluctuating society, and constantly adapted his *schema* and *schemata* to the contexts to handle difficult situations.

As for potential for this type of analysis, I am confident that the ideas emerged from the present research could provide useful lens through which to understand the lively descriptions included later in the Macedonian and Comnenian sources, which for reasons of space I regretfully had to leave mostly out, together with the *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus (whose richness of gestures had been only partially analysed by Reiske). For example, the memorable image of Michael III who turned upside-down the imperial *schema*, dared irreverent jokes, get drunk with his jovial friends, and theatrically assumed roles not proper to his social position in the highly biased accounts of the Theophanes Continuatus and John Skylitzes²³⁰⁶. It could be especially interesting to address the use and perception of gesture at the court of Alexius Comnenus, the ruler invincible in his tongue as well as in his hand (ἄμαχος καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν ὁμοῦ καὶ τὴν χεῖρα)²³⁰⁷, who gave orders with his sight and his gesture²³⁰⁸. His wife, the empress Irene, a *'true animated statue* (ἔμπνοον ὡς ἀληθῶς ἄγαλμα) *of beauty and a living column* (στήλην ἔμβιον) *of grace*', is characterized by highly elegant

²³⁰² AGAPETUS, *Ekthesis*, ch. 5; ed. PG 86.1, col. 1165; tr. BELL 2009, p. 101. See also KAZHDAN and CONSTABLE 1982, p. 61 (about Justinian). Psellos in the *Historia Syntomos* also described John Tzimiskes as being 'like a statue in appearance (ἀγαλματίας τὸ εἶδος) and a man of taste (χαριέστατος)'; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Historia Syntomos*, ch. 105; ed. and tr. AERTS 1990, pp. 102-103.

²³⁰³ So is defined Priscus Attalus when he was brought by the Goths in Spain, before he was caught and punished by Honorius; OROSIUS, *Historiarum adversus paganos*, VII, 42.9; ed. and tr. LIPPOLD AND CHARINI (1976) 1993, vol. II, pp. 394-395.

²³⁰⁴ SYNESIUS OF CYRENE, *De Regno*, 9; 18; ed. and tr. GARYZA 1989, pp. 400-401; pp. 424-425. The movement was given in this case by the words of the author who described him.

²³⁰⁵ LEONTIOS, *Homilia on Job*, V, 15 (166); tr. ALLEN and DATEMA 1991, p. 79; quot. JAMES 2001, p. 139.

²³⁰⁶ On the different interpretations of the account, see DVORNIK (1948) 1953, p. 158-161; LJUBARSKIJ 1987; IVANOV 2006, pp. 134-138; SCOTT 2010.

²³⁰⁷ ANNA COMNENA, *Alexiadis libri XV*, III, 3, 2; ed. and tr. LEIB 1937, vol. I, p. 111.

²³⁰⁸ ANNA COMNENA, *Alexiadis libri XV*, IX, 7, 3; IX, 9, 6; ed. and tr. LEIB 1937, vol. II, pp. 182-183.

gestures which seem to show a new kind of physical *habitus*²³⁰⁹. The role of gestures as visual boundaries in diplomatic exchanges became especially a much complex matter which could cause misunderstandings between two different ritual communities²³¹⁰. Gestures continued to be prove their nature far from being a universal language, as well experienced by Liutprand of Cremona's chef when tried to shop down to the market of Constantinople: he did not know Greek and tried to communicate through gestures of the fingers and the head ('*qui non signorum signis, sed digitorum seu capitis nutibus cum venditore emptor loquebatur*'), but this did not prevent him from being swindled by the salesman²³¹¹. The failure to understand a symbolic gesture or behaviour can be presented as an attack on the rank, as stated by Althoff in reference to a Byzantine legation humiliated at the Charlemagne's court²³¹². And unforgettable remains Anna Comnena's report of the arrival of the Crusades at Constantinople, a masterpiece in showing Byzantines' and Latins' attitudes toward the correct use of good manner. Far away from the deference displayed by Liutprand of Cremona – who, despite the following outbursts once returned back home, always respected the required etiquette – the Crusaders are seen as behaving like a bunch of uncivilized and arrogant boors, unable to properly use their bodies and completely ignorant over the rules of the court²³¹³. The emperor at this point not only proved to be able to heroically endure the shameless and unbridled never-ending chatter of the Franks at receptions²³¹⁴. His *schema* was now permeable, and he could exploit even the gestures of his 'ignorant' enemies. When Alexius Comnenus welcomed Bohemond of Antiochia in his tend at Devol, in 1108, he sealed the treaty by stretching out his hand and grasping the hand of Bohemond (ἐκτείννας τὴν χεῖρα ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ τῆς ἐκείνου ἀψάμενος χειρὸς), performing the western gesture of the *immixio manuum* so to make him his λίζιος (i.e. *ligius*, vassal)²³¹⁵. The same will be made by his son John II when he will receive the submission of the Frank leaders in Antiochia in 1137²³¹⁶. A gesture

²³⁰⁹ She kept her lips closed but displayed her forearm up to the elbow and accompanied her words with elegant gestures (ἡνιόχει δὲ τὰ πολλὰ ἢ χεῖρ τῷ λόγῳ σὺν εὐρυθμίᾳ), with fingers and hands whose shape (διάθεσιν) made them look as if they had been shaped by an artist from ivory; ANNA COMNENA, *Alexiadis libri XV*, III, 3, 4; ed. and tr. LEIB 1937, vol. I, p. 112.

²³¹⁰ See above, p. 203ff.

²³¹¹ Forced to wait further for his much desired departure from Constantinople, Liutprand was confined together with his *graekólalos*, the expert in Greek language, in a poor accommodation like a prisoner; LIUTPRAND OF CREMONA, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, 46; ed. CHIESA 1998, p. 207; tr. OLDONI e ARIATTA 1987, p. 220; pp. 241.

²³¹² ALTHOFF 2005.

²³¹³ There were exceptions. For example, Baldwin grabbed one of the men who dared to sit on the throne of Alexius and yelled at him that this was not the way to behave with the emperor of Byzantium; ANNA COMNENA, *Alexiad*, X, 10, 6; ed. and tr. LEIB 1937, vol. II, p. 239.

²³¹⁴ ANNA COMNENA, *Alexiadis libri XV*, XIV, 4, 5-6; ed. and tr. LEIB 1937, vol. III, pp. 161-162.

²³¹⁵ ANNA COMNENA, *Alexiadis libri XV*, XIII, 10, 3; ed. and tr. LEIB 1937, vol. III, p. 122. He then addressed him with the greetings customary between *basileis* (καὶ τὴν συνήθη τοῖς βασιλεῦσι προσαγόρευσιν) and placed him next to the throne; *ibidem*.

²³¹⁶ MICHAEL ITALICUS, *Panegyric for John Comnenus*, fol. 89-90; ed. and tr. LAMMA (1952) 1968. Niketas, who also described the submission of Raymond, called him once again λίζιος; NIKETAS CHONIATES, *Historia I*, 11.1; ed. and tr. KAZHDAN, MAISANO, PONTANI 1994, pp. 64-65; n. 132, p. 533.

outside the Byzantine tradition was now employed, without any issues, to bind the faith of the crusader knights.

To conclude, the present research has focused mainly on the rationale and a general vision of the functioning of the gesture in the society and in the mechanisms of the power. I felt it was necessary first of all to systematize an object and a field of investigation that is difficult to define, targeting terminological, methodological and epistemological problems and presenting a coherent image of the emperor on the background of the society of which he was a part, with its reflections and peculiar perceptions of the body. I hope to have open up new problems and new directions for research. But I am also aware that his kind of approach had been to the detriment of the contexts, the motivations and the underlying reasons and circumstances that inspired changes or encouraged continuities, as well as of the specificities and complexities of certain authors and events which could have deserve a more throughout analysis (as been made, for example, by Helmut Leppin for the contemporary theological and Christological controversies that have influenced the way of looking at the imperial behaviour in the fifth century)²³¹⁷. I believe that all these aspects, if investigated further in the submitted framework, could leave room for interesting developments in the research. As once Bloch stated, it is not enough to ascertain the deception, one has to unveil the reasons to better reveal it²³¹⁸. For the moment, I hope to have unveiled the deceit and to have made it clear how it worked and its value as testimony.

²³¹⁷ LEPPIN 1996, pp. 5-6.

²³¹⁸ 'Mais constater la tromperie ne suffit point. Il faut aussi en découvrir les motifs'; BLOCH (1949) 1974, p. 43.

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ABBREVIATIONS:

BMGS: Byzantine Modern Greek Studies

Byz: Byzantion

ByzZ: Byzantinische Zeitschrift

DOP: Dumbarton Oaks Papers

JÖB: Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik

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