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*Servandae Antiquae Litterae*: How Latin and Greek Scholarship during the Decline of the Byzantine Empire Saved Classical Literature

Classical scholarship has been an academic pursuit since the initial production of what is now considered classical literature in ancient Rome and Greece. The contemporaries of authors, playwrights, historians, in fact of all writers of the ancient world, criticized and shared the work of their peers. During the Roman republic, Pliny the Younger<sup>1</sup>, among others, even revised and formalized letters specifically for the purpose of publication. Every aspect of the written word was leveraged to showcase one's literary ability and to present one's thoughts to the public.

This tradition of literary criticism has persisted until the modern era both in the study of classics and in that of other languages. The study of classics is currently maintaining a relatively steady place in the world of higher education, in particular at liberal arts institutions. While the classics are not as popular to the average person as they were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the average public interest is increasing with many secondary schools reintroducing Latin and Greek to the classroom. The study of classics would not be possible without hundreds perhaps thousands of scholars who painstakingly hand copied the ancient texts until the invention of the printing press, and after that time as well. If those individuals had not passed these works down through the generations, not only would the formal study of classics perhaps never have existed, at least not to the extent that it does today, but the entire foundation of Western society would disappear. To put this in the form of a witty analogy, imagine a bad magician attempting to pull away a tablecloth without disrupting any of the place settings. However, he causes all of the dishes to break on the floor. The removal of that table cloth by the magician has the same result for the dishes as the removal of classics would have for our

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<sup>1</sup> Pliny the Younger was the nephew of Pliny the Elder, a Roman author and naturalist most well known for his *Naturalis Historia*. He wrote letters to emperor Trajan concerning Christians in Bithynia and to the historian Tacitus about the terrible eruption of Mount Vesuvius in which his uncle died which were edited for publication.

modern society: everything we know would crash to the ground and break into little tiny pieces.

Simply put, the millennia old tradition of the classics is an irrefutable cornerstone of Western civilization. It has survived solely at the hands of those who deemed the texts worthy enough to copy and share with their friends. In particular, Byzantine scholars of the Palaeologan dynasty are an eminent reason for the considerable quantity of ancient Latin and Greek works of literature, science and thought that are currently extant. To demonstrate the importance of Byzantine scholarship we will begin by examining the historical narrative of Constantinople and the Byzantines from the Fourth Crusade in 1204 to the final fall at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Then we will discuss in detail the scholars, such as Nicephorous Blemmydes<sup>2</sup>, Maximus Planudes<sup>3</sup> and Demetrius Triclinius<sup>4</sup>, who were most instrumental in saving works such as the plays of Diophantus' *Arithmetica* and the plays of Euripides.

## **I. History of Scholarship during the Decline of the Byzantine Empire**

We shall begin our discussion with the Fourth Crusade. Pope Innocent III preached a new crusade immediately after he succeeded to the Papacy in January 1198. The crusading army left Venice in late 1202 to begin their journey to the Holy Land with their eyes specifically honed on retaking Constantinople from the hands of the Orthodox Byzantines. The crusaders first reached the great city in July of 1203 but were not able to take the city until April of 1204. During this extensive siege, massive damage was done to the city of Constantinople. Two separate fires destroyed large portions of the city and many books were lost forever in the flames. While historians know that a monumental amount of literature was consumed by these fires, more was destroyed by other means during the siege and even

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2 Nicephorous is the Latinized spelling of Nikephoros. I am using the Latin versions of all names because they are more fitting with the English language than Greek spellings written with Latin characters

3 Planudes originally went by the name Manuel but changed his name to Maximus upon becoming a monk in the monastery of Chris Akataleptos, which is also known as the Kalandershane Camii. This monastery was likely the first Franciscan monastery in Constantinople. See Wilson 1983 for further readings.

4 Triclinius is the Latinized spelling of Triklinios.

more taken by the conquerors to be sold on the black market and for private collections, exactly which works are no longer extant on account of this event is not clear. The extent of the damage incurred in 1204 is well explained by Nigel G. Wilson in his work *Scholars of Byzantium* when he says “the destruction of libraries by the Turks has probably been exaggerated, since there are very few indications of the loss of Greek texts in 1453, whereas it is clear that after 1204 Byzantine scholars rarely if ever show direct acquaintance with literature that we cannot read today” (Wilson 1996: 218). Wilson goes on to mention that at least the two best works of Callimachus<sup>5</sup> were destroyed in 1204. Fernando Báez confirms that “one of the best texts by Callimachus of Cyrene, the *Hecale*, cited and read with a pleasure that today fills us with envy by Michael Choniates<sup>6</sup>, ... disappeared” in *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books: From Ancient Sumer to Modern Iraq*. Báez goes onto say “[c]opies of Sappho and other classics were also destroyed. Even so, the Byzantines reestablished the stability of their city and continued their philological labor” (Báez 2006: 98). As Báez and Wilson duly indicate, the Fourth Crusade was the single most important event in the context of Latin and Greek scholarship in the Byzantine Empire. No other event came close the amount of literature destroyed.

In spite of the razing of their literary collections “the Byzantines reestablished the stability of their city and continued their philological labor”. After the Latins took control of Constantinople in 1204, the center of scholarship in the Byzantine empire moved to Nicaea. However, the scholarship practiced in Nicaea was of a different genre from what was practiced in Byzantium before 1204 and from what resumed in Constantinople after 1453. The scholars in the Nicaean period focused almost entirely on salvaging and restoring the works that were damaged or temporarily lost on account of the Fourth Crusade. There were few works of scholarship written and new manuscripts organized

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5 Callimachus was Greek poet know for his short poems. Unlike many poets of his time, he experimented with different meters, topics and formats for poetry. He was an important inspiration for many poets, including the Roman Catullus.

6 Michael Choniates was a Byzantine writer who lived from 1140 to 1220. He was one of the last people to possess the *Hecale* and *Aitia* and the only modern information about those two famous works of poetry is known through the commentaries of Choniates, as Báez points out. In addition, he was a writer of poems, speeches and all manner of other forms of literature.

compared to the centuries that followed in the Palaeologan dynasty and the humanists of the Renaissance. One important impact of the Nicaean period is an improved tradition of education. In addition, the studies at Nicaea began a new focus on scholarship relating to Greek scientific classics<sup>7</sup>. After more than a half century, the Byzantines pushed the Latins out of Constantinople and took back their capital in 1261.

After the return to Constantinople, Byzantine scholarship was able to reach its highest levels of knowledge. The style of scholarship started in Nicaea was carried back to Constantinople and improved upon immensely, but the general focus shifted to more traditional scholarly and academic pursuits thus creating the beginning the Palaeologan dynasty, the final dynasty of Constantinople. Michael Palaeologus was the first Palaeologan emperor. He came to power in 1259 and led the the recovery of Constantinople from the Latins. Despite the re-acquisition of Constantinople, the strength of the Byzantine empire continually fell for the rest of the Palaeologan Dynasty, which lasted until the Turkish conquest in 1453. However, the Palaeologan Dynasty was successful in a few aspects of governing. In particular, the restoration of relations between the Byzantine empire and the Latins. As one can imagine, the Byzantines were not very amiable with the Latins after the Fourth Crusade and the devastation that Constantinople experienced. Primarily the Byzantines worked to mend their relationship with the Venetians, who were the most powerful state on the Mediterranean at the time due to their naval prowess. One effort to improve the bond between Constantinople and Venice was the visit taken by Maximus Planudes to Venice in 1296-7. Planudes was sent to Venice with the primary goal of pacifying the tempers of Venetians who were outraged over the murder of some of their comrades in Constantinople. In *Greek Scholars in Venice*, Deno John Geanakoplos illustrates just how intense the hostility between the Greeks and the Italians was: “Pope Innocent III himself informs us that after the performance of a Latin rite in the Byzantine churches, the Greeks were accustomed to

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<sup>7</sup> See Reynolds and Wilson 1968, Wilson 1996, Geanakoplos 1962, Staikos 2007 340-345 for more on Nicaea.

scrub their altars, in their eyes polluted by the Latin ceremony, and also to rebaptize their children in the Greek rite” (Geanakoplos 1962: 16). Planudes specifically was selected for this post in Venice because he had more than a passing familiarity with Latin, which was a very unusual trait at the time, unique to select lawyers beyond Planudes. In fact, as will be discussed later, Planudes was perhaps the only scholar of his time to possess any knowledge of the Latin language, to which we owe a great many works of literature. I will expand more on Planudes, among other scholars later.

As the Palaeologan dynasty progressed through the years, Byzantines began to see their government and culture shutdown. With the danger of living in a Turkish society imminent for many Byzantine citizens, emigration to Western European states, the very same ones who orchestrated the Fourth Crusade, started becoming a reality. While there were many options for Byzantines chose their new home from, the most significant was Venice. This seems peculiar at first given the animosity between the Byzantines, Constantinople in particular, and Venice in the past, but the Renaissance was born in Venice. And with the beginnings of the Renaissance came the development of humanism<sup>8</sup>. Geanakoplos provides one of the most comprehensive definitions of humanism when he states “we shall understand humanism to embrace the broad range of classical studies as originally conceived of by the Italian scholars of the fourteenth century --- the study of the writings, especially literary, of the ancient authors, the recovery of manuscripts of lost or rare texts, and the desire to learn Greek and write Latin, utilizing the refined style of the ancients as a model” (Geanakoplos 1962: 19). To be more specific, the Latins began to take an real interest in the Ancient Greek works, which their favorite Roman authors referenced and admired in the texts which have manuscript traditions in Italy. Returning to the Byzantine refugees in Venice, perhaps the primary reasons why Venice was a desired destination the high demand for scholars who could teach Greek given the recent and rapid growth of Humanism.

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<sup>8</sup> The word humanism is the origin of the more modern term humanities which is used to describe fields including but no limited to anthropology, classics, history, geography, linguistics, law, politics, performing arts, philosophy, religion and visual arts.

Beyond the movement of just scholars from Constantinople to Italy, many books experienced the same journey. The manuscript trade between the two cities began as early as 1200 in fact, before the Fourth Crusade razed the city of Constantinople and destroyed so many literary works with the city. While the exchange started that early, it did not come to its peak until the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Byzantine empire began to fully collapse. However, it is not impossible that the exchange of scholars began that early as well since there certainly was interaction between the two states.

Having provided a synopsis of the history of the Byzantine empire, and notably Constantinople, in the context of their roles in the protection and safeguarding of classical Greek and Latin literature, I will now delve into the details of how certain scholars contributed to the preservation of the writings which have shaped modern Western society.

## **II. Scholars of Byzantium and Their Contributions from 1204 to 1453**

There were many scholars throughout the history of Constantinople and I do not have time nor space to fully address all of the scholars who were important to the salvation of classical literature. So I have chosen a handful of scholars, monks and teachers who were especially meaningful to the corpus of Greek and Latin literature which is extant today. In the Nicaean period, the single most important figure was Nicephorous Blemmydes, a scholar and teacher known expressly for his work on textbooks regarding logic and physics. Moving into the Palaeologan dynasty, a much longer period of time, there are substantially more individuals to focus on. To begin there is Maximus Planudes, who was mentioned previously, renowned for his knowledge of Latin, and Theodore Methocites, whose library was among the most impressive in Constantinople maybe even the most impressive in all of the Byzantine empire. Continuing in the Palaeologan dynasty, Demetrius Triclinius was the first Byzantine to comprehend classical poetic meters and Manuel Chrysoloras closed out the Palaeologan dynasty by becoming the first person to lecture on Greek in Italy. Continuing into the final fall of Constantinople

and the exodus of scholars following, Michael Apostoles will be the focus of the discussion regarding the legacy of classical literature.

Nicephorous Blemmydes lived from 1197 to 1272. He is known primarily for his textbooks on logic and physics, which were largely unoriginal compilations and collections. In addition, Blemmydes composed an autobiography which provides a great deal of detail about his education and mental development. He notes that when he was of age for secondary education in Nicaea c.1213, the infrastructure to provide that level of education was not yet in place only nine years after the Fourth Crusade. Blemmydes read a great variety of texts including Diophantus and Aristotle to widen the scope of his education. When he was nearing the end of his life Blemmydes ventured out from Nicaea to find texts he did not have access to near to his home. He ventured deep into Greece, specifically Athos, where we found a number of rare texts but he neglects to name these works. While Blemmydes was definitely a well rounded scholar, he did not produce much original scholarship, which was fairly characteristic of the Nicaean period.

Moving from the Nicaean period into the Palaeologan Dynasty the first and most important scholar is Maximus Planudes. He was a Byzantine scholar and monk who lived c. 1255-1305<sup>9</sup>. He lived almost his entire life during the reigns of emperors Michael VIII and Andronicus II, the first two emperors in the Palaeologus dynasty, the last dynasty in the Byzantine empire. Planudes is especially interesting within the realm of Byzantine scholars for a few reasons. First, he was interested in a much broader selection of texts and topics than most scholars. Most scholars focused intensely on just a small number of topics and while Planudes focused his interests, he was well rounded enough to claim a substantial interest in all seven branches of the trivium and quadrivium. Even more interesting is Planudes' knowledge of Latin. At first glance, it is reasonable for one to think that many scholars in the

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<sup>9</sup> As with most people from this time period, Planudes birth and death dates have some discrepancies. His birth date is fairly fixed between 1255 and 1260. However his death date ranges from 1305 in Wilson 1996 to 1330 in Encyclopædia Britannica 1911

Byzantine empire, often flaunted as purely a continuation of the Roman empire, would have a fairly advanced knowledge of Latin. However, the majority of the Byzantine empire was Greek speaking during Planudes' life as well as the years preceding and following him. In fact, during his lifetime, Rome and Italy as a whole were detested by the Byzantines, as I addressed in the first section of this paper. Given this animosity and distrust, the source of Planudes' Latin education is subject to debate. Wilson presents three substantially different arguments in his 1996 work *Scholars of Byzantium*. First, Planudes learned Latin when he went to Venice on diplomatic business c.1296<sup>10</sup>. While it is possible that Planudes obtained his proficiency with the Latin language on this trip to Italy, it is more likely that he was given this assignment on account of his ability with Latin. The second explanation offered by Wilson is that another Byzantine scholar and monk by the name of Manuel Holobolus taught Planudes Latin. However, this theory depends on a doubtful assumption that Holobolus is the actual translator of a selection of texts by Boethius concerning logic. The third possibility is that Planudes learned the Latin language from the remains of the Latins which endured in the monastery of Christ Akataleptos. The biggest flaw with this theory is the timeline. The Latins left the monastery in 1261, when Planudes was still a small child. He is not proven to reside in the monastery until 1299 or 1301, some forty years later. Nevertheless, whichever explanation of the origin of Planudes' knowledge of Latin is true, it is certain that he was fairly well versed in the grammatical intricacies of the language and that such knowledge was very rare at the time.

Beyond the Latin language, Planudes was a teacher in a variety of subjects. In his teaching position at the monastery of Christ Akataleptos, he instructed pupils on the seven liberal arts, which were considered the base of education during his lifetime. These arts are divided into the trivium and the quadrivium. The trivium was the first for each pupil to master, consisting of the liberal arts

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<sup>10</sup> The reasons Planudes was sent to Venice are likely twofold. Geanakoplos 1962 agrees with Wilson 1996 that Planudes was likely chosen to go to Venice because he already knew Latin. Geanakoplos 1962 adds that his mission in Venice was to placate the Venetians who were outraged at the murder of several Venetians in Constantinople.



pertaining the mind. It was also considered the easier collection to master. The three arts within the trivium are logic, grammar and rhetoric, which are input, process and output of the brain, respectively. After a student had a sufficient handle on the arts of the mind, they progressed to the quadrivium, the arts of matter. The quadrivium contains arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. While these terms were not coined until the Carolingian Renaissance, the groupings were utilized in education during Planudes' life and even as early as the schools of ancient Greece. Planudes is especially interesting in this context because he not only personally studied and taught these concepts and skills, but also edited and translated written works concerning these topics.

Regarding the trivium, Planudes' work was primarily focused in grammar. He produced grammatical notes on many works including Aesop's fables, Philostratus' *Images* and *Heroikos*, and an original anthology including Strabo, Pausanias and Justinian's civil servant Johannes Lydus most notably. In logic, he did not pursue the topic beyond Boethius's translations of Aristotle. Planudes' study of rhetoric was also fairly lackluster, consisting only of editing the corpus of rhetoric manuals passed down from antiquity.

Planudes' work relating to the quadrivium is both similar to his work relating to the trivium and not. While he barely discussed music at all and only examined geometry in the form of notes on Euclid's *Elements* 6.5 and 10.32, his works relating to arithmetic and astronomy are extremely detailed and their contributions endure to this day. Planudes almost entirely studied arithmetic using Diophantus' *Arithmetica*. He borrowed two copies of this work, one from Theodore Muzalon and the other from Manuel Bryennios. He compared the two versions and autographed a copy of the work for himself, with notes on the first two volumes as well. In addition, he composed an original essay with improvements over Diophantus primarily in the method of extracting square roots. But Planudes most important contribution in the field of arithmetic is simply keeping the interest in Diophantus' work alive. It is quite probable that Planudes is solely responsible for that work being extant to this day. The

impact of Diophantus' work being extant is truly immeasurable but one example of its importance was touched upon in Wilson's *Scholars of Byzantium*. It was in fact a copy of *Arithmetica* in which Fermat wrote his famous last theorem. A theorem which took over three hundred years to be proved again<sup>11</sup>. Planudes' contributions to astronomy are also notable. He produced autograph copies of Cleomedes and Aratus. While it is not well known what, if any corrections, Planudes applied to the work of Cleomedes, Aratus' work received serious revision at the hands of Planudes. He deleted three inaccurate passages from the work and replaced them with original work stemming from Ptolemy's *Almagest*. While such a revision would never be done to a classical work today, Wilson provides a very reasonable explanation for Planudes' actions : "Planudes' procedure appears in a better light if we think of him as revising a successful textbook, for which many a modern analogy can be cited. It is also fair to remark in his defense that he appears to be doing no more than the ancient critics Attalus and Hipparchus, who corrected Aratus in order to bring his account into line with observed facts" (Wilson 1996: 232). This substantive revision further support Planudes' position as a well rounded scholar capable of understanding and teaching many complex subjects, an uncommon status in the ancient world.

While few, if any can match the importance of Planudes, other scholars in the Palaeologan Dynasty carried significant consequence in the sphere of classics. One such scholar was Theodore Methocites (1270 - 1332). Methocites was most well known for curating the library at the Chora Monastery in Constantinople. Under his direction the monastery was fully restored to the state it had once been in. However, in 1328 Methocites' property was seized by the state and he was exiled to

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<sup>11</sup> Fermat's Last Theorem is derived from a note he wrote in his copy of Diophantus' *Arithmetica*. His margin note according to Wilson 1996 was "On the other hand it is impossible to separate a cube into two cubes, or a biquadrate into two biquadrates, or generally any power except a square into two powers with the same exponent. I have discovered a truly marvelous proof of this, which however the margin is not large enough to contain". Translated into standard notation, this says that there are no positive integers  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$  which satisfy the equation  $a^n + b^n = c^n$ . Fermat proposed this theorem in 1637 and was not proved until 1995, 358 years later, when Sir Andrew Wiles published a peer-reviewed proof consisting of over 150 pages of group theory, algebraic geometry, commutative algebra and Galois theory. Given the complexity of this modern proof, it is considered unlikely by many that Fermat actually had a proof of this theorem.

Didymoteichon. Upon his exile, the first issue that came to his mind was what would happen to his beloved monastery when he was gone. In his work *The History of The Library in Western Civilization: From Constantine The Great to Cardinal Bessarion*, Konstantinos Staikos clearly lays Methocites' concerns. Staikos says “[Methocites] urged the monks to preserve harmony among themselves, to guard and cherish the collection of books which he had deposited with them and to make sure that not one book was destroyed or damaged by bookworms or other pests” (Staikos 2007: 427). Methocites' concern for the state of his precious collection is the primary reason why he is such an important figure. He realized that books were not simply a resource for the present but something that must be preserved for those who come after. While copying texts and autographing commentaries are useful and important parts of scholarship, there is no replacement for having possession of an original text. While for much of classics the original source material is the best resource, for philology, if every original text was still in existence the field would not exist. Returning to Methocites, his foresight for the importance of literary texts is remarkable and essential to the current state of Classics. However, it is not known exactly what works were saved by Theodore Methocites, or if his library survived the Turkish conquest in 1453. All that is truly known about Methocites, is that he was a great man who realized the importance of passing on original texts to those who inherited the interest in Latin and Greek literature from him and others.

The third scholar of the Palaeologan Dynasty who deserves our attention is Demetrius Triclinius (c.1280 - 1340). Triclinius lived in Thessalonica where he presumably ran a school given that there is no evidence he was a monk. In addition, he is thought to have been a pupil of Thomas Magister, another famous Byzantine scholar<sup>12</sup>. Triclinius focused his academic energies on scientific works and Greek drama. While Triclinius did emend many scientific works, none of his edits are particularly

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12 While Thomas Magister is an important figure in Byzantine scholarship and philology, there is not space in this essay to full address his contributions. See Staikos 2007: 257, Reynolds and Wilson 1991: 47, Sandys Vol. 1: 419, 430 for more information and discussion on him.

informative or useful. On the other hand, at least half of the extant works of Euripides, not to mention other Greek playwrights, were preserved by Triclinius. This legacy is the single most important contribution he made to the future of the study of classics. His interest in Greek drama in particular began with a copy of Hephaestion's<sup>13</sup> handbook on meter. As he understood more of what he read and was able to acquire additional texts, Triclinius was able to truly establish himself as a prominent scholar in the Palaeologan dynasty.

To begin with his less significant achievements in literature and finished with the most impressive and significant, it is noted that he made adjustments to a text of Hesiod prepared by a pupil of Planudes, many of which were metrical, which depicts his initial foray into works of meter. Moving into Greek tragedy, Triclinius' least important contribution was his work on Sophocles. Unlike his work on most other Greek playwrights, his edition of Sophocles included all the plays which are in existence today. His commentary on *Oedipus tyrannus* is notable because there are multiple notes from Triclinius that showcase a weak understanding of the refined details of meter and of the transition between meter and prose with Sophocles' work. More significantly, Triclinius' edition of Aristophanes' dramas included eight plays when most only included three. In addition to *Plutus*, *The Clouds* and *The Frogs*, the three which were deemed essential reading for any student of Greek literature, he included *The Acharnians*, *The Knights*, *The Wasps*, *Peace* and *Wealth II*. The only plays which are currently extant and were not included in Triclinius' Aristophanes are *Thesmophoriazusae*, *Ecclesiazusae* and *Lysistrata*. Wilson proposes that these works were not included because “[*Thesmophoriazusae*] ... was almost unknown, [and] the other two were rarities” (Wilson 1996: 252). In this anthology, Triclinius made many improvements to the text which were actually such. This is important because many Byzantine scholars, especially those of the Palaeologan Dynasty did more damage to works of Greek and Latin literature than benefit. As Geanakoplos writes “[Byzantine scholars] compiled or edited

<sup>13</sup> Hephaestion was an Alexandrian grammarian from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE who wrote the single most important treatise on Greek meters that had been preserved.

lexica and treatises on grammar and syntax, wrote scholia on poetry, prose, and scientific literature, and developed certain philological techniques for editing classical texts. Though their endeavors have often been subjected to severe criticism by nineteenth century scholars on the ground that in their work of editing they often corrupted the genuine texts, there is little doubt that through the interest they aroused in the ancient literature they were instrumental in preserving for the modern world valuable manuscripts of classical texts” (Geanakoplos 1962: 23). While it cannot be said for certain that the scholars discussed in this essay necessarily improved the ancient texts and manuscripts they interacted with more than they bowdlerized, Geanakoplos' point still rings true. To be completely honest, none of the Byzantine scholars were as skilled at Greek or Latin grammar, syntax or meter as the Greeks and Romans who came before or as the Italian Humanists of the Renaissance who came after were. But their interest and internalized obligation to teach the classics is why so many texts are extant.

Returning specifically to Triclinius, his work on Aristophanes was very well received by later scholars who noted his ability in correcting the flawed verse of Aristophanes in places<sup>14</sup>. Much like his edition of Aristophanes, Triclinius' Aeschylus includes less plays than are currently extant but more than were used in the average Byzantine classroom. Most notably, he alone is responsible for the perpetuation of *Agamemnon*, which Wilson notes is “the most powerful Greek tragedy, a text which may nevertheless have been subjected the hazards of [Triclinius'] critical procedures” (Wilson 1996: 253). While Triclinius' work on Aeschylus, Aristophanes and Sophocles are all notable and important to the legacy of those authors in modern classics, none of them compare to the effort put into and the impact of his text on the tragedies of Euripides. He discovered nine plays which no other Byzantine scholar had seen let alone worked with. While very few details of Triclinius' work on Euripides were exposed during my research, it is clear that he individually saved approximately half of the surviving Euripides plays. This alone places him as one of the most important Byzantine scholars to the

<sup>14</sup> In addition Triclinius created symbols to note whether a vowel is long or short. See Wilson 1996: 252 for further discussion.

preservation of Greek literature for future students of the Classics because Euripides is perhaps the most widely read and familiar Greek playwright. Now having discussed Demetrius Triclinius in detail, we move on to the final scholar from the Palaeologan Dynasty who will be discussed in this composition, Manuel Chrysoloras.

Manuel Chrysoloras was born c. 1355 and died in Germany in 1415. He was the first scholar to teach Greek in Western Europe having carried out a lecture series in Florence from 1397 to 1400. After this series he moved to Pavia and carried out a similar series over the next three years. Chrysoloras was invited to Florence by the chancellor of Florence, Coluccio Salutati<sup>15</sup>, after hearing about how effective his teaching was from Roberto Rossi<sup>16</sup>. What is very interesting is that Salutati's initial goal was to send Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia<sup>17</sup> to Constantinople to meet with Chrysoloras, obtain a long list of books from him, both for personal use and or a library of some sort and then to bring Chrysoloras to Florence if possible. It is interesting to understand that the primary obstacle preventing Chrysoloras from going to Florence for an extended period of time is likely the complications of travel in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Whereas, in modern times traveling from Constantinople, now Istanbul, to Florence could be done in half a day flying or just under a day driving! Eventually through Jacopo was able to convince Chrysoloras to travel to Florence and share his wealth of knowledge on the Greek language. Chrysoloras was so successful in his teachings because he managed to simplify the existing grammar texts into textbooks which were accessible to schoolchildren and those in Florence as well. For example, his textbook *Erotemata* contained 10 types of nouns while a similar textbook by Manuel

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15 Coluccio Salutati was a skilled writer and orator on top of being the Chancellor of Florence. He drew heavily from Cicero and Vergil, but perhaps his favorite author was Petrarch. His personal library was the largest library in Florence during his time in power. Salutati was the last man who held power in Florence before the Medici family came to power in 1434.

16 Roberto Rossi as a pupil of Chrysoloras and one of the first Florentines to ever read Greek. He eventually became a tutor of the Medici family, specifically for Cosimo Medici, the founder of the Medici dynasty.

17 Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, also known by his Latin name Jacobus Angelus, was an Italian scholar and humanist during the Renaissance. His most important translations were many works of Plutarch and Ptolemy. He also brought texts of Homer, Aristotle and Plato to the attention of western scholars through his studies under Manuel Chrysoloras in Constantinople.

Moschopulus<sup>18</sup> discussed 56 types of nouns. With examples like this it is easy to see how Chrysoloras was so successful at teaching Greek. In fact, his textbook was so well regarded by Florentians that it was in print publication by 1471 only thirty one years after the invention of the printing press! The success of his textbook likely had a greater impact on the legacy of Greek in Italy and Western Europe in general because it was clearly in use long after he died and by many students and teachers who never had the pleasure of directly interacting with Chrysoloras himself. In addition to his textbook on Greek, Chrysoloras' biggest achievement was translating a number of Greek works to Latin, by his own hand and those of his students, with accurate idiomatic translations which had been lacking from virtually all previous Latin version which were word for word translations. Any person who has studied languages can confirm that idioms are the most difficult aspect of writing and speech to master or even understand, which lends more significance to Chrysoloras' achievement. Unlike other scholars, the value of Chrysoloras' work was recognized by his contemporaries and especially his students. His most famous pupil Guarino da Verona<sup>19</sup> paid tribute to Chrysoloras in the form of a small collection of texts entitled *Chrysolorina*. The title is of course an invented Latin word in the form of words such as *Manliana* and *Appiana* which described fruit these Romans brought back from foreign lands, just like how Chrysoloras brought Greek from a far away land back to Italy.

Chrysoloras' missions to Italy were the last major contribution to classical scholarship before the fall of Constantinople. As the Byzantine empire declined the majority of scholars emigrated to preserve their work and their literary collections. One such scholar was Michael Apostoles. He was born in Constantinople, date unknown, and died in 1480. He lived during the final collapse of the Byzantine empire. After the Turks took his home city in 1453 he fled to Italy and became a client of Cardinal

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18 Manuel Moschopulus, the Latinized form of Manuel Moschopoulos, was a Byzantine grammarian and scholar during the Palaeologan Dynasty. He was a student of Planudes.

19 Guarino da Verona is perhaps most well known for a story concerning a case of Greek manuscripts. Legend says that he as returning to Italy with two cases of Greek manuscripts, he lost one case when his ship wrecked. As a result of this great loss, his hair turned gray in one night.

Bessarion<sup>20</sup>. Apostoles is most well known for his strong opinions on the value of Aristotle and Plato. He was of the opinion that neither author deserved significant attention in the Humanist studies. However, his patron did not agree with such sentiments and discredited Apostoles' beliefs with a short treatise which also served as an end to the relationship between the two figures. However, Apostoles continued his career as a copyist and a collector in many places before his death in Crete.

In conclusion, Byzantine scholars were pioneers in the fields of philology and classical scholarship. Nicephorous Blemmydes, the most prominent scholar of the Nicaean period, wrote textbooks on logic and physics, discovered many lost Greek texts and helped create the foundation of secondary education in Nicaea, which carried over into Constantinople. During the Palaeologan dynasty, there was Maximus Planudes, Theodore Methocites, Demetrius Triclinius and Manuel Chrysoloras. Planudes known for his study of Latin and extensive scholarly works on both Greek and Latin texts, Methocites for his impressive and valuable library, Triclinius for his landmark work to preserve and improve Greek tragedy and Chrysoloras as the bridge connecting Greek and Latin scholarship in the crumbling Byzantine empire to the future home of the Renaissance and residence of the largest collections of Latin codices and manuscripts, Italy. Finally, Michael Apostoles lived through the final collapse of the Byzantine Empire and physically carried the legacy of scholars to Italy and to other European states afterwards.

These six scholars were individually remarkable and valuable to the study of classics but they were not alone. Each of them learned their craft from an elder, be it a monk, another scholar or a variety of sources, and taught the intricacies to the next generation. Because these men were not in their own bubbles of influence or living in separate worlds, they influenced each other, when it aligns with their respective timelines, and improved upon the work of each other and the other scholars in their

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<sup>20</sup> Basilios Bessarion, often referred to as Cardinal Bessarion, was a Roman Catholic Cardinal Bishop who presided over two Papal conclaves as *primus Cardinalium*, in 1464 and 1471, who was among the most learned scholars of his time. He maintained a remarkable personal library containing some 700 Greek and Latin manuscripts.



field. They were not alone in recognizing the value and potential impact of the classics in government, art and beyond, but they worked to restore and preserve the works of the classics. They spent their lives, at least before the invention of the printing press, copying the works of Plutarch, Euripides, Caesar, Ovid and so many others by hand so that other people could experience the joy of reading the classics. According to Elmer D. Johnson's *History of Libraries in the Western World*, approximately 75% of extant Greek classics are known through Byzantine copies. Without these men we would have so much less content to read and enjoy. And yet there is still more literature that is not extant, Callimachus and Sappho among the Greek authors, and perhaps even more than is not even known through contemporary sources. We have to be joyful and glad for the classics that are extant and yet we must also acknowledge and grieve for the works which were never saved. Classics is and will always be an incomplete study of what was, just like all historical studies, but it provides the most complete picture of how past societies have grown, fallen and gone on to influence future states.

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