

a very particular blend of learned and popular style' (9). The work thus draws heavily on the Greek past, both its immediate and more distant predecessors in the novel/romance tradition (15–17) while also, as a work written in the vernacular register, anticipating the literary style of modern Greek that would come to dominate in the following centuries. But A. rightly situates *L&R* not just within a diachronic Greek tradition; from a synchronic perspective, he also shows the influence of the western and, to a lesser degree, Persian and Arabic literature that circulated freely in the late-medieval eastern Mediterranean (17–22). Thus, the work is a hybrid of the ancient and medieval Greek tradition and the western romance tradition epitomized by Chrétien de Troyes and others that infused other works in the empire's last centuries.

Since its inception a decade ago, the Translated Texts for Byzantinists series has established itself as among the most important publishers of medieval Greek fiction. The first volume in the series, Elizabeth Jeffreys' *Four Byzantine Novels* (2012) made accessible to Byzantinists and general readers these long-neglected works. The upshot of the decade of scholarship since *Four Byzantine Novels* is that the novels and romances, long dismissed as stylistically artificial, poor imitations of the tradition of the ancient novel, intellectually superficial, or marginal to Byzantine and medieval European literature, have undergone a reevaluation that has disproved each of these caricatures. A's own scholarship has been instrumental in this reevaluation. Though a few minor typos mar this otherwise excellent volume (e.g. for Silvercastle: Silvecastle on p.18, Silverscastle on p. 36, and Silverastle on p.53), this volume, the culmination of what he calls 'a passionate affair that gave me many hours of bittersweet pleasure' over the past three decades, gives audiences the chance to explore this 'intriguing Byzantine Greek narrative' (ix). It's a chance they would do well to take.

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Florin Leonte, *Imperial Visions of Late Byzantium: Manuel II Palaiologos and Rhetoric in Purple*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 344
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A refined inspection of the literary legacy of one of late Byzantium's most important emperors is conducted in *Imperial Visions*, by Florin Leonte.

Although the overarching purpose is to supplement political history, the focus on Manuel's rhetorical texts makes this less useful as a general history of his reign. Although L. is clearly well-acquainted with the entirety of Palaiologan authors and late Byzantine history in general, and provides relevant context on Manuel's life and times, this study does not aspire to be a new stand-alone history. Readers seeking such

a work should see Siren Çelik, *Manuel II Palaiologos (1350–425): Byzantine Emperor in a Time of Tumult* (Cambridge, 2021), which assesses Manuel's written oeuvre more generally (as a complementary aspect), whereas L.'s monograph will be of greater use to specialists in Manuel's rhetorical texts, or Byzantine rhetoric and literature in general.

Following a contextual introduction and notes on sources, L. divides the study into two main parts. Despite the often abstruse nature of the text, the thesis is simple enough: that Manuel II relied on his cosmopolitan upbringing and education to develop communications strategies within a complex political-religious context, to achieve goals or mitigate negative outcomes when possible, at a time of extreme limitations and difficulties for the empire. This has long been known. What is more novel about the approach is the focus on Manuel's rhetorical works as literary and historical artefacts to demonstrate the concept.

In order to discuss Manuel's texts (in Part II), L. first mentions those of his allies and rivals in the lay and ecclesiastical intelligentsia of Constantinople and other cities, in Part I, 'Consent and Dissent,' which explores the emperor's literary court. This is essentially a classic survey, in which the ideas of important churchmen are discussed in their contemporary contexts, including relations with the Western church, pastoral outreach to Orthodox populations in Latin-controlled areas (like Crete) and Turkish-controlled ones (as with most of Anatolia), as well as the internal power struggles between Manuel II and his discontented nephew and rival, Despot of Thessaloniki, John VII.

L. associates the rise of a collective authorial role in the Church with Hesychasm, officially adopted in 1351, which influenced trends toward a largely non-political, anti-church Union clerical mindset that instead favoured monasticism and prayer (p. 20). The most important ecclesiastical, and then lay authors are then assessed.

While focusing on too many authors to provide an authoritative account of any single one, the first part provides good context for the more important second part, 'Other voices, other approaches: Manuel II's political writings,' which analyses Manuel II's writing, exploring its literary character and political subtexts. L. argues that Manuel cemented his authority and indeed, legitimacy during a very unstable era, largely through his own writing, managing to hold his own in a perennial battle of wits with the cultivated mandarins of the imperial court and the often-antagonistic ecclesiasts.

L. displays an authoritative knowledge of the ancient Greek and Byzantine rhetorical corpus and its literary strategies in his scrutiny of Manuel's works; specifically, four: the *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage*; the *Foundations of an Imperial Education*; the *Seven Ethico-Political Orations*, and the *Funeral Oration on His Brother Theodore, Despot of Morea*. All of these texts were composed during Manuel's reign and, L. writes, 'reveal the extent to which the emperor regarded his literary activities as intertwined with, and reflected in, the administration of the Byzantine state' (p. 8).

L. devotes 13–25 pages (43 in the case of *Seven Ethico-Political Orations*) to a discussion of these works, which greatly expands our appreciation and understanding of Manuel's thought as writer and statesman. L.'s methodology is well exhibited by his

approach to the funeral oration for Despot Theodore ('The rhetorical template and the compositional structure of the Funeral Oration,' from p. 203). After demonstrating how Manuel employed a long-existing rhetorical template from antiquity for this *epitaphios*, L. discusses each section – bolstering his claim about the unusually detailed historical narrative for such a rhetorical form (in this case, about contemporaneous events in the Peloponnese) by citing three near-contemporary Byzantine authors commenting on Manuel's text.

For L., Manuel emerges as an 'omniscient storyteller' (p. 214), deliberately transgressing the bounds of a genre he had earlier sworn to eschew, as undertaking a long narrative would be the historian's task. It is an interesting insight, and supports L.'s contention that narrative's diverse function in such rhetorical works remains somewhat overlooked by Byzantinists. This is accompanied by use of theoretical terminology: Manuel is described as being in a homodiegetic relationship with his text; that is, becoming a character in his own narration (p. 215). As with his other examples, L. presents Manuel as utilizing conventional works of rhetoric in personal ways, to emphasize and assert his own imperial power. L. concludes that Manuel's literary works reveal not only 'his attempts to answer political challenges, but also a unique and long-term imperial project' to create 'a system of effective political communication by exhibiting his fatherly concern for his son and co-emperor' (p. 265).

While accepting Sphrantzes' view of Manuel as a self-confessed 'managerial' emperor overseeing diminished territories and constant crises, L. makes the case that Manuel took an active role in staving off various problems and guiding resolutions when dealing with political and ecclesiastical rivals. In this light, 'the role of rhetoric in his rule cannot be overlooked' (p. 267). L. does a service in exploring these texts as vital source-material for a reign lacking in contemporaneous historiographical sources, a fact that has long forced scholars to look to Byzantine texts published after Manuel's death for information on his reign.

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Emmanuel Roïdes, *Pope Joan* Translated by David Connolly. Athens: Aiora Press, 2019. Pp. 231
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David Connolly's 2015 annual lecture of the UK Society for Modern Greek Studies¹ presented such a bleak account of the lot of the translator of modern Greek literature

¹ David Connolly 'Love's Labour's Lost or A Tale of Modern Greek Literature in English Translation.' Annual Public Lecture of the Society for Modern Greek Studies (UK), 6 June 2015.