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‘And the whole city cheered’

*The poetics and politics of the miraculous
in the Early Palaiologan period*

Niels Gaul

Post-1204 Byzantine history – Laskarid or Nicaean history, in this case – began with a display of civic independence.¹ If, that is, we trust George Akropolites who, writing his *History* towards the end of the thirteenth century,² faithfully preserved the following incident (while at the same time glossing over it as discreetly as possible – for, somewhat embarrassingly, it seems to have been an act of ‘political’ resistance): when the *despotēs* Theodore Laskaris, the future emperor in exile, fled Constantinople together with his wife and daughters, ‘arriving at the city of Nicaea, he appealed to the citizens to admit him into the city and to accept him as their lord. But they would not admit him. Then Laskaris urged them persistently and, even though he entreated them to admit his wife only, he persuaded them with difficulty.’³ The reader is not told who ‘the Nicaeans’ were – presumably, the local elite rather than the *dēmos* – and in which way they reached ‘their’ decision, nor is there any evidence permitting a prosopographical scrutiny of this incident, but one is led to assume that the city acted unanimously, as a whole.

The long and pious reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282–1328) saw the loss of the Anatolian provinces to the advancing Ottoman and Turkmen tribes and in its wake the transformation of the only recently restored medieval Eastern Roman Empire, with Constantinople as its centre, from a regional into a local power.⁴ Consequence, as much as cause, of this rapid fragmentation of the centralising (imperial) power was the re-emergence, after a long gap from Imperial and late antique Rome, of meaningful civic discourse. This discourse started resurfacing from the twelfth century onward for a variety of reasons⁵ and accelerated with the cataclysmic events of 1204 and the temporary – or perhaps not so temporary, for Constantinople was never to fully recover its previous status – loss of the Empire’s ideological centre.⁶ With the City of Constantine in ‘Latin’ hands, former subject cities stepped up to take her place; the initially reluctant city of Nicaea emerged to be one of the more important among them. *Poleis* started perceiving themselves once again as distinct political entities, whose elites sought to take charge of their own affairs internally as well as externally. Normally, this⁸ happened within the imperial framework, but especially during the fourteenth-century civil wars, there was room for manoeuvre.

In fact, the Nicaean attestation of civic independence (or pride?) that opened this chapter can be corroborated from sources considerably closer to the event. The *rhētor* and historiographer Niketas Choniates referred to Theodore Laskaris, before his acclamation as emperor, as ‘lord of the eastern cities’, thus emphasising the role of the *poleis*.⁷ He also provides us with a short description of Laskaris’ political conduct regarding these cities: ‘You travel to the eastern cities and negotiate with their citizens,’ Choniates wrote,

you point out the impending danger if they do not become your subjects right away. These you rebuke, those you reprimand. Soon you address a public assembly, soon you privately receive the nobles and invite them to dine, and you show them your great experience and intricate knowledge [of the circumstances], if only in that manner you raise the low spirits of the Rhomaioi.⁸

Addressing assemblies publicly, meeting civic notables privately: this aptly highlights the tools available to those who thought to control civic discourse in the late Byzantine world; they are discernible in the sources throughout the Palaiologan period.

As suggested by these initial observations, it appears that the discursive description of the Empire as a conglomerate of cities virtually reappeared from the very moment that the Queen-City, Constantinople, was lost.⁹ While later events, like the oft-quoted Catalan wars in the first decade of the fourteenth century, without doubt contributed to the notion of the ‘walled town’ as a self-sustaining community,¹⁰ the possibility to image the Empire as consisting of a network, or ‘archipelago’, of cities had already been there for quite some time.¹¹

In a world of ‘small-state complexities’,¹² frequently torn apart by rebellions, religious strife and outright civil wars, competing legitimacies and loyalties posed a severe challenge to civic concord (ὁμόνοια) and peace at the smallest incident. No governor (κεφαλὴ) who came under pressure from both sides – above and below, as it were: from the imperial power on the one hand and his own citizens on the other – could be sure to retain a hold over affairs if tables turned. In Kantakouzenos’ apposite words:

Each of the lords over the cities will be put under pressure by their own citizens, and fearing the fickleness of fortune and not knowing to whom of the emperors the empire will fall, they will hand over their cities to the one who appears stronger at the moment.¹³

One form of – more often than not, ritualised – communication that re-emerged in Palaiologan civic communities to address this need for concord were public assemblies (ἐκκλησίαι).¹⁴ Normally, unless things went terribly wrong, the common people, the *dēmos*, could be relied on to swing along with what their social betters had decided; rather than a ‘democratic’ practice, such public assemblies were yet another means of visualising and performing power. Describing with hindsight¹⁵ the situation towards the end of the first civil war in 1328, the elder statesman and historiographer John Kantakouzenos explicitly stated that the *dēmos* of Epirote Edessa was dependent upon the opinion (γνώμη; other meanings include ‘disposition’ or ‘favour’) of the local lords: ‘The powerful in Edessa [...] did not exaggerate in any way, as the populace of Edessa depended on their opinion.’¹⁵ This ties in well with the same Kantakouzenos’ telling advice that the younger Andronikos, when falling out with his grandfather in the early 1320s, should seek refuge in Adrianople because his late father, the unfortunate Michael IX (r. 1294–1320), had assembled a considerable power base there, ‘and many would be rather eager and willing to take some risk for his son’.¹⁶ Finally, the exemplary case of Bizye shows that, in the pretext of a public assembly, a pressure group of *archontes* could in fact overrule the *kephalē* if the latter lacked support from his peers: in 1344, the governor George Palaiologos preferred to withdraw to Thessalonike, thanking the assembly for being allowed to leave unharmed, rather than to defect to the opposing party in the so-called second civil war.¹⁷

However, not only *poleis* entered the post-1204 stage of Byzantine history with renewed vigour. This was also a period when the miraculous returned to Byzantine culture (and literature).

The return of the miraculous

Accounts and collections of miracles, popular at all times save perhaps the Komnenian and Laskarid twelfth and thirteenth centuries,¹⁸ resurfaced in the reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos; in all likelihood, the phenomenon was tied into the restoration of Orthodoxy early in Andronikos’ reign and inter alia served to glorify this emperor’s pious rule.¹⁹ Palaiologan authors ‘refreshed’ and expanded the miracle collections of shrines which had long been in function. Such was the case with Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos’ account of the Pege shrine of the Theotokos – at the request of a certain Makarios, an aristocrat from Serres turned monk at the Pege – or of the miracles of St Euphrosyne the Younger.²⁰ Similarly, Constantine Akropolites reworked the miracle collections of the shrines of saints Theodosia, which he used not least in order to promote his own family and its imperial connections, and Zotikos.²¹ Somewhat further down the social ladder, Maximos the deacon, presumably of the Kosmidion monastery in the vicinity of Constantinople, rewrote the miracles of Cosmas and

Damian, whereas in Trebizond, John Lazaropoulos composed his famous dossier of the miracles of the city's patron saint, Eugeneios.²² Equally, collecting miracles began serving the purpose of creating new saints, as they testified to someone's saintly conduct:²³ the posthumous miracles of Patriarch Athanasios I, recorded by Theoktistos the Stoudite, or especially those of Gregory Palamas, as recorded by Philotheos Kokkinos, come to mind.²⁴

In the present context, my interest is not with the miraculous or miracle collections *per se* but, rather, with the performative power of the miraculous in influencing or shifting civic opinion. As it happens, two pertinent instances of miraculous performances achieving, or consolidating, such shifts have come down to us not¹⁰ in late Byzantine hagiography, as one might expect, but in historiography. The somewhat fluid boundaries between the genres, or more precisely the inclusion of hagiographical elements into other genres, has previously been noted with regard to the Palaiologan period.²⁵ By contrast, eleventh- and twelfth-century historiographers such as Michael Attaleiates, John Skylitzes, John Kinnamos, Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates did not pay much attention to matters miraculous. On the contrary, Michael Psellos ridiculed Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos for believing that a miracle had occurred at his late wife, the Empress Zoe's, tomb when 'by a trick of nature some fungus sprang up' in a place where the silver covering a column of the tomb had cracked and moisture had crept in.²⁶ In the later thirteenth century, George Akropolites openly contested the view that St Demetrios had helped the besieged Thessalonians by killing the Bulgarian king Kalojan (John) in 1207, denigrating the saint quite bluntly.²⁷ There was, then, a considerable change of attitude in the days of the elder Andronikos.

By analysing these two instances, this chapter attempts to illuminate how this return of the miraculous could be exploited by shrewd politicians to achieve civic goals, and how such performances were recorded by contemporary historiographers (either believing or unbelieving). The first example comes from George Pachymeres' *Histories* and looks at Magnesia in the early fourteenth century (AD 1303). My second example derives from John Kantakouzenos' *History* and scrutinises Andronikos III's entry to Thessalonike in January 1328. What is primarily effected in both instances is civic unity in a critical situation. One of our authors, George Pachymeres, was observing and, possibly, believing in the miraculous occurrences he narrated; the other, John Kantakouzenos, was involved (I believe) in the staging of the spectacular miraculous cure he described in detail.

In analysing these episodes as social performances, I once again borrow my terminology from Jeffrey C. Alexander's work on social performances in the public and political spheres.²⁸ Drawing on performance theory, Alexander defines the elements of public performance as follows:²⁹ the script and its cultural background; the actors; the audience; the means of symbolic production and *mise-en-scène*; and, finally, the distribution of social power. Adapting Austin's well-known analysis of speech-acts, Alexander suggests that social performances are judged as either successful or unsuccessful (infelicitous). Success comes when the audience experiences an authentic re-fusion – or even flow – of the 'increasingly disentangled' elements of performance: '[i]n a fused performance, audiences identify with actors, and cultural scripts achieve verisimilitude through effective *mise-en-scène*'.³⁰

In this context, it is especially the distribution of social power that warrants a closer look: the two instances here presented are, to the best of my knowledge, the only ones from the Early Palaiologan period with a top-to-bottom structure performed before an audience, in contrast to the more common bottom-to-top structure, in which a 'private' individual, often of low social rank,³¹ becomes the subject of a miraculous healing (often without any immediate audience). While this chapter does not intend to enter the discussion as to whether medieval miracles were 'real' or 'imagined',³² it cannot be excluded that, for the just-mentioned structural¹¹ reason, the two miracles here discussed, unless merely literary performances, may actually have been staged performances of the miraculous. In this sense, this chapter suggests strategies for deciphering the codes of late Byzantine historiography while at the same time exploring how local elites, the so-called *archontes*, and occasionally even rival emperors could hope to manipulate civic opinion by means of miraculous (social) performances.

Case study I: Magnesia, 1303

The first case study is set in the city of Magnesia in the Maeander region. Not long before a residence of emperors and safeguard of the imperial mint,³³ close to Ephesos and in proximity to the (Laskarid) summer palace at Nymphaion, by 1303 the city was in imminent danger of falling to the advancing Turks.

In this context Pachymeres relates the following episode (for a draft translation of the Greek text, cf. Appendix I.1): In the winter of 1302/03, during his ill-fated campaign against the Ottomans,³⁴ co-emperor Michael IX and his bunch of Alan mercenaries hurriedly left Magnesia behind in night, snow and, most importantly, desperation. Some time later, the worry-stricken captain of the castle (*kastrophylax*), who remains anonymous, observed at night a flaming torch going round the walls of the town, not once or twice, but thrice. The *kastrophylax* did not fail to alert an appropriately wide-ranging audience: ‘When naturally he shared this with the notables, he led them, too, to similar astonishment (ἐκπληξιν).’ The audience subsequently expanded further. None of those present, however, was capable of explaining the strange phenomenon. At this stage the *kastrophylax*’s brother, known to all as deaf and dumb since the day of his birth, was brought into play: in fact, he emerges as the key actor. He was the only one, one hears, who was able to see the blazing torch for what it really was: ‘a man in imperial attire’. The imperial apparition turned out to be St John the Merciful, or Almsgiver – the former Emperor John III Batatzes – who, by means of his mere presence, seemed to offer his protection and encourage the townspeople to defend their city.³⁵ In the end, those who witnessed this manifestation ‘believed themselves protected by God’. The initial desperation was gone. It is evident that this episode represents a piece of pro-Laskarid propaganda;³⁶ it was also a social performance which felicitously achieved its aims and a shift in civic spirits.

Pachymeres’ careful description allows us to infer what such a social performance evoking the ‘miraculous’ needed to observe in order to be judged felicitous in an early fourteenth-century provincial town. The elements of performance were as follows.

- Background symbols/foreground script: a miracle setting evoking/vested with spiritual power (reiterating and adapting background scripts/symbols that had been established since late antiquity in times of danger – in this particular case, protective processions around the walls of a city).³⁷
- The actors: the principal actors are the anonymous captain of the castle and his – allegedly – deaf and dumb brother. Also, the *epi tēs trapezēs* Michael¹² Doukas Philanthropenos is singled out by Pachymeres as an important witness, and thus perhaps his source for this occurrence.³⁸
- The audience: first the local elite, the *archontes* (τοῖς προέχουσι); later, the common townsfolk. It remains somewhat unclear whether common folk was already included among the ‘others’ (ἄλλοι, 439.10; σὺν πολλοῖς δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις, 439.28) who were sent to investigate the apparition, or merely learnt of the miracle in the end (προσπαίει δὲ πᾶσιν, 441.11).
- The means of performance: a flaming torch; a saintly figure in imperial attire (not seen by anybody but one witness).
- The mise-en-scène: a stormy night, with limited visibility.
- Finally, the distribution of power: suspiciously, the performative script follows a top-to-bottom structure: from the *kastrophylax* and the local notables down to the common townspeople, rather than the far more common bottom-to-top structure.

This last observation provides a convenient point of departure for further considerations. For the present purpose, it does not matter what ‘really happened’ that night, whether the whole story is fiction or whether some sort of performance was indeed staged (a tempting thought): what renders this episode suspicious above all is its top-to-bottom structure. The only *archōn* whose name is mentioned – presumably detached from the imperial court –, the *epi tēs trapezēs* Philanthropenos, is explicitly singled out as ‘a man embellished with nobility, old age, sagacity, and experience in mat-

ters of warfare': it would certainly not have been beyond such a mind to conceive the sort of performance that made its way into Pachymeres' *Histories*. One notes that Pachymeres himself expressed his doubts about the proceedings at Magnesia; he found the miracle difficult to believe and was about to omit it (ἄπιστον δ' ἀκοῦσαι, ᾧ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς διηπίστησα ἄν, καὶ δι' αὐτὸ καὶ παρέλιπον) – but did narrate it, he says, because it came on such good authority.³⁹

Two contextualising observations help throw further light on this. First, as indicated previously, it is important to note that supernatural occurrences are attested elsewhere in Pachymeres. Yet while he refers to supernatural portents and divine omens on a number of occasions, healing miracles are limited to three instances. Intriguingly, all of them occur in the very same book of the *Histories*, in chapters XI.10, XI.15, and XI.32.⁴⁰ The former two are connected with Michael IX's 1302/03 campaign against the Turks – the one just discussed, and the other benefiting the junior emperor (XI.10) – and the last is set in Constantinople in 1306, where at the time Andronikos II was facing considerable opposition.⁴¹

In chapter XI.10, Pachymeres describes a miraculous healing of Michael IX himself.⁴² In August 1303, the junior emperor, unable to reach Pergamon, retreated to Kyzikos and thence to Pegai; there he fell so ill that he felt his end approaching. With great difficulty, he sent a letter to his father in Constantinople, describing his symptoms in detail. The senior emperor duly dispatched his doctors, some of his *oikeioi* and holy oil from the shrine of the Theotokos Hodegetria, together with one of the monastery's monks (who remains anonymous).⁴³ In a dream, Michael already on his deathbed (ἤδη νεκρός) saw the Theotokos approaching, |¹³ who alerted him to the monk's arrival. The emperor called on his entourage: "See," he said, "whether a monk who has just landed is resting on our shore and brings gifts from the Mother of God."⁴⁴ The monk was duly identified and the junior emperor's life saved due to the Theotokos' intervention: the suffering and despondency was ripped from his body like a nail (ἥλον). The emperor's miraculous recovery happened 'amidst immense enthusiasm and with wonder' (ἐν ὅτι πλείστῳ τῷ θειασμῷ γενομένη καὶ μετὰ θαύματος).⁴⁵ The narrative structure and context of this healing miracle are very different from chapter XI.15: although some courtiers were present no audience is explicitly mentioned and, judging by Pachymeres' account, the miracle was not tied into civic circumstances: unlike the appearance of John Batatzes in chapter XI.15, Michael IX's recovery in chapter XI.10 is not expressly linked with a heartening of the citizens of Pegai, or of the emperor's army. Judging by paratextual markers, Pachymeres himself appears to have accorded less significance to this event than to the other two: the rubrics of chapters XI.15 and XI.32 refer to the miraculous events described in the chapters,⁴⁶ while the heading for chapter XI.10 merely reads: 'About the emperor Michael's retreat to Kyzikos, then Pegai.'⁴⁷

The miracle described in chapter XI.32, by contrast, lends itself to direct comparison with the Magnesia episode, as it describes an almost identical healing miracle. This final instance – for a complete translation, cf. Appendix I.2 – observes the far more common bottom-to-top structure: a 'deaf and dumb' adolescent (νεανίας) received a calling to the church of St Theodosia in Constantinople,⁴⁸ where he was miraculously cured, first by a vision of the saint herself and subsequently, and lastingly, by means of a fire miracle. In the event the young man himself reported the story to the emperor, the elder Andronikos Palaiologos, who led an enthusiastic crowd in procession to praise the saint in a night-long vigil. This episode follows the typical structure that such miracles assume in most Palaiologan dossiers of healing miracles, e.g. those of Patriarch Athanasios I:⁴⁹ the former patriarch appeared in a dream to a young man called Manuel Bourdes, who lived in the Kynegoi quarter of Constantinople. He carried an enormous apple inscribed with the letter Alpha; to his right was the Theotokos who admonished the patriarch not to give the apple to the boy until he had performed a great many supplications. In the end, Bourdes was healed and 'became a fervent herald of the miracle and up to now has refused to remain silent, proclaiming the works of God and openly celebrating His mighty deeds'.⁵⁰

Second, while healing miracles of deaf- and dumbness are by no means uncommon in late Byzantine hagiography and miracle collections, they generally seem to be void of political implications, with the possible exception of Kokkinos' detailed attention paid to the miracles Palamas performed

for the family of the *hetaireiarchēs* Andronikos Tzimiskes from Berrhoia, who subsequently changed his allegiance from the anti-Palamite to the Palamite camp.⁵¹

Yet it is the opposing narrative structures of chapters XI.15 and XI.32 – top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top – which make for the most interesting effect. Did contemporaries, one wonders, perceive the connection between these two performances, which Pachymeres established by means of their juxtaposition in ¹⁴ his narrative? More importantly perhaps, did such a connection ever exist outside this literary representation? Did the anti-Palaiologan instance (chapter XI.15) become permissible to be included in Pachymeres' narrative as it was framed by two pro-Palaiologan miraculous occurrences (chapters XI.10 and XI.32)? Or did, by contrast, the anti-Palaiologan instance, in Magnesia – spatially beyond the grasp of the primarily Constantinopolitan audience for whom Pachymeres wrote – gain reaffirmation and an increasing claim to authenticity by being sandwiched between two accounts of pro-Palaiologan miracles, especially the structurally almost parallel episode which featured a ruling, Palaiologan emperor, Andronikos II, the saintly patriarch Athanasios I, and the clergy of the Great Church among its actors?

Did the Palaiologoi – in similarly critical times – hope to imitate, and emulate, the effect the *archontes* at Magnesia had achieved with their performance, by staging a similar performance in their city, Constantinople? There is some circumstantial evidence in support of the assumption that the Palaiologan court assigned some significance to this miraculous performance: one of Andronikos II's leading courtiers, the *megas logothetēs* Constantine Akropolites, son of George Akropolites, who was also one of the day's most prolific hagiographers, composed, or perhaps was commissioned to compose, an updated encomium of St Theodosia, expanding the saint's posthumous miracle account to his day.⁵² A mere coincidence? Or is this, as the evidence would suggest, Palaiologan court propaganda at work?

Case study II: Thessalonike, January 1328

From the church of St Theodosia in Constantinople, this chapter returns to civic discourse and moves on to the social drama of the so-called first civil war, which raged intermittently from 1321 to 1328 between Andronikos II Palaiologos and his grandson of the same name, Andronikos III.⁵³ This second case study scrutinises the younger Andronikos' progress to Thessalonike in January 1328, as (decades) later recollected by his 'friend' and eventual successor, John Kantakouzenos. Among the healings of imperial figures in late Byzantine sources, this one stands out for its immediate political impact.

First a brief account of what happened, according – and this is important to keep in mind – to Kantakouzenos (for a draft translation of the Greek text, cf. Appendix II.1).⁵⁴ A certain Philommates came to Andronikos III's camp in Zichna to persuade him that the hour was good to claim Thessalonike.⁵⁵ At the same time, rumours spread in the Thessalonike that the young Andronikos had detached two messengers to facilitate this move; the next day the metropolitan⁵⁶ – it is particularly this bit of the story that does not seem to add up – went out to the Chortaïtes monastery in order to intercept them, while the *kephalē*, George Choumnos,⁵⁷ decided – rather counterintuitively – to wait in front of, rather than sheltered behind, the eastern city gate. In the event, the metropolitan, allegedly unexpectedly, encountered the younger emperor himself charging towards the city (rather than the two envoys he expected). In the ensuing confusion – and greatly helped by ¹⁵ Choumnos waiting outside the gates – Andronikos III and his supporters managed to take the city, with those loyal to the elder emperor seeking refuge in the akropolis. However, the situation remained unstable, even dangerous: the elder Andronikos' army was not far away at Serres and about to send reinforcements, and the akropolis remained under enemy control. What emerges from between the lines is that, while a majority of citizens may have supported Andronikos III's cause, there was no unanimity: the atmosphere was heated, veering towards outbreaks of violence. In these circumstances, before laying serious siege to the akropolis, Kantakouzenos reports that Andronikos III decided to visit the 'shrine', i.e. the basilica, of St Demetrios. There – or so Kantakouzenos would have us, and in all likelihood his contemporary audience as well, believe – the emperor's foot was miraculously cured by being

anointed with the saint's *myron*. It had been wounded 14 months earlier when the emperor waged war against the Turks. The young emperor's performance – for he himself was the principal actor – must have been felicitous and its authenticity beyond question (or again, so Kantakouzenos would make us believe) for the whole city erupted into chants to glorify their patron saint.

The next day, the previously tense situation had clearly been resolved (again according to Kantakouzenos): only now the whole city joined Andronikos III's party eagerly (προθύμως). And only after this performative boost of civic community the authority of the captain of the akropolis, a man called George Lyzikos,⁵⁸ was challenged by those under his command. It was questioned, interestingly, on the grounds that Lyzikos was not a citizen of Thessalonike, but of another city (ἐτέρας ὄντα πόλεως πολίτην), and therefore should not interfere with the city's business. He was finally forced to leave the akropolis together with those still loyal to the elder Andronikos; the others submitted themselves to the younger emperor.

It is illuminating to compare Kantakouzenos' account with Gregoras' version of the same events (for a translation of the core passages, cf. Appendix II.2).⁵⁹ In the latter's *Roman History*, the anonymous metropolitan clandestinely supported the party of Andronikos III from the very beginning; Andronikos sneaked into the city in disguise;⁶⁰ once inside, he revealed his imperial garments; almost the whole city (μικροῦ πᾶσα ἡ πόλις) prostrated themselves and chanted acclamations (εὐφήμεις ... φωνᾷς). No mention whatsoever is made of St Demetrios; no 300-strong army is detached to reinforce the akropolis. The next day, the akropolis was taken by sheer force: there is equally no mention of an alliance of Thessalonians denying Lyzikos' right to make any decisions on the city's behalf. Of course, Gregoras, unlike Kantakouzenos, was not an eye-witness to the events, but the different thrust of his account is clear: Gregoras, the Constantinopolitan polymath, probably writing some time after the event and possibly at a time when he had become alienated from Kantakouzenos,⁶¹ did not see any need to create a literary performance of civic unity. Gregoras' counter-account throws the focus of Kantakouzenos' version and the sense of community allegedly achieved by Andronikos III's miraculous cure into sharp relief. In any case we are, again, entitled to read the story along the lines of Pachymeres' Magnesia episode: the narrative (fictional or not) allows us to decipher what a performance needed to feature in order to pass as felicitous or authentic. |¹⁶

In this particular instance, however, it should be noted that, while frequently referring to God's judgement and wrath, Kantakouzenos, unlike Pachymeres, was not in the habit of weaving miracles into his *History*.⁶² Thus one may rather more legitimately wonder whether the young emperor and his shrewd 'public relations manager', Kantakouzenos, may indeed have staged a performance, or whether they consciously decided (at least) to exploit whatever may have occurred to their political advantage.⁶³ This possibly reveals this episode as a literary strategy: seeking to achieve unity at least in writing, by drawing on the miraculous. Whatever the case, in Kantakouzenos' literary representation, it worked rather well.

St Demetrios was a saint of decidedly pro-Palaiologan tendencies, just as much as St John the Merciful at Magnesia was a decidedly anti-Palaiologan saint. In her seminal study scrutinising the political aspects of the cult of St Demetrios in the thirteenth century, Macrides points to two instances in which the patron saint of Thessalonike, or rather his *myron*, was exploited politically – both times in favour of the local, Epirote Angeloi, dynasty, and against the Laskaris clan.⁶⁴ In such constellations, the Palaiologoi were the natural heirs to the Angeloi; as is well known, the family monastery of the Palaiologoi in Constantinople was dedicated to St Demetrios.

There is, finally, further evidence of a particularly close connection between Andronikos III and St Demetrios. The emperor innovated with respect to the saint's invocation on imperial coinage and became the first Palaiologan emperor to present himself next to the saint on silver coins minted in the capital, Constantinople. Previous emperors had issued coins featuring the saint exclusively from the Thessalonican mint.⁶⁵

Conclusion

Both case studies have offered examples of how a miraculous performance brought about civic unity. The fragmented society of the late Byzantine world was quite literally de-fused;⁶⁶ it fell to social performances one way or another, and the literary representations thereof, to at least attempt to re-fuse these centrifugal interests and parties. In this sense, a telling example of a miraculous performance that pacified an urban crowd is preserved in Philotheos Kokkinos' *Life of Isidore Boucheir*. When Isidore's friend, Nicholas from Monemvasia,⁶⁷ left Constantinople to visit Kantakouzenos, the Palaiologan faction who could not get hold of the man himself raised an angry mob in order to destroy his house. In this situation Isidore, deeply enraged by this unlawful action (a sentiment seemingly shared by his hagiographer, Kokkinos)⁶⁸ evoked the help of the Theotokos:

When he had just taken a small portion of bread with his hands and stamped it, as is the custom, with the name of the Mother of God and consecrated it with her invocation, he placed his dear and greatest weapon as a protection and defence, as it were, to the house, that had already been given up as hopeless by almost everyone else; he said: 'I trust in my Christ that nothing horrible will meet you and nothing that depends on her [i.e. the Theotokos]' impregnable protection and command.' Isidore spoke thus; and this was¹⁷ what was immediately accomplished. And more importantly, lest it seems to some that what happened regarding the house happened simply from coincidence and not as a miracle of the queen [i.e. the Theotokos] through the prayers of the great man: the *dēmos* rushed forward with wrath and arms when the demagogues and leaders of this riot gave the signal (as is customary); after they had come close to the house and were already almost at the gates, they recovered their senses and disbanded thanks to the divine power of the protectress and commander, like the flow of a torrent that strangely shoots up or waves of the raging sea that rise to equal heights with mountains of the neighbouring land, but are strangely dissolved by beaches and sand into foam with little power by the order of the lord.⁶⁹

The thrust is rather different here, in that Isidore's miracle pacified the crowd without the latter actively witnessing any miraculous performance. Yet this miracle is still indicative of the power that contemporaries ascribed to the miraculous in managing an unruly *dēmos*. As Angeliki Laiou concluded: 'and it is, perhaps, significant that in his [Kokkinos'] eyes only miracles could be invoked against the irrational actions of the "mob"'.⁷⁰ Or, to put it differently, at a time when the voice of reason was rarely heard, the miraculous in particular held the power to re-fuse fragmented civic communities.

And while this is not the place to explore to what degree the Early Palaiologan revival can be compared with the almost contemporary Early Italian Renaissance – civic discourse would, in fact, be one such matter⁷¹ – one may in conclusion draw attention to Niccolò Machiavelli's fine observation:⁷²

They [i.e. the rulers of a republic or kingdom] should also foster and encourage everything likely to be of help to this end [i.e. to keep their commonwealth religious, and in consequence, good and united], even though they be convinced that it is quite fallacious. ... It was owing to wise men having taken due note of this that belief in miracles arose and that miracles are held in high esteem even by religions that are false; for to whatever they owed their origin, sensible men made much of them, and their authority caused everybody to believe in them.⁷³

Even if the *archontes* of Magnesia, John Kantakouzenos or the younger emperor Andronikos had known Machiavelli's advice: they could hardly have performed any better.⁷⁴

Appendix I.1: Translation of George Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.15, ed. A. Failler, 4:439–41

About the prodigious miracle in Magnesia

It remains for me to expound a miraculous occurrence performed in our days; awe-inspiring to narrate and incredible to the ear. I myself would not have believed it (and would therefore have omitted it [from my narrative]), if not for the word |¹⁸ of many and trustworthy men. It offers an example of God's providence and ongoing solicitude for the utterly human race, even if otherwise the divine intention works profoundly and beyond our perception, and at the same time of the glory of an emperor of virtuous reputation,⁷⁵ while God judges in every respect the error and achievements of men by their deeds and by which means alone they pursue them. We have already narrated how the emperor [Michael IX] departed from Magnesia on the Hermos.⁷⁶ Others were in charge of it following the emperor's departure, one of them the *epi trapezēs* Philanthropenos, a man in every respect adorned by noble birth, age, reason, and battlefield experience. When at any rate the town was entrusted to a *kastrophylax*,⁷⁷ the latter was still awake late at night when it was already time for the watch; he saw a flaming torch that made its way around the city. When this happened two or three times, it caught the *kastrophylax*'s attention. When naturally he shared this with the notables, he led them, too, to similar astonishment. Meanwhile they wished to know what this might be: and also others were sent in order to investigate, but no more of what was happening was revealed to them. Together with these many others the *kastrophylax*'s brother went out, whom everybody knew to have been deaf and dumb from birth. And while for them it was not possible to learn anything beyond the common, to him that wondrous and mysterious marvel was unveiled. And the proof was adduced by the miracle worked on him: for by speaking from being deaf and dumb he rendered credible and not to be opposed whatever he might say. That one saw, when he stayed for a while, not a flaming torch but a man dressed in imperial garments, who disregarded their watch, as it were, but said that he himself had the stewardship of their watch. And at the same time that, when he spoke, he spoke as if to someone who listens: and the deaf one heard immediately! And that the voice ordered him to give orders with a loud voice to the guards to be as alert as possible to ensure their salvation. And one miracle immediately followed the other miracle: for the one who had heard what to do was already also heard speaking, and by speaking he showed his words as trustworthy. The stewardship, as the Lydian might say,⁷⁸ of that merciful emperor John, in which they trusted for their protection by God, came to everyone's ears.

Appendix I.2: Translation of George Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.32, ed. Failler, 4:497–501

The marvel performed by the holy blessed martyr Theodosia

In this year, too, a marvellous miracle of the blessed martyr Theodosia was performed; no small danger will come to me, who records these events – the deeds of God are worthy of announcing! – from not reporting it, and no small penalty for those who listen [to my account]. That what is said will in every respect investigate God's providence thoroughly, and offer a token of the Almighty's solicitude for us. A young man from the City of Constantine had been deaf and dumb for many years, and the suffering confined him who was left wanting for his livelihood to a life as a servant, through which he was provided with the necessary things, even if he was not stable in his service to one master, but changed masters. He served among others also a certain Pegonites, who lived very close to the rather |¹⁹ conspicuous church of the Heralds of God: in a dream the virgin martyr appeared to him [the young man] and ordered him to approach the church that was hers in every respect, with a candle and offering. He woke and, asking for that which had been announced by means of gestures only and receiving it, as those who could hear understood [his request], he approached the church and implored adequately and, having rubbed himself with the light-bringing oil, falling to her feet according to custom, he became a suppliant to the martyr.

Returning from the church, it seemed that his ear was unwell. When he had scratched it repeatedly with his finger, immediately a small living winged animal, as it seemed, fell out from there which – when he handled it in wonder and prepared to ward it off – immediately disappeared. However, the

lurking pain seemed to grow easier, and he was full of good hope: but he reached the house suffering again from similar pain. And those, as previously, beckoned him to kindle a fire while they were kneading the flour, and falling to his knees he *blew shrilly*. But no *flame arose* and no *fire kindled by a god roared*, as in the poem, only smoke was smouldering, and he laboured uselessly and became aggrieved. After many attempts the fire did not obey; his breathing was changed into words and he bursts into a voice: for he curses the hearth, curses the whole not to ever kindle and turn into a flame, shouting loudly from deep within: which, naturally, did not remain hidden from those in the house. However, when they heard this they were astonished, and not trusting themselves they believed either of two: either that the fire had sent forth the voice or indeed that the one who had up to that point been dumb and whom they did not know to ever have sent forth a voice [had sent forth the voice]. As in their examination whose voice this was and what had been said they were shouting from afar, the dumb young man heard this and testified for himself that he, because he himself heard the examiners, was also the one who himself cursed the fire with his own mouth. And immediately those standing near realised this awe-inspiring marvel, passed on the word, and the event became well-known to all.

The miracle then also reached the emperor, and they brought the one who had been dumb and deaf to him, as was ordered; the patriarch was also present. The young man, when being asked, announced all [that had happened] from the very beginning, narrating it himself with his own voice. Therefore, as the ruler did not judge it just to pass over this event in silence, an all-night vigil was announced on the spot in honour of the martyr, with even the emperor himself not being absent from the celebration. Much rather, as the latter wished to accord honour to the miracle-worker, he left it to the others to make their way as they wished, but he himself together with the whole senate and the patriarch, at nightfall went by foot to the church and attended to the martyr.

Appendix II.1: Translation of John Kantakouzenos, *History*, I.53, ed. Schopen, 1:267–72

While affairs were in this state, Philommates came to the emperor [Andronikos III] from Thessalonike; he was sent by those who pursued the matter of the young emperor there and announced that all other matters were well and that, if the ²⁰ emperor came now, he would take the city without any toil. When the emperor learnt this, he selected the pack animals, baggage and of the soldiers those who did not have possession of stout horses fit for war, and left them in Zichna with the *megas papias* TzAMPLAKON and a few others. He himself, together with the *megas domestikos* and the other leaders, taking with himself the host [he had] selected [to accompany him], seemed to set out against Drama in order to lay siege against it.⁷⁹ But when the night came, he turned from the road on which he was travelling, and marched against Thessalonike through the Strymon.⁸⁰ When he had crossed the river, at Marmarion he ordered his host to have a short rest,⁸¹ with everybody dismounting from their horses. Rested, they again took to the same road, travelling the following day as well as the night that followed that day, and at dawn on the third day they reached the Chortaïtes monastery.⁸²

On the previous day a rumour had made its rounds through Thessalonike, that the young emperor had taken Zichna, that had joined his cause, and having reached Serres, had the [old emperor's] western army together with the latter's [268] Serbian allies enclosed inside its walls, and they were not able to withstand him. [The rumour said further that] after his return to Zichna the young emperor sent the *parakoimōmenos* Apokaukos and Alexios Palaiologos here [i.e. Thessalonike], under the pretext that they served as ambassadors to the one who governed Thessalonike, the *megas stratopedarchēs* Choumnos, and the metropolitan; yet in truth to hold secret converse with those who pursued their matter [in the city] and at the same time to spy out, if it were possible to bring Thessalonike under the younger emperor's power. Such things were spread by the rumour.

Choumnos sought hard to find out who brought such tidings, but was not able to. However, it seemed advantageous to him and the metropolitan that the latter, having made his way to Chortaïtes the following day, should order Alexios Palaiologos and the *parakoimōmenos* Apokaukos, if those things that were reported about them were true, to return to the emperor, because entry to Thessalonike would not be granted to them. And [that he should] announce to them in advance that if they

did not comply and forced their entry, that those who wanted Thessalonike to defect from the [older] emperor would be prevented from plotting with them. Such actions they devised in response to what they had heard. At dawn the following day, the metropolitan travelled the road toward the Chortaïtes monastery according to plan; Choumnos, on the other hand, having exited with his entourage through the so-called Gate of the Asomatoi stood to observe the events; and the whole city was in suspense with regard to the rumours. Those to whom it seemed right to support the cause of the young emperor [269] had been ordered not to wear weapons or use horses, but either to stay at home or to come out without weapons and on foot. Then these, with the news of the young emperor reported from everywhere, climbed unarmed onto the walls of the same gate and awaited the outcome of the events.

When the metropolitan came close to the Chortaïtes monastery and unexpectedly encountered the young emperor, he was utterly astonished and cursed the emperor's ill-timed arrival; when the emperor addressed him, he was bewildered by the sudden danger and did not return the salute, but returned to the city as quickly as he could in order to announce the emperor's approach. And the emperor ²¹ followed him, advancing quickly. The members of the emperor's party who stood on the walls, when they recognised from the standards that the emperor was approaching, attacked those outside the gates with renewed courage by throwing stones from the walls: those – with the enemies coming against from outside and those on the inside clearly turning into enemies, too – did not know what to do and moved inside the walls and closed the gates. But since they were unable to withstand against those who were throwing [stones] from the walls, they turned to flight and reaching the akropolis they occupied it, in order to defend themselves from there. Its commander was George Lyzikos from Berrhoia.

Those on the walls, once they had climbed down and opened the gates, welcomed the emperor. And the whole city was well-inclined to the emperor, and all came to welcome him. The emperor who feared that an army, if it arrived from Serres, would make the akropolis difficult [270] to conquer, selected an army which he believed sufficient for the task and ordered it to guard the akropolis, lest anybody enter it. When those in Serres [the supporters of the old emperor] learnt that the [young] emperor entered Thessalonike, they feared that it might surrender to him, which indeed happened; they send three hundred chosen soldiers in order to hold the akropolis and offer those in the city the courage to withstand the [young] emperor. But when those whom the young emperor had assigned to guard the akropolis clashed in battle with them, they routed them completely and killed some of them; others they captured alive. The [young] emperor, once he had seen to setting a watch for the akropolis, went into the holy shrine of the myrrh-giving martyr Demetrios in order to venerate him (for from young age he offered greater honour and faith to Demetrios than to the other martyrs and was his follower, as it were) and at the same time to give thanks for his present good fortunes. And when he had venerated and thanked St Demetrios, he intended to apply the martyr's myrrh to his foot once he had taken off his shoe (he had occurred a wound to his foot from his battle against the Turks – and for fourteen months it proved incapable of healing even though the physicians attempted many a cure, but becoming gangrenous it gave him unbearable pain), as he believed that those feats which human craft and diligence could not accomplish, these God granted his holy martyrs to accomplish. When the emperor had undressed his foot [271] and removed the bandages with which it was bound – oh what great care of God for his martyrs! The bandage was found ripped on the outside but the foot was healthy to such a degree that no trace of a scar or wound appeared, that it was impossible to know if it had ever been wounded! When the emperor saw this he took more delight in it than in the fact that Thessalonike had submitted to him, and therefore gave more and warmer expressions of gratitude. And the whole city, when they learnt of the miracle worked on the emperor, sang hymns to God and to Demetrios, His servant.

As the day came to an end, the emperor left the shrine and made his way to the palace; there he spent the night. But the next morning the emperor himself in full armour and his host, together with the whole populace of Thessalonike who eagerly joined the expedition, marched against the akropolis so as, if those who occupied it would not yield it voluntarily, to force them with arms. Initially the emperor sent [a messenger]; he addressed those inside and called on them to hand over the akropolis without a fight offering an amnesty and promising that ²² they would fare well. But they did not

obey, but confirmed their decision and took position to defend the wall. And for three or four hours they defended themselves valiantly from the walls. Thereafter those in the akropolis who were not completely inclined towards the elder emperor's cause found themselves at variance in their opinion with the others, and demanding a cessation [272] of the battle against the [younger] emperor they embarked on a discussion with those who were besieged alongside them. And they argued not to permit Lyzikos to give counsel regarding their fatherland, as he was the citizen of another *polis*, whom his relatives – since Berrhoia sided with the [younger] emperor – would ask to be released, if he caused any offence; and they said to the others that it was not just and advantageous if every other *polis* sided with the [younger] emperor, that they resisted and continued fighting. For they were not capable of defending themselves and the akropolis, being cut off by themselves, since those from Serres who came to join them in battle had been defeated and others would not dare to come. 'The [younger] emperor's host is great and sufficient for battle, and furthermore the whole city besieging us with every man will force us to capitulate. Even if we will be able to resist for a short while, we will be punished from both ends. For if we win, we will kill our friends and those closest to us; if we lose, we meet certain death; which is all not agreeable to us. If this seems good to you [this is what we shall do]; but if not, we shall put ourselves and the akropolis into the emperor's hands.'

These said such things; Lyzikos and whoever was loyal to the elder emperor, not knowing what to do, asked together with the others for forgiveness, if they had offended the [younger] emperor, and having received it, they handed over the akropolis.

Appendix II.2: Partial translation of Nikephoros Gregoras, Roman History, IX.4.3, ed. Schopen/Bekker, 1:409.6–11 and 410.2–17

In the following month of December, letters from the Thessalonians were sent in secret to the young emperor; they invited him to come at the earliest opportunity. For [they said that] there was consent among the common people, the majority of the notables and indeed the archbishop himself that the very moment of the emperor's appearance before the walls, they would rush to open the gates for him. ... While these men⁸³ were busy with such affairs between Thessalonike and Serres, the [younger] emperor secretly entered Thessalonike, concealing all imperial regalia under a commoner's garment. Once he was inside the gates he immediately threw off that garment, and made it manifest to all that he was the emperor. And immediately almost that whole city rushed together, performed *proskynesis* before him and welcomed him with auspicious words. But there were also a few who hated him and were fiercely attached to the old emperor: these rushed to the akropolis, occupied it and safeguarded themselves behind its walls. From there, they defended themselves valiantly against those who besieged them, the [younger] emperor himself and as many members of the rebellion as had gathered around him. And they wounded many, throwing stones and shooting arrows, so ²³ that many of the missiles from there were stuck in the emperor's shield. The following day those around the emperor collected a big pile of dry wood and set fire to the gates of the akropolis, and won it by force in this way.

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Notes

¹ In this chapter, I use the term ‘civic’ to denote anything connected to the politics and citizens of a *polis*.

² On Akropolites, see now Macrides 2007: 5–34 and *PLP* no. 518.

³ Akropolites, *History*, chapter 6, ed. Heisenberg/Wirth, 10.17–26: ἀπελθὼν οὖν οὗτος μετὰ τῆς σφετέρας γυναικὸς καὶ τῶν τέκνων ... καὶ περὶ τὴν Νίκαιαν πόλιν γενόμενος παρεκάλει τοὺς Νικαεῖς ἔσω τοῦτον τῆς πόλεως δέξασθαι καὶ ὡς κυρίῳ προσανέχειν αὐτῷ. οἱ δὲ οὐκ ἐδέχοντο. λιπαρῶς γοῦν ὁ Λάσκαρις τούτοις προσκειμένος καὶ κἄν τὴν γυναῖκα μόνην δέξασθαι ἐκδυσωπῶν, μόλις εἰς τοῦτο πειθηνίους ἐγνώρισεν, tr. Macrides 2007: 118. From the Greek text one gets the impression that a considerable span of time may have elapsed before Laskaris finally gained hold of Nicaea, certainly only after he had taken possession of various other Bithynian *kastra*.

⁴ See e.g. Laiou 2006.

⁵ On this discourse see Gaul 2011: 53–210. Underlying reasons that facilitated this discourse include increasing economic prosperity that resulted in the circulation of members of the provincial urban elites through Constantinople as well as new discourses that thus emerged in classicising *paideia*.

⁶ Schreiner 1998.

⁷ Choniates, *History*, ed. van Dieten, 627.3–4: τῶν ἐφῶν κρατοῦντι πόλεων; *Oration* 14, title: βασιλεύοντα τῶν ἐφῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν πόλεων. The expression is used earlier in the *History* to refer to the Anatolian parts of the Empire, e.g. van Dieten, 357.47.

⁸ Choniates, *Oration* 14, ed. van Dieten, 131.17–23 (dated c.1208): περιέρχῃ τὰς ἐφῶς πόλεις, εἰς λόγους ἔρχῃ τοῖς ἐνοῦσι, τίθης ὑπόψια ὅσα πείσονται πάνδεια, εἰ μὴ σοι πείσονται τάχιον· τούτοις ἐπιπλήττεις, ἐκείνοις ἐπιτιμᾷς· νῦν μὲν ἐκκλησιάζεις τὰ λαώδη συστήματα, νῦν δὲ παραλαμβάνων ἰδίᾳ τοὺς λογίμους καὶ συγκαλῶν ἐς συνδείπνιον πολυγύμναστος τὸ ἦθος καὶ ποικίλος τὴν γνώμην δείκνυσαι, εἴ πως ἀναθάλψεις οὕτως τὸ ἀπεσβηκὸς ἦδη τῶν Ῥωμαίων φρόνημα.

⁹ On the role of Constantinople as a *polis* in the twelfth century, cf. Magdalino 1993, 109–23.

¹⁰ Laiou 1972: 229–30: ‘The reign of Andronicus II saw the emergence of the walled town as a self-governing and often self-financed entity. [...] As the central government was losing its power, it transferred authority to particular groups; the growth of particularism is a fundamental aspect of the Palaeologan period. As for the walled town, its importance increased during the last years of Byzantine rule [...]. The Catalan campaign, by forcing the town inhabitants to provide for their own defense, contributed to the development of local government, with the towns as a focus.’ Ibid. 170 and 192 and n131 (with earlier literature).

¹¹ Gaul 2011: 53–61. For the expression ‘archipelago’, cf. Kaster 1988, 21.

¹² Laiou 2006.

¹³ Kantakouzenos, *History*, I.21, ed. Bekker, 1:104.14–19: οἱ τ’ ἐφεστηκότες ταῖς πόλεσιν ἡγεμόνες, ὑπὸ τε τῶν ἰδίων ἑκάστος πολιτῶν ἐκβιαζόμενος καὶ τὴν ἀδελφίαν δεδοικότες τῆς τύχης, οὐκ εἰδότες πρὸς ὁπότερον τῶν βασιλέων τὸ κράτος χωρήσει, τῷ δυνατωτέρῳ τὸ νῦν ἔχον φαινόμενῳ καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐπικειμένῳ παραδώσουσι τὰς πόλεις.

¹⁴ Tsirpanlis 1973.

¹⁵ Kantakouzenos, *History*, I, 54, ed. Schopen, 1:274.17–24: οἱ δ’ ἐν Ἐδέσσει δυνατοὶ ... μηδεμίαν ποιησάμενοι ἀναβολήν, ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ δῆμος Ἐδεσσηνῶν τῆς αὐτῶν ἐξήρτητο γνώμης.

¹⁶ Kantakouzenos, *History*, I, 4, ed. Schopen, 1:23.25–24.2: πολλοὶ προσεγένοντο αὐτῷ οἰκεῖοι καὶ φίλοι καὶ βουλευσόμενοι μάλα προθύμως ὑπὲρ τοῦ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ διακινδυνεύειν; cf. Gickler 2015, 197.

¹⁷ Kantakouzenos, *History*, III, 79, ed. Schopen, 2:490.2–9.

¹⁸ Efthymiadis 1999. With a few exceptions, such as the miracles of St Photeini: Talbot 1994.

¹⁹ See generally Talbot 1991 and 2012; Efthymiadis 1999, 2004 and 2014: 125–30. Gaul 2011: 203–10 argues that this is one of many indicators of an increasingly uprooted society clinging to moral support – the so-called ‘Palaiologan revival’ of *paideia* would represent the reverse of the same coin.

²⁰ Efthymiadis 2006/07.

²¹ Or to promote the cult through his family’s standing, as Efthymiadis 2004: 241 suggests. On the miracle collection see also Talbot 1991: 17–20. Akropolites’ family standing was somewhat precarious in relation to those of similar rank; cf. Gaul 2016: 264–65.

²² Rosenqvist 1996, Efthymiadis 1999: 210–11.

²³ Macrides 1981.

²⁴ Talbot 1983 and 2010. Talbot observes that Kokkinos first composed the list of Palamas’ miracles as a stand-alone text, and only later integrated it into his *Life of Gregory Palamas*.

²⁵ Efthymiadis 2004: 243–4, Gaul 2011: 318–23. In addition to historiography, Efthymiadis points to epistolography.

²⁶ Psellos, *Chronographia*, VI, 183, ed. Reinsch, 188, tr. Sewter, 250; Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* features a few apparitions in dreams, e.g. the brief apparition in the battle of Distra of Leo the former metropolitan of Chalcedon to Anna's uncle, George Palaiologos (*Alexiad*, VII, 4. 1).

²⁷ Akropolites, *History*, chapter 13, ed. Heisenberg/Wirth, 23.21–23, tr. Macrides 2007: 140.

²⁸ Cf. also Gaul 2018.

²⁹ Alexander 2006: 32–37.

³⁰ Alexander 2006: 29.

³¹ That is not to say that Andronikos II and his family were not also repeatedly marked as the recipients of miracles: in addition to the cases presented in this chapter, drawing on the Macedonian dossier associated with Leo VI, Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos continued to associate the Pege shrine especially with the imperial family, featuring both wives of Andronikos II (Anna of Hungary and Yolanda of Montferrat, suffering from barrenness); the miracles of St Euphrosyne the Younger feature Michael IX. Kantakouzenos and Gregoras report Andronikos III's healing in 1340.

³² Justice 2008; cf. also Klaniczay 2013. This issue has not yet received much attention in Byzantine Studies but see now Mitrea 2018: ch. III.1.

³³ Bokody 2013.

³⁴ Gickler 2015: 87–104.

³⁵ According to Angelov 2007: 267 this is the earliest historical testimony for the emerging cult of St John the Merciful. Cf. also Ciolfi 2014 and, on George of Pelagonia's *Life of St John*, Ciolfi 2018. Manuel Philes' little studied epigram on the gates of Medeia (modern Kızıköy) ascribes a very similar effect to the one described here for those beholding an emperor's effigy – in the latter case, presumably Andronikos II and Michael IX Palaiologoi (Gaul forthcoming).

³⁶ Cf. Angelov 2007: 267–9.

³⁷ In general see Skedros 2006, 83–91; Talbot 2001. In this particular case, the script evokes protective processions around the wall of a city, such as famously performed by Patriarch Sergios in 626, when he carried the *maphorion* of the Theotokos around the walls of Constantinople. See Brubaker and Wickham (forthcoming) for context and further examples.

³⁸ *PLP* no. 29777.

³⁹ Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.15, ed. Failler, 4:439.11–12. Pachymeres does not always distance himself from miraculous occurrences, as Hunger 1978, 1:451 suggested: 'Pachymeres unterläßt es in der Regel nicht, auf seine persönlichen Zweifel gegenüber den angeführten Erscheinungen diskret hinzuweisen.' The fact that he adds a disclaimer in the case of the pro-Laskarid miracle but not the pro-Palaiologan ones (chapters XI.10, XI.32) may have been a caveat. On Pachymeres as a critic, yet at the same time collaborator, of the early Palaiologoi, see Angelov 2007: 260–9. Gickler 2015: 19–22 emphasises Pachymeres' sympathies for Michael IX, his former disciple.

⁴⁰ Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.32.

⁴¹ Angelov 2007, 315–21.

⁴² See also Gickler 2015: 99–101.

⁴³ Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.10, ed. Failler, 4:427.21–429.10. The abbreviated version of Pachymeres' *Histories* adds that the monastery in question was the Hodegetria: Failler, 4:428n78.

⁴⁴ Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.10, ed. Failler, 4:429.14–15: 'ἴδετε' λέγων 'εἰ μοναχὸς ἐπ' αἰγιαλοῦ ἀποβάς ἵσταται φέρων καὶ δῶρα τῆς θεομήτορος'.

⁴⁵ Gickler 2015: 100 compellingly describes Michael IX's suffering as a psychosomatic reaction to the failing campaign.

⁴⁶ The title of chapter XI.15 reads *περὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν Μαγνησίαν τεραστικοῦ θαύματος* and of chapter XI.32: *τεράστιον τελεσθὲν παρὰ τῆς ἁγίας ὁσιομάρτυρος Θεοδοσίας*. For the English translation, see Appendices A.1 and A.2 below.

⁴⁷ Pachymeres, *Histories*, XI.10, ed. Failler, 4:427.10–11: *περὶ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως Μιχαὴλ εἰς Κύζικον, εἴτα εἰς Πηγάς, ἀναχωρήσεως*.

⁴⁸ Effenberger 2011.

⁴⁹ Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Patriarch Athanasios I*, chapters 56–57, ed. Talbot, 104–8.

⁵⁰ Theoktistos the Stoudite, *Miracles of Patriarch Athanasios I*, chapter 57, ed. Talbot, 108: *κήρυξ διαπρύσιος αὐτὸς τοῦ θαύματος γίνεται, καὶ ἔτι σιγᾶν οὐ βούλεται, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Θεοῦ κηρύττων, καὶ τὰ μεγαλεῖα διαρρήδην ὑμνῶν*.

⁵¹ Kokkinos, *Life of Gregory Palamas*, chapters 130–33, ed. Tsames, 583–86.

⁵² Talbot 1991, 18.

⁵³ For social drama see Turner 1974, especially 23–59.

⁵⁴ Kantakouzenos was an eyewitness of the event but did not write his *History* before his fall from power decades later, after 1354, see Hunger 1978, 1:468.

⁵⁵ *PLP* no. 29916.

⁵⁶ Unfortunately, there is a prosopographical gap for this period; the name of the metropolitan is not known.

⁵⁷ *PLP* no. 30945.

⁵⁸ *PLP* no. 15196.

⁵⁹ Gregoras, *Roman History*, IX.4.3, ed. Schopen/Bekker, 1:409.6–410.16.

⁶⁰ Van Dieten 1979: 208n222.

⁶¹ Van Dieten 1975.

⁶² The only other instance is Andronikos III's miraculous cure in 1340: Kantakouzenos, *History*, II.17 and II.20, ed. Schopen, 1:409–10 and 426–27. Cf. also Gregoras, *Roman History*, IX.10.5, ed. Schopen/Bekker, 1:442.

⁶³ Alternatively (not pursued further in this chapter), Kantakouzenos may have intended sending a message to his contemporary audience in the late 1350s and 1360s, rather than the Thessalonians in 1328.

⁶⁴ Macrides 1990. However, it must not be forgotten that this was a civil war with a Palaiologos fighting a Palaiologos.

⁶⁵ *DOC* 5.1:165 and 5.2: plate 48. For earlier examples, e.g. of Andronikos III's grandfather, Andronikos II, see *ibid.* 5.1:157 and 5.2: plate 41.

⁶⁶ Alexander 2006: 29–32.

⁶⁷ *PLP* no. 20394.

⁶⁸ *Life of Isidore* 42.7–9, ed. Tsames, 380: 'and the most horrible and worst part, which frequently likes to occur in such circumstances: [this happened] not at the order and decision of judges and the hands of soldiers and those who customarily enact such punishment, but they [the leaders of the Palaiologan faction] inflamed this irrational and bold rage of the *dēmos* like a wild fire' (καὶ τὸ δεινότατόν τε καὶ κάκιστον ... οὐ ψήφῳ καὶ ἀποφάσει δικαστῶν καὶ στρατιωτικῇ χειρὶ καὶ τοῖς εἰωθόσι τὰ τοιαῦτα κολάζειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀλόγιστον ταυτηνὶ καὶ θρασεῖαν ὁρμὴν τοῦ δήμου καθαπερεῖ τι πῦρ ἄγριον ἀνάπτουσι [...]).

⁶⁹ *Life of Isidore* 42.21–37, ed. Tsames, 380–81: ἄρτου τοιγαροῦν μερίδα τινὰ βραχεῖαν εὐθὺς μετὰ χεῖρας λαβὼν καὶ σφραγίσας καὶ τῷ τῆς Θεομήτορος ὡς ἔθος ὀνόματι καὶ τῇ ἐπικλήσει καθαγιάσας, τὸ φίλον αὐτῷ καὶ μέγιστον ὄπλον οἷα δὴ προφυλακτικόν τι καὶ ἀμυντήριον ἐφίστησι τῇ ἀπεγνωσμένῃ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἤδη σχεδὸν οἰκίᾳ, 'πέποιθα τῷ ἐμῷ Χριστῷ', φήσας, 'ὡς οὐκ ἀπαντήσει δεινὸν οὐδὲν ὑμῖν οὐδοτιοῦν τῶν ἐπηρτημένων τῇ ταύτης ἀμάχῳ προστασίᾳ καὶ στρατηγίᾳ'. ὁ μὲν οὖν οὕτως εἶπε, τὸ δ' ἦν εὐθὺς καὶ τετελεσμένον. καὶ τὸ μεῖζον, ἵνα μὴ καὶ τισι δόξῃ κατὰ συντυχίαν ἀπλῶς καὶ οὐ θαῦμα τῆς βασιλίδος ταῖς εὐχαῖς τοῦ μεγάλου γεγενῆσθαι τὸ κατὰ τὴν οἰκίαν, ὁρμῶσι μὲν ὁ δῆμος μετὰ τοῦ θυμοῦ καὶ τῶν ὀπλῶν, τῶν δημαγωγῶν καὶ τῆς στάσεως ἐξάρχων ὡς ἔθος τὸ σύνθημα δεδοκότων· εἴτ' ἐγγὺς αὐτοῦ που γενόμενοι καὶ σχεδὸν πρὸς ταῖς θύραις, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς αὐθις ἐπανερχονται καὶ διαλύονται θεῖα τῆς προΐσταμένης τε καὶ στρατηγούσης δυνάμει καθάπερ τι χεῖμαρρου ῥεῦμα καινῶς ἀνατρέχον, ἢ κύματα μαινομένης θαλάσσης ἴσα μὲν καὶ ὄρεσι κατὰ τῆς γείτονος κορυφοῦμενα χέρσου, αἰγιαλοῖς δὲ καὶ ψάμμῳ μικρᾷ τῇ τοῦ τάξαντος δεσπότου δυνάμει καινῶς εἰς ἄφρον αὐθις διαλύόμενα.

⁷⁰ Laiou-Thomadakis 1980: 105.

⁷¹ Gaul 2011: 197–202.

⁷² The late Byzantines, to the best of my knowledge, (as every so often) lack a theoretical discussion of the matter.

⁷³ Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I, 12.7–9: 'E debbono [= i principi d'una repubblica, o d'uno regno] tutte le cose che nascono in favore di quella [= mantenere la loro repubblica religiosa, e per conseguente buona e unita], come que le giudicassono false, favorirle e accrescerle; e tanto più lo debbono fare quanto più prudenti sono, e quanto più conoscitori delle cose naturale. E perché questo modo è stato osservato dagli uomini savi, ne è nato l'opinione dei miracoli che si celebrano nelle religioni eziandio false; perché i prudenti gli augmentano, da qualunque principio e' si nascono, e l'autorità loro dà poi a quelli fede appresso a qualunque' (trans. Crick 1998: 143).

⁷⁴ Yet as much as the miraculous could be exploited, it held power over the powerful, too, as Pachymeres was acutely aware. In his account Andronikos II, whom the historiographer characterises as 'pusillanimous, to speak the truth' (δειδύμων ὢν, ὡς τὸ ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν, *Histories*, VII.30, ed. Failler, 3:95.6–7), was at least twice moved to action in the wake of divine portents: the blood-weeping icon of 1284 sparked a renewed attempt at unifying the divided church (*Histories*, VII.30, ed. Failler, 3:93.20–95.21); the great earthquake of 1296 judicial reforms (*Histories*, IX.15–16, ed. Failler, 3:259.20–263.4).

⁷⁵ The former emperor John III Batatzes (r. 1222–1254).

⁷⁶ Pachymeres, *Histories*, X.20, ed. Failler, 4:347.11–349.10.

⁷⁷ The name of this *kastrophylax* is not known; he seems not to be identical with Philanthropenos.

⁷⁸ This must be John Lydos, but the reference does not seem to point to any of the surviving passages in the latter's œuvre.

⁷⁹ Following the military road that branched off from the Via Egnatia towards Serres, Zichna and Drama, and rejoined the Via Egnatia at Xanthi.

⁸⁰ The emperor is now following the main Via Egnatia towards Thessalonike.

⁸¹ I follow the reading of Fatouros 1976: 191, who considers the capital letter in μικρὸν a typo.

⁸² The monastery was located c.10 miles east of Thessalonike on the slopes of a mountain now called Chortaites.

⁸³ These were the *despotēs* Demetrios Palaiologos, the *prōtobestiarios* Andronikos Palaiologos and Michael Asan, members of the party of the elder emperor, Andronikos II. They were outside the city as they suspected trouble (διὰ τὰς ὑποψίας τῶν θορύβων, 409.19) from the citizens who were largely on the side of the younger Andronikos; Gregoras also reports that they severely disliked each other, and could not agree on any course of action.

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