

THE LEGEND OF ARIUS' DEATH: IMAGINATION, SPACE AND FILTH IN LATE ANCIENT HISTORIOGRAPHY*

In the last forty years, research in the history of early Christianity has broadened considerably in scope. Whereas an earlier generation of historians focused its attention on those figures deemed foundational, even 'orthodox', by later Christian tradition, in more recent times historians have taken up the task of reconstructing the lives and thoughts of other figures from the early Christian past. This turn toward inclusivity produced studies of late ancient writers who were long neglected because they were considered heretics and thus not worthy of investigation: Montanus, Mani, Priscillian, Eunomius, Evagrius and Jovinian, to name only a few.¹ Historians' new inclusivity has extended even to the figure identified by Christian tradition as the father of all heretics, Arius, the fourth-century Alexandrian presbyter whose teaching about the Christian god sparked a local theological controversy that eventually spread so far as to involve the emperor Constantine and to inspire the first imperially sponsored Christian council, at Nicaea in 325 CE. Rowan Williams offered an intellectual biography of Arius in 1987; his project did not view Arius through the standard categories of heresy or deviance, but rather sought to understand his intellectual positions as provocative and inspiring to many

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¹ For a sample of these reconsiderations in English, see for Montanus: William Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia* (Macon, 1997) and more recently William Tabbernee, *Prophets and Gravestones: An Imaginative History of Montanists and Other Early Christians* (Peabody, 2009); for Mani: Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Manchester, 1985); for Priscillian: Henry Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford, 1976); for Eunomius: Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford, 2000) and *Eunomius: The Extant Works*, ed. Richard Paul Vaggione (Oxford, 1987); for Evagrius: Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford, 2006); for Jovinian: David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Heresy* (Oxford, 2007).

other ancient Christians.² Yet even such historically minded reconstruction has left one infamous part of Arius' life unexamined, namely, its end in 336 CE.³ Starting in the 360s CE, numerous late ancient sources began to report that Arius' death was the result of explosive gastrointestinal problems he suffered in the city of Constantinople while he was attempting to negotiate admittance to the church there. Because of the graphic nature of the reports, most historians have expressed caution about their veracity; both the gruesome details of the story and its delayed appearance in the historical record have led scholars such as Williams to consign it to 'the sphere of melodramatic semi-fiction'.⁴ Thus the story remains curiously suspended: not entirely dismissed as a fabrication, but not taken as historically reliable either. It is my aim to show that there is, in fact, historical insight to be gained, not about Arius' death itself but about those who propagated and embellished the story, moving it into the realm of rumour and legend. How and where Arius actually died are details long out of the historian's reach, but the late ancient changes in how and where Arius was remembered to have died in Christian historiography are available, and those changes indicate not only the conception of the world held by late ancient Christians, but also their conception of the past.

This article has three sections. The first describes the earliest surviving appearance of the story of Arius' death and traces the changes that were added to it in late antiquity. The version that ultimately became the dominant one had Arius dying near the famous porphyry column that stood at the centre of the Forum of Constantine, a space constructed as part of the dedication of Constantinople in 337 CE. The majority of the additions made to the story were first seen in Christian histories written in or centred on Constantinople during the first half of the fifth century, and the second section of the article explains the context in which these additions were generated: the late ancient discourse regarding Christian orthodoxy and the co-

² Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London, 1987). Williams' work was helped by the earlier publication of Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (London, 1981).

³ For this date for Arius' death, see Timothy Barnes, 'The Exile and Recalls of Arius', *Journal of Theological Studies*, new ser., lx (2009).

⁴ Williams, *Arius*, 80–1.

option, even merger, of Christian and imperial ritual in that city. Though the context for the expansion of the story was local and specific, the version created in that context resonated widely, far beyond the limits of Constantinople. The third section of the article explains why: Constantinople was a city known by more people than just its inhabitants. As the capital, it was represented across the empire, particularly through the symbol of the porphyry column from Constantine's Forum. What is more, Christianity in late antiquity was heavily invested in the imagination as a religious faculty, and Christians of the period frequently remade the history of physical spaces by means of imagined objects and legends. Thus, the specific version of the story that originated in fifth-century Constantinopolitan politics happened to intersect with features in late ancient culture that helped it to emerge as the dominant version. The conclusion offers some observations about spaces and their representation in antiquity, discussing how what is imagined to be in a space can be as significant as what physically exists in it. For the story — legend, really — of Arius' death is not a mere scatological curiosity of Christian history, but a complex and effective manipulation of represented space by means of an imagined event.

I

GOING PUBLIC: HOW THE DEATH OF ARIUS CAME TO LIGHT

In his own time, Arius was considered by many Christians a valuable and brilliant teacher who was able both to preserve philosophical coherence in Christian thought and to explain the complexity of divinity in ways accessible to average people. That he has come to be known as the arch-heretic of Christianity is largely due to the rhetorical skill of Athanasius (d. 373 CE), the powerful and savvy fourth-century Christian writer. Athanasius had a tumultuous career, first serving as an assistant to the bishop of the city of Alexandria and in that role attending the Council of Nicaea, then acting as bishop of Alexandria himself during a time when imperial support for one or another faction of Christianity meant much to the fortunes of bishops, who could be and were deposed frequently. For Athanasius, who was deposed and returned as a bishop five times in his life, the casting of Arius as a villain who corrupted Christianity was an integral component of

his campaign to solidify his authority as leader of the Alexandrian community and even of Christians in other cities. Athanasius developed his demonizing portrait of Arius during the later 330s and early 340s CE, the fifteen years after his subject's death, in texts that described Arius as a diabolical snake who poisoned the innocent with his ideas, and any whose theology approached his as 'Ariomaniacs'. Though Athanasius and the Christians who were persuaded to agree with him sought the starkest and most negative types by which to discredit Arius, neither Athanasius' writings from this period nor records of church councils unfavourable to Arius mention his death at all. For almost two decades after Arius had supposedly died, decades in which Christian intellectuals in Rome, Alexandria and the newly dedicated city of Constantinople were intensely debating the merits of ideas Arius had espoused, and during which his enemies would have used any story to add to Arius' infamy, even the bare fact of his death remained unspoken.⁵

Then, something changed. In 358 or 359 CE, Athanasius composed a letter in response to another bishop who had asked about the details of Athanasius' disagreement with Arius, and more specifically, about the nature of Arius' death.⁶ Offering the guarantee of having heard the story from an eyewitness, Athanasius carefully unfurled its details with equal parts caution and excitement: according to the witness, a certain Macarius, Arius had been excommunicated from the church and as a result he had gone to Constantinople along with an ally, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and their common supporters in order to petition the emperor Constantine directly; they wished him to force the local Constantinopolitan bishop, Alexander, to allow Arius and his group entry to the church and communion with the Christians there. Their petition apparently worked, for as

⁵ For the full extent of Athanasius' campaign, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, 2004), ch. 5.

⁶ David Gwynn offers a far more conservative dating of 340 CE for this letter, following Charles Kannengiesser; see David M. Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father* (Oxford, 2012), 9; Charles Kannengiesser, 'Athanasius of Alexandria: *Three Orations against the Arians*: A Reappraisal', *Studia Patristica*, xvii, 3 (1982). Though the date of this letter makes no difference to my overall argument, I opt for the later date, primarily because if the letter to Serapion were as early as 340 CE, it would mean that Athanasius had refrained from retelling the story of Arius' death for nearly fifteen years, years in which he disparaged Arius in almost every other way. To possess such a weapon and not to use it seems out of character for Athanasius.

the story goes, once Arius had sworn that he held the proper theological ideas and had signed a statement to that effect, Constantine issued an order that he be admitted to the church. The Constantinopolitan bishop Alexander had, in response to this order, shut himself inside the church and had prayed that God intervene to stop Arius, Eusebius and their group from entering the church and, from Alexander's perspective, defiling it with their presence. Here is the dramatic conclusion to the scene, as Athanasius told it in his *Letter to Serapion*:

Praying about these things, the bishop withdrew, very concerned; but a wondrous and unexpected thing took place. As those with Eusebius threatened, the bishop prayed, and Arius, overconfident in those who were with Eusebius, foolishly went in to the 'throne' because of the necessity of his gut. Immediately, according to what is written, 'falling face first, he burst in the middle'. Upon falling, he immediately expired, deprived of both communion and his life at the same time.⁷

In this vignette, Athanasius deftly painted the scene of Arius' death to recall the spontaneous disembowelment of an earlier enemy in Christianity, Judas, who fell face first, burst open, and died according to the Acts of the Apostles. The overtones of judgement in his report are clear: Arius' pretensions were foiled when God judged him as he had judged Judas, visiting on each of them a horrible, immediate death.

After this first appearance in the surviving literature, the embarrassing tale of Arius' death was rapidly adopted as part of the anti-heretical genre of writing so popular among Christians in the fourth century. In spite of his own strong warning to Serapion not to retell the story, nor to copy the letter for distribution, Athanasius very quickly incorporated the tale into his campaign against Arius. Only a year or two after his letter to the lone bishop, Athanasius repeated the story in a circular letter to bishops in Egypt and Libya, where the gruesome report of Arius' end is nestled alongside older anti-Arian tropes of diabolical heresy, snakes, and poison dispersed to the unsuspecting.⁸ Beyond Athanasius' anti-heretical writings, the tale of Arius' death also became an integral part of other accounts of heresy. Christian writers such as Epiphanius of Salamis reported it in their own

⁷ Athanasius, *Letter* LIV, 3, in H. G. Opitz (ed.), *Athanasius: Werke*, vol. 2.1 (Berlin, 1940), 178–80.

⁸ Athanasius, *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*, esp. 18–19, in D. U. Hansen, K. Metzler and K. Savvidis (eds.), *Athanasius: Werke*, vol. 1.1 (Berlin and New York, 1996), 39–64. This letter was written after *Letter* LIV but before 361 CE.

catalogues of those who deviated from a narrowly constructed orthodoxy.⁹ Over time, the rumour of Arius' filthy death inspired a trope marking heresy itself, as many who were tagged as heretics were reported to have 'died like Arius'.¹⁰

Yet the story did not remain within the genre of heresiology, because as late ancient writers sought to update and expand earlier histories of the Christian community, they decided that the theological conflicts of the fourth century should also be recounted in detail as part of Christian historiography. Though most late ancient historians depended upon Athanasius' letters for the kernel of the story, they added details when they incorporated it into their own histories. The predominant trend among these fifth-century historians was toward making that death into a spectacle: it was placed in ever more public locations and the putative witnesses were multiplied. The first example of this trend appears in the work of Rufinus, a historian who originally set out to update and expand the earlier *Church History* written by Eusebius of Caesarea as he translated that text from Greek into Latin, but who ended up including information that Eusebius did not offer. Part of his new history was the story of Arius' death. Rufinus added a twist to the Athanasian report by conjuring an audience available to watch the showdown between Arius and Alexander, the Constantinopolitan bishop who refused Arius communion. In Rufinus' telling, their argument had captured the imagination of the entire city. 'There was', he wrote, 'great suspense for all about where the steadfastness of Alexander or the threats of Eusebius and Arius would turn'.¹¹ At the precise moment of

⁹ See, for example, Epiphanius, *Panarion* LXIX.0.3, in K. Holl (ed.), *Epiphanius III: Panarion (haereses 65–80)*, Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller (Berlin 1985), 160. Because many heresiologists after Epiphanius simply copied and expanded what he had written, the story of Arius' death was widely dispersed in heresiological texts.

¹⁰ Figures as different as Nestorius, the early fifth-century Christian bishop of Constantinople; Theodoric, the late fifth and early sixth-century leader of the Ostrogoths; and Muhammad, the seventh-century prophet were all explicitly reported by later writers to have died 'like Arius'. For Nestorius, see Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII; Zacharius Rhetor, *Chronicle*, III.1; John Rufus, *Plerophoriae*, XXXIII–XXXVI. For Theodoric, see the anonymous Valesiana, XVI. For Muhammad, see Gerald of Wales, cited in John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York, 2002), 168.

¹¹ Rufinus, *Church History*, X.14 in E. Schwartz and T. Mommsen (eds.), *Eusebius Werke 2.2 Die Kirchengeschichte*, Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller (Leipzig, 1908; repr. Berlin 1999), 979–80.

highest drama, 'as all souls were hanging in suspense', Arius proceeded to the church, 'pressed upon by a crowd of bishops and people'. At the last minute, he 'turned aside to a public facility, out of necessity', and the moment that he sat, 'his intestines and all his guts flowed out down the drain'. The context Rufinus created for the story set a scene that emphasized Arius' exposure: it was daytime, not night, when Arius went to the toilet; he was on his way to demand entrance to the church; and he was accompanied in the streets by a crowd of supporters whom a reader could presume would wait for him, fruitlessly, to leave the toilet.

The trend Rufinus began developed further in later historiographical projects, and at times the embellishments for the story went so far as to create physically implausible narrative settings in which Arius was to have met his end. For example, the mid fifth-century historian Socrates had, like Rufinus before him, been inspired to write a more extensive record of Christian history because he found Eusebius of Caesarea's *Church History* incomplete.¹² Socrates used many resources to expand what Eusebius had done; in his own *Church History* he included the story of Arius' death, making use of the account in the text of Rufinus' *Church History* and most likely, Athanasius' two letters about it.¹³ Yet he adapted the setting of the story: instead of having Arius die during a night visit to a public toilet, as Athanasius' letter had it, or die when he stole away during his walk from the emperor's residence to Alexander's church, as Rufinus had narrated, Socrates located Arius at the Forum of Constantine, a well-known public space which, it should be noted, was not on the route between the emperor's residence and the bishop's church.¹⁴

The scene in Socrates' *Church History* is so distinctive that it is presented here at length. Recall that Arius had gone to ask the emperor to support his case, and when Arius gained the approval of the emperor, Socrates wrote that he 'exited the imperial court, escorted through the middle of the city by those around Eusebius

¹² Socrates, *Church History*, in *Socrate de Constantinople: Histoire ecclésiastique, livre I*, ed. P. Périchon and P. Maraval, *Sources chrétiennes*, 477 (Paris, 2004), 44. Specifically, Socrates complained that Eusebius had 'made only a partial record of things regarding Arius'.

¹³ An observation of Périchon and Maraval, *Socrate de Constantinople*, 30. Another fifth-century historian, Theodoret of Cyrus, simply reproduced Athanasius' letter in his *Church History*, I.13.

¹⁴ I appreciate the anonymous reader who drew this fact to my attention.

who were acting like guards — a spectacle for all to see'.¹⁵ These 'presumptuous actions' were met with 'judgement', which Socrates described in excruciating detail.

When he came near to the Forum of Constantine, in which the porphyry column stands, a fear from a bit of conscience seized Arius, and along with the fear followed a loosening of the bowels. Asking whether there was a privy nearby and, learning there was one beyond the Forum of Constantine, he went in that direction. Then faintness took him, and his bottom fell through along with his excrement. The thing which doctors call the rectum immediately fell out through his bottom, with a lot of blood following, and the rest of his intestines flowed out together with his spleen and his liver, and he died immediately.¹⁶

Into the narrative of Arius' death Socrates introduced new and graphic details about the process of his dying, while he used two memorable locations — the space of the Forum in Constantinople and the central object in the Forum, its porphyry column — to situate the story. Reasoning from the chain of small embellishments that Socrates paid out, a reader could easily conclude that Arius had been trapped between his urgent need for the safety of the privy that lay on the other side of the Forum, on the one hand, and the eyes of the public watching his procession, on the other. It is not difficult to imagine him straggling away from the procession, leaking his excrement along with his viscera across the expanse of the public square in full view of those there to watch the 'spectacle'. With just a few phrases, Socrates called up Arius' grotesque body and placed it within the most recognizable of the imperially designed spaces of late antiquity, in juxtaposition with an iconic imperial monument, the porphyry column.

The reading just provided is just that — a reading. It is only one of many possible interpretations of the story that Socrates told. Given his version's lack of precision about exactly where the moment of death occurred, it is of course possible for a reader to have imagined all kinds of different scenarios: that Arius arrived at the privy he was seeking before he began to die, or that perhaps he had the cover of an alley, a hidden corner, or a forgiving crowd of supporters to hide his last moments. Even beyond the interpretative flexibility of Socrates' version, there were certainly other inferences from what had happened to Arius available in antiquity. The fifth-century histories that

¹⁵ Socrates, *Church History*, I.38.7, ed. Périchon and Maraval, 256.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

survive all follow the basic outline of the story first given by Athanasius, but they offer different perspectives on what the events might have meant. Another historian, Socrates' contemporary Sozomen, located the death of Arius inside a public toilet, a situation which led to more speculation about the cause. As Sozomen explained,

Not everyone believed the same thing regarding his death. To some it seemed he had been taken by a sudden sickness of the heart; or that he suffered a stroke on account of his pleasure that matters were going the way he wanted, and died right then; to yet others, it seemed he had received judgement, being impious. Those who thought like he did reasoned that the man was destroyed by acts of magic.¹⁷

Sozomen was willing to share with his readers a range of interpretations that he either had heard or deemed plausible.¹⁸ His history reveals several points of contestation, and the varying interpretations of Arius' death were reinforced, over time, by people's reactions to them. Sozomen noted that any 'who were constrained to go into the communal space because of necessity — as often happens in a multitude — they would warn each other to avoid the seat. The place was avoided, even afterward, as the very spot where Arius received the punishment of impiety'. That practice existed not to mark the location of Arius' death for the sole reason of historical interest — as with any memorialization, it also delivered an interpretation: remembering Arius on a toilet seat was to remember his 'impiety' and the divine punishment he received for that impiety. With so many possibilities available, it is not surprising that there were attempts to manage the optics of the situation. In fact, Sozomen reported that a supporter of Arius had tried to obliterate the ongoing memorialization of Arius' terrible end by 'acting quickly' and purchasing the privy, demolishing it, and building another structure in its place, 'so that the people might forget and so that the death of Arius might not be lampooned by the passing on of such a remembrance'.¹⁹ We can deduce from Sozomen's report that multiple slightly different versions of these events existed in antiquity and that they were all subject to propagation by telling and retelling.

¹⁷ Sozomen, *Church History* II.29.5, in Sozomenos, *Historia Ecclesiastica I*, ed. G. C. Hansen (Turnhout, 1960), 314.

¹⁸ For a comparative study of Socrates' and Sozomen's aims and styles of historiography, see Peter van Nuffelen (ed.), *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven, 2004).

¹⁹ Sozomen, *Church History* II.30.6–7, ed. G. C. Hansen, 318.

But later evidence suggests that the version from Socrates' *Church History*, in which Arius' death took place in the open during a presumptuous public procession, quickly became the dominant one, crowding out other settings and interpretations. Consider that when Photius, a ninth-century Christian historian, looked back to evaluate earlier histories, he compared them to Socrates' efforts. Based on that standard, Photius complained that writers such as Eusebius were not sufficiently clear about the importance of theological orthodoxy and their descriptions of the theological controversies of the fourth century, especially regarding Arius, 'were not written with the purpose of accuracy or clarity in mind'. Photius assumed that Eusebius 'did not wish to make public' the theological defeats Arius suffered, and therefore made absolutely no mention of 'the just and sudden end of Arius, which came from God and *was seen by every eye*'.²⁰ In this we see the dissatisfaction of a later reader who has been educated to expect a particular version of the story about Arius, namely the one in which his graphic death took place not in a latrine, but in public, so that all could witness it. In fact, the presumption that Arius' awful death happened in Constantine's Forum was such a regular part of the story by the ninth century that people forgot that the story had only come to light in the 360s. Instead, Photius took for granted that the death was as well known to the public as the fifth-century legend had made it out to be, and that a historian such as Eusebius had deliberately concealed it out of shame. But the story did not begin as a commentary on public space and orthodoxy in Constantinople; the changes introduced by fifth-century historiographers, especially Socrates, located it there, moving Arius' death from a night-time private disaster to situate it as a midday spectacle at the heart of the late antique city. In the process, a small tale (a rumour, even) went public, first being repeated in secretive tones in a private letter, but ultimately becoming in the fifth century the most conspicuous and necessary part of any church history about the fourth-century landscape of Constantinople.²¹

²⁰ Photius, *Library*, CXXVII, in Photius, *Bibliothèque*, tome II, ed. René Henry (Paris, 1960), 101, author's emphasis in italics added.

²¹ The legend was reworked to other ends by later historians as well. See, for example, David Gwynn's discussion of how the reports of Athanasius' life included in *The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, reports which probably took their final form after the tenth century, included a reformed version of the events of

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II

SITUATING THE ARIUS LEGEND: CHRISTIANITY AND IMPERIAL CEREMONIAL CULTURE DURING THE THEODOSIAN DYNASTY

It is clear from the twists and turns in the development of the legend of Arius' death during late antiquity that scholars have been right not to treat it as a historical report. Its development suggests it should be analysed as if it were a rumour. To do so, we do not have to wrench the story out of its natural genre, for after all, Athanasius' first recounting in his letter to Serapion had all the trappings of rumour. Distant in time from the event it purported to describe, yet secured as an authoritative version by a witness known only to Athanasius, it was fraught with the tension of speaking an almost unspeakable, and salacious, tragedy. Like a rumour, Athanasius' story relied on tropes to offer a universal moral lesson, collating the death of Arius closely with the infamous death of an earlier scandalous figure, Judas. What is more, the story was appropriated and reshaped multiple times, added to the histories of the fourth century that were written in the fifth century and becoming so ubiquitous that its absence from histories of the church caused suspicion. To treat the story as a rumour is to analyse not the event it reports, but instead the additions to the story as they accrued over time. As James Scott has argued, 'the key fact is that the process of embellishment and exaggeration' in the development of a rumour 'is not at all random. As a rumor travels, it is altered in a fashion that brings it more closely in line with the hopes, fears, and world view of those who hear it and retell it'.²² The historical context reflected in the historiographers' changes to the Arius legend — their 'hopes, fears, and world view' — is to be found in the notions about Christianity, imperial ceremony and public space that were being contested in Constantinople during the time of the Theodosian Dynasty (379–457), an era which encompassed the writing of most of the church histories whose emendations of the legend were discussed in the last section.

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Arius' death aimed at pointing up Athanasius' orthodoxy (Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria*, 188–90).

²² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1992), 145.

This political dynasty introduced many novel elements to late ancient Constantinopolitan society, but for the purpose of understanding the additions to the story of Arius' death, its most significant innovation was the merging of Christian and imperial representational discourses. The combination of Christian and imperial symbols was evident in all kinds of cultural products, but it was especially visible in those texts that were written to offer a particular portrait of the empire and the place of Christianity within it: the histories written during the fifth century. In a pattern familiar from ancient politics, historians such as Socrates had the task of producing histories that framed the excellence of those who ruled; the traditions upon which the dynasty was built were couched as continuations of the venerable past. The questions that drove Rufinus, Socrates and Sozomen certainly interrogated issues of orthodoxy and imperial power, for they all opened their histories with commentary on the career of Constantine, placing his embrace of Christianity to the fore alongside the stories of those Christians whose theologies deviated from Constantine's approval, first among them Arius. The framing they chose revealed that they were motivated not just by the issue of the imperial support of Christian religion, but the imperial support of the correct Christian religion, particularly as it was practised in Constantine's new city.²³ For Theodosius, the correct religion was Nicene Christianity; he went out of his way to support and expand the minority Nicene Christian community in Constantinople when he began to rule in 379 CE. Over the next fifty years, not only did his successors continue to support Nicene Christians, but they combined that type of Christianity with imperial ritual and representation to such a degree that modern historians can speak of the 'Christianization of public ceremonial' in the city.²⁴

²³ By a certain measure, the histories written in the first half of the fifth century were all also heresiologies, in that they narrated the fortunes of Nicene and non-Nicene Christians as central to understanding the moral forces of the divine and human worlds. Even legal texts such as the Theodosian Code, often read as simply a set of laws, encompass heresiological passages and can be founded on the logic of heresiology: see Richard Flower, '“The Insanity of Heretics Must Be Restrained”: Heresiology in the *Theodosian Code*', in Christopher Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2013).

²⁴ An accessible entry to the wide bibliography on this subject is Peter Van Nuffelen's recent article, 'Playing the Ritual Game in Constantinople (379–457)', in Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly, (eds.), *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2012). Compare Brian Croke,

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The cultural project aligning Nicene Christianity with imperial representation was so successful that the textual resources surviving from the period overwhelmingly present it as the only natural and inevitable course of Christianity. While we recognize that Nicene Christians were not always the majority, the force of the project justifying their authority stands as witness to their once-contested situation, and very little evidence survives about other, non-Nicene Christians at Constantinople during the Theodosian dynasty. What does survive reveals the presence of communities of non-Nicene Christians, variously called Eunomians (after an important fourth-century figure), Anomoeans (after their theological position denying the sameness in substance between the Father and the Son, a hallmark of Nicene theology), or Arians (by those who saw them as a part of a long genealogy of heretics that began with Arius himself).²⁵ What late ancient historians do report of them hints very obliquely at the prospect that this community had a different understanding of the relationship between imperial power and representation and Christianity, namely, that Christianity was something to be held apart from public displays of authority such as those of the imperial cult. When Socrates tells the history of how Theodosius exiled Eunomius, for example, he includes the small detail that Eunomius had not been assembling with others in a church building, but rather had been teaching privately in meetings at his own house.²⁶ Even when a church building associated with this group does appear, it carries secretive connotations: Socrates narrates elsewhere how Nestorius, a Christian bishop, damaged a small church where 'Arians' had been worshipping 'off in a corner'.²⁷ Sozomen for his part reports that Eunomius did not live in the city of

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'Reinventing Constantinople: Theodosius I's Imprint on the Imperial City', in Scott McGill, Cristiana Sogno and Edward J. Watts (eds.), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: Later Roman History and Culture, 284–450 CE* (Cambridge, 2010).

²⁵ See Vaggione's discussion of the way Eunomians were linked with Arius in Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus*, 37.

²⁶ Socrates, *Church History*, V.20, in Socrate de Constantinople: *Histoire ecclésiastique, livre IV–VI*, ed. P. Périchon and P. Maraval, *Sources chrétiennes*, 505 (Paris, 2006), 210.

²⁷ Socrates, *Church History* VII.29: *en parabustô*, in Socrate de Constantinople: *Histoire ecclésiastique, livre VII*, ed. P. Périchon and P. Maraval, *Sources chrétiennes*, 506 (Paris, 2007), 108.

Constantinople proper, but rather in the suburbs; he held assemblies of Christians in private houses.²⁸ As disparate pieces of information, these insignificant details may not seem to yield much, but constrained by the lack of evidence about non-Nicene communities, we can attempt to gain something by reading them against Nicene claims about the rightness of Christians holding and using imperial spaces. The representations of non-Nicene Christians as private or secretive align to some extent with the surviving laws about them, which tend toward denying them access to property or imperially supported spaces.²⁹

Because all these fleeting details occur in histories that generally support the more imperial style of Christianity, we could presume that they are simply propaganda, meant to portray other kinds of Christians as powerless and detached from the most important parts of late ancient culture. There is a source from antiquity, though, that probably represents a non-Nicene perspective, and it reveals that such Christians may have intentionally withdrawn from public displays of power, seeing the Nicene merger with imperial authority as a development antithetical to Christianity. Philostorgius, a Eunomian Christian, wrote a *Church History* after the year 425 CE, and though this text has not survived, it was epitomized by a later, ninth-century writer and several pieces were adopted into other texts.³⁰ Though Philostorgius' history does not directly address the question of Nicene engagement with imperial support and displays of imperial power, two short vignettes offer a glimpse of what his attitude toward that engagement, and the exclusion of non-Nicene Christians from such a system, might be. The first is a deathbed scene: Philostorgius relates how a Christian named Lucian, responding to the

²⁸ Socrates, *Church History* VII.17, ed. Périchon and Maraval.

²⁹ See *Theodosian Code* XVI.5, which includes laws against Eunomians having public gatherings, possessing church buildings, serving at the imperial court, or even their clergy living in cities. Additionally, a later heresiologist offers the rich image that the Anomoeans meet in caves in the earth. See Timothy of Constantinople, *Heresies* (PG 86:24) and the discussion of them in David Maldonado-Rivera, 'Encyclopedic Trends in the Making of Heresy in Late Ancient Christianity', (Indiana Univ. Ph.D. thesis) which brought the sources about Eunomian Christian communities to my attention.

³⁰ These summaries and borrowings were collected by Joseph Bidez, *Philostorgius, Kirchengeschichte: mit dem Leben des Lucian von Antiochien und den Fragmenten eines arianischen Historiographen* (Berlin, 1913; revised edn, 1981); for an English translation see Philostorgius, *Church History*, trans. Philip R. Amidon (Atlanta, 2007).

imperial oppression that did not give him access to a place in which to worship, turned his prison cell into a church by performing a Christian ritual there; as he did so, 'the holy choir that surrounded him . . . took the form of a church and shielded the proceedings from impious eyes'.³¹ This short story could be a commentary on the irrepressibility of non-Nicene Christians who, according to Philostorgius, did not need buildings to have churches; or, it could also suggest a distinction between this historian's view of Christian activities, which properly should take place away from 'impious eyes', and non-Christian activities, which are open and available to be seen by those with impious eyes. Even more direct is a different passage, summarized by a later epitomator who thought of Philostorgius as a heretic. Though it is framed negatively, nevertheless it gives a glimpse of Philostorgius' attitude toward the Theodosian-era merging of Christian and imperial ritual. Speaking of Philostorgius, the epitomator wrote, 'Our enemy of God accuses the Christians of worshipping with sacrifices the image of Constantine set up upon the porphyry column, of paying homage to it with lamp-lighting and incense or praying to it as to a god, and of offering it supplications to avert calamities'.³² Here, Philostorgius appears to have registered some version of a Christian ritual that took place in Constantine's Forum and to have expressed his deep concern that such public ceremonies might verge on idolatry. Though these two pieces of evidence are small and conveyed only in hostile summaries of Philostorgius' work, they hint at reticence among non-Nicenes regarding the use of public space and the co-option of imperial power by Christians, even disapproval of the Nicene acceptance of the merging of Christian and imperial horizons.³³

The social logic expressed by both sides in these fifth-century histories — that imperial power, ritual and imperially supported spaces were the right of Nicene Christians, while separation, privacy and even hiddenness were the right of non-Nicene

³¹ Philostorgius, *Church History*, II.13, trans. Amidon, 30; Bidez, 25.

³² Philostorgius, *Church History*, II.17, trans. Amidon, 35; Bidez, 28.

³³ Central to those few texts that do survive is the concept of *akribeia* — acuteness, precision, or purity, a standard which appeared to affect the social structures of Eunomian communities in particular. See Peter Van Nuffelen, 'Episcopal Succession in Constantinople (381–450 CE): The Local Dynamics of Power', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, xviii (2010), esp. 435–41.

Christians — is the context in which we should understand the embellishments that quickly became part of the legend of Arius' death in the fifth century and beyond. The very popular versions drew Arius' death out of the night-time and into daylight, out of the toilet and into the Forum to be 'seen by every eye'. Going public in this way slotted the story and its lessons into a wider conversation taking place about the character of Christianity, its theological unity, and its relationship to imperial power. Put another way, such embellishments are an argument, made not in propositional language, but in jarring, scandalous images. The history that recounted not only that Arius died, but specifically that he had to interrupt his would-be triumphant procession across the Forum to do so, argued that God, arbiter of Arius' death, sided with those whose claim to ritual action in the Forum was legitimate and against those who did not belong in such a space.

That message would have been clear enough had Arius simply dropped dead, but of course the manner of his death also signified divine displeasure. Long before the fifth century, Christian writers had adopted a common tool already in use among ancient historians: narrating for the villains of a text a messy, filthy death, either by intestinal incontinence or genital infestation with worms, or both.³⁴ For example, the early fourth-century Christian writer Lactantius raised this occasional trope to the level of a genre, his treatise *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* offering tale after tale about the bad ends of those who were 'enemies of God'.³⁵ But in the later antique period, filth came to be associated with heresy and heretics, not only in their deaths but also during their lives. As Blake Leyerle has demonstrated, the threat of filth was deployed

³⁴ As examples, see Josephus' treatment of Herod (*Jewish Antiquities*, XVII), Plutarch's treatment of Sulla (*Life of Sulla*, XXXVI), or the longer catalogues of such awful deaths recounted in these articles: Thomas Africa, 'Worms and the Death of Kings: A Cautionary Note on Disease and History', *Classical Antiquity*, i (1982); Wilhelm Nestle, 'Legenden vom Tod der Gottesverächter', *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, xxxiii (1936); W. Speyer, 'Gottesfeind', *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum*, xi (1981); and Sergi Grau, 'How to Kill a Philosopher: The Narrating of Ancient Greek Philosophers' Death in Relation to Their Way of Living', *Ancient Philosophy*, xxx (2010).

³⁵ See especially the story of Galerius, whose 'bowels rotted and his entire seat decayed' and whose 'odour pervaded not just the palace, but the entire city' in Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, XXXIII, in Lactantius Firmianus: *De la mort des persécuteurs*, ed. J. Moreau, *Sources chrétiennes*, 39 (Paris, 1954), 116.

in late antiquity to construct moral boundaries and to incite pedagogical urgency. When fourth-century orator John Chrysostom's congregation considered certain parts of the city or certain actions unobjectionable, not worthy of their moral attention, John motivated them to sharpen their attention by arguing that filth — not merely dirt, but putrid, scatological, rotting organic matter — attached to those places and actions.³⁶ Other Christians attached filth specifically to non-Nicene Christians: Theodoret of Cyrus' *Church History*, for example, narrated two stories in quick succession that suggested 'Arian' Christians carried with them the risk of pollution by excrement.³⁷ Considering these instances, we can see that the story of the death of Arius was not a singular occurrence, but one plank in an expanding platform that associated heresy and deviance with filth.

We can gauge the effectiveness of that platform and the role of the Arius story as a part of it by observing the way that the Forum of Constantine was remembered once the idea that Arius had died there had taken hold. The Forum was created during the foundation of the city of Constantinople; at its origin, it did not include monuments to or representations of Christian orthodoxy. But after late antiquity, new traditions about the past of the Forum emerged, traditions marking the spot of Arius' death that by the eighth century were assumed to have always been a part of the Forum's landscape. Most memorable of these traditions is recorded in a set of 'Notes' about Constantinople, the *Parastaseis*, which were a kind of underground, fantastical guide to the city.

Too often these 'Notes' are not taken as historically significant, because they comprise myths about strange places and sites in Constantinople and so are considered less accurate in their depiction of places and spaces than a traditional history might be. But that is precisely why they are useful: they record the features of the city, not necessarily as they existed in the eighth

³⁶ Blake Leyerle, 'Refuse, Filth, and Excrement in the Homilies of John Chrysostom', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, ii (2009).

³⁷ Theodoret, *Church History*, 4.13: the local Arian bishop, who 'lives all alone', asks others to bathe with him at the local bathhouse, but they choose to drain the hot water rather than touch water that has touched his body; later, another bishop in the same city rides through a public place and when a ball that boys had been playing with passes under his animal, the people react to it as if it were polluted.

century, but as they could be imagined to exist.³⁸ Among those features is Constantine's Forum with its iconic porphyry column, which the 'Notes' record had been monumentally tagged with a particular historical event. Here is part of the entry on the Forum:

There too after this Arius met his disgusting death, the wretch who dared to blaspheme worse than the pagans, the miserable creature who wanted to seize the patriarchal throne of Constantinople by imperial aid with procession and honour. But Alexander, great in his divine knowledge, did not [. . .] until he brought the man to his horrible death. So in that place about twenty-nine palms distant from the arch, Arius was represented in the reign of god-loving Theodosius, on a slab of marble close to the ground, and with him Sabellius, Macedonius, and Eunomius, an object of disgust to passers-by, to vent on them dung and urine and spittle, and to load with dishonour those who had dishonoured the Son of God. These things can be seen up to the present day by those who wish to examine what we have written with philosophy and effort.³⁹

In a cruel mimesis of Arius' own legendary death, the Constantinopolitans represented in the 'Notes' pour out their hatred of Arius in their bodily products, their filth marking the place of his death and the death of other heretics. What had once been attributable to Arius alone was attributed in this tradition to other non-Nicene Christians of the fourth century and, in extension, to those who espoused their views. So the story of Arius' death came to exist as an inseparable, organic part of the landscape of the Forum, a memorialization imagined in stone that continually gestured toward (and asked passers-by to gesture toward) the sin of heresy. As such, the imagined memorial to Arius' disgusting death is the precipitate of an extensive late ancient conversation about imperial spaces being implicated in Christian practices. One question remains: if the development of the legend of Arius dying in the Forum near the porphyry column is a reflection of the local politics of the city, why did that version of the story resonate so strongly beyond the city of Constantinople? The answer has to do with the way that the porphyry column signified the city and with the nature of late ancient Christianity itself.

³⁸ On the wider genre of *patria* literature, see Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: Études sur le recueil des 'patria'* (Paris, 1984).

³⁹ *Brief Historical Notes*, 39, in A. Cameron and J. Herrin (ed. and trans.), *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 104–6.

III

ICONIC OBJECTS AND THE MEANING OF SPACE IN THE LATE
ANCIENT CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

The political context in which the historiographers of the early fifth century embellished the legend of Arius' death to locate the event in ever more public settings is discussed in the previous section. Christian writers in Constantinople explored the ramifications of imperial alignment with Christianity and the access to imperial space that came with such alignment, arguing with images and scandalous stories that non-Nicene Christians had no rightful cooperation with imperial power. The most popular variation of the Arius legend participated in this exploration by placing the death in a specific location within Constantinople by mentioning a particular object: the porphyry column that stood in the Forum of Constantine. Whether he was aware of it or not, Socrates tapped into a cultural dynamo of memory and representation when he chose to include the column as a detail in his version. It was already an iconic object in the imagined geography of the Mediterranean, invested with meaning and bearing great potential to carry new meanings about the city it represented and that city's founder.

The porphyry column assumed this importance, at least at first, because of how Constantine deployed it in his foundation of his capital, Constantinople. As a part of the new city, it deliberately evoked the old city, namely Rome. The column was situated in a newly dedicated public space, a 'Forum of Constantine' which lay just beyond the old boundaries of the former city, an open circle on the central road leading to the new urban territory claimed by Constantine in an ancient Roman ritual.⁴⁰ The new space was the site of the opening day of ritual dedication of Constantine's 'new Rome' on 11 May 330 CE.⁴¹ As the climax to a formal

⁴⁰ The historian Zosimus, otherwise antithetical to Constantine for his support of Christianity, describes the Forum as 'circular' and lying 'in the place where the gate was previously situated'. Constantine 'had surrounded it with porticoes on two levels', and had 'placed two huge corridors of Proconnesian marble opposite one another, through which it is possible to enter the porticoes of Severus and leave the old city', *Historia nova*, II.30.4 in Samuel N. C. Lieu and Dominic Montserrat (eds. and trans.), *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Byzantine Views: A Source History* (London, 1996), 19.

⁴¹ Garth Fowden, 'Constantine's Porphyry Column: The Earliest Literary Allusion', *Journal of Roman Studies*, lxxxi (1991).

procession that day, a statue representing Constantine was placed on top of the large porphyry column dominating the open space. Though the statue has not survived, the best modern reconstructions of it assume that Constantine was depicted in a way reminiscent of the Unconquered Sun, a traditional Roman deity to which emperors often referred in their official portraits of themselves.⁴² Thus the column was a central feature of Constantine's extensive programme of urban representation. Sarah Bassett's reconstruction of the changing collection of public art and statuary displayed at Constantinople shows a dense, ramified and inescapable programme of public symbolism, aimed at gathering all the extant cultural signs to support Constantine.⁴³ Within this much wider programme, the column was itself a complex sign, designed to draw upon cultural expectations of the images of power and to stamp the new city with the authority and authenticity of the old.

The nuances of that programme of display fell away, however, for those who wished to represent the city of Constantinople in an abbreviated way and rapidly in late antiquity the column alone began to stand as a symbol of the city as a whole. Consider, for example, the way that Constantinople is represented on the Peutinger Map, a surviving eleventh-century copy of a late fourth-century map. Approximately twenty-two feet long by one foot high, the map compresses the known Roman world into a series of highways, rivers and seaways. Significant cities are represented iconographically, with small pairs of simple buildings or sometimes a courtyard-style building, with Rome, Antioch and Constantinople warranting depiction as seated personae, perched alongside significant architectural elements representing their unique cityscapes. The personification of Constantinople in this map sits next to a representation of the porphyry column and its statue.⁴⁴ The representation of this feature of Constantine's Forum was so widespread in antiquity that on this map, designed to present the whole world at a glance,

⁴² Jonathan Bardill, *Constantine: Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age* (Cambridge, 2011), 31–5 (figs. 17–19); see also his discussion of sun imagery in imperial portraiture at 28–63.

⁴³ Sarah Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. the survey of displays from Constantine's era at 50–78.

⁴⁴ Richard J. A. Talbert, *Rome's World: The Peutinger Map Reconsidered* (Cambridge, 2010) has a copy of the map.

the column takes the place of the city, signalling its built environment in a single figure. Just as the Golden Gate Bridge is to San Francisco, or the Colosseum is to Rome, the porphyry column with its statue was to Constantinople. Mary Carruthers has analysed how such abbreviated images — symbols that suggest a wider reality, but do not specify its details — can be used in feats of memory that we might think of as constructive, rather than simply reproductive. An abbreviated image calls up a set of known facts, but does not compel its user to order or evaluate those facts in only one way. Instead, the person who remembers a wider reality by means of an abbreviated image generates much of that reality herself.⁴⁵ If, as the Peutinger Map indicates, the porphyry column was an abbreviated image by which the entirety of Constantinople was to be remembered in late antiquity, then the column was pluripotent, available to be used even by people distant from the city as they reconstructed for themselves the spaces they perceived to be part of the city and the events they imagined to have happened there. The effect could be stronger for those outside the city than for those who experienced the city's landscape every day, for outsiders who did not frequent the city had only the abbreviated image, what stories they had heard, and their imaginations to guide them.⁴⁶

Because it was a symbol struck in shorthand, evoking but not specifying its meaning, the porphyry column was often the focus of late ancient efforts to change its meaning. Such efforts had political impact, because writers in antiquity assumed that the character of the column, once determined, would also determine the intention of Constantine, its commissioner. Thus, according to an anonymous life of Constantine written several centuries after the founding of the city, Constantine had secretly included a number of objects in capsules, installing them below the foundation of the famous porphyry column on the first day of the city's new life. Unknown to most Constantinopolitans,

⁴⁵ Mary J. Carruthers, '*Ars oblivionalis, ars inveniendi*: The Cherub Figure and the Arts of Memory', *Gesta*, xlviii, 2 (2009).

⁴⁶ Carruthers explains this effect by considering the controversy regarding an Islamic centre that was to be built near the former site of the World Trade Centre. The controversy was mostly driven by the concerns of people outside New York City, for whom the site, tagged as Ground Zero, was a type of abbreviated image for that city (and the United States in general) in the political context of the 'War on Terror'. See Mary J. Carruthers 'The Mosque that Wasn't: A Study in Social Memory Making', *Insights* (University of Durham Institute for Advanced Study), iv (2011).

Constantine had, 'with his own hands', hidden in the base of the column the five thousand loaves of bread that Jesus miraculously produced to feed the hungry crowd, along with the baskets that held the bread and the nets that held the fish, and also the axe that Noah had used to cut the wood for his ark.⁴⁷ The presence of these objects, when revealed by the historian, signalled Constantine's previously hidden desire that the central space of his new city be a Christian space, one indelibly linked to the Christian past. This same anonymous historian reported that the statue atop the porphyry column held a cross and had an inscription in which Constantine dedicated the city to 'Christ, my God'; it had remained unknown because it was out of sight, but to those attuned to its presence, it changed the column into a Christian punctuation mark on the space of Constantine's Forum. In this way, a later Christian historian placed imagined objects near the column to amend what it signified. Both Constantine's supposed direct words, inscribed in stone, and the objects included under the column fixed, concretely, the intention of Constantine for future citizens to discover.⁴⁸

The fact that these objects and the inscription at the top of the column were only purportedly present made no real difference, for their imagined presence would have changed the significance of the column and the Forum within Constantinople's religious history as easily as their having been physically present would have. This is because late ancient Christianity was overwhelmingly a religion that exercised the imagination. The formal training systems for adult Christians that developed during the fourth and fifth centuries placed considerable emphasis on the skill of using the imagination to envision what was not immediately visible. Catechetical manuals from the time are filled with admonitions that seeing the invisible reality behind visible things was not only required of Christians, but was the most transformative religious technique that they could cultivate. Bishops and preachers often offered homilies that

⁴⁷ Anonymous, *Life of Constantine*, XXIV, in Lieu and Montserrat (eds. and trans.), *From Constantine to Julian*, 128; Michelangelo Giudi (ed.), 'Un BIOΣ di Costantino', *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, ser. 5, 16 (1907), 337.

⁴⁸ This kind of manipulation of space through objects hidden in the landscape, then revealed, was a common occurrence in late ancient Christianity. Consider the legend of Helena finding the True Cross in Jerusalem, or the *inventio* of the martyred bodies of Protasius and Gervasius in Milan.

depended upon the technique, teaching Christians to see the hidden demonic world lurking in seemingly innocuous urban spaces or the invisible angels present in churches during Christian rituals.⁴⁹ Beyond such formal pedagogy, Christian culture in general drew vigour from what Patricia Cox Miller has termed 'the corporeal imagination', a cultural tendency to locate and visualize bodily presences in the absence of physical matter.⁵⁰ The disposition that allowed Christians to continue to engage meaningfully with the bodies of killed martyrs or to imagine the presence of angels and demons also allowed them to easily imagine the reality of objects such as those said to have existed near the porphyry column — whether the religious objects supposedly added to its foundation at the dedication of the city or the body of Arius dying nearby — and to understand those objects as a reality that bore significantly upon the meaning of the visible space. Such a disposition facilitated the propagation of the story of Arius' dying in the Forum, and as it did so, it changed the significance of the Forum even for those who would never see it in person.

Not only did late ancient Christians regularly practise seeing the invisible alongside the visible, they also regularly sought to visualize the multiple temporalities that could be represented in a single space. Once established, the image of Arius dying in the midst of the Forum, near the porphyry column, for every eye to see, worked retroactively to define Constantine's city as always having been the place where Arius died. Rather than there having been a historical awareness of the emergence of the legend of his death over time, the version of the tale told in Socrates' history offered a past for Constantinople in which Arius' death in 336 CE was continuously memorialized in the Forum from its founding in 337 CE onward. In his 'Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land', Maurice Halbwachs explained how fourth-century Christians blended past and present like this, redefining the space around them as having ever embodied the

⁴⁹ See my discussion in Ellen Muehlberger, 'Bringing Angels into the World: Catechesis and the Christian Imagination' in *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford, 2013); and Dayna Kalleres' exploration of the hidden cityscape created by Christian leaders in Dayna S. Kalleres, *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2014).

⁵⁰ Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2009), esp. 102–15.

past represented in the Christian gospels. Thus, in Halbwachs' example, by remaking places such as Jerusalem using newly built features and linking the new features to the past recounted in the Christian Bible, Christians created the appearance of an uninterrupted historical record, easily accessible in the contemporary landscape. Often, historians of antiquity have been inspired by Halbwachs' theorization of this effect to illuminate how physical structures can create particular versions of the past. But it is important to notice that for Halbwachs, it was not solely the physical structures themselves that shaped memories, but the 'image of the space' defined by those structures that created 'the illusion of not having changed at all through time and of encountering the past in the present'.⁵¹ The image of any space is, of course, constituted in part by its physical components, but in late ancient Christian culture, the invisible yet real components of a place were as much a part of that image as anything visible. The embellishments added to the legend of Arius' death in the fifth century were the projections of a conversation about Christian claims to imperial signs of power, but those embellishments became necessary parts of the dominant version of the legend because they resonated with the religious techniques prevalent in late ancient Christian culture. The success, then, of the story of Arius' death, was an emergent phenomenon that depended upon the imaginative faculty cultivated by late ancient Christians.

CONCLUSION

In her 2002 book, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscapes, Monuments and Memories*, Susan E. Alcock lamented the tendency she saw among historians of the ancient world either to neglect the possibility that those living in the ancient world could have a sense of their own past as variable and as constructed as any society's, and thus be tempted to 'analyze and assess their activities as if they had no memories at all', or

⁵¹ Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1968), 167. The Mary Douglas translation (*The Collective Memory* (New York, 1980)) renders this phrase ('l'image . . . de l'espace') as 'the spatial image', which has been taken to mean something like the look of a space. Here, I prefer 'the image of the space' in order to emphasize that the physical appearance of a place is just one of many factors that constitute its image in the imagination. See also Halbwachs's discussion of the stability of memories associated with objects in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago, 1992), 204–5.

alternately, to reconstruct the past of their subjects by culling details from textual sources alone.⁵² In response, Alcock proposed that historians should seek to understand their subjects' memories of the past through the 'material framework' in which a society's memories are 'embedded and supported'.⁵³ Her proposal was informed by Pierre Nora's work on 'sites of memory', but where Nora found that conceptions of the past are anchored to, and can be accessed in, a number of 'sites' (which, for Nora included monuments and objects, but also symbols and texts), Alcock focuses on physical structures.⁵⁴ The 'material framework' she advises historians to consult comprises monuments and landscapes. The examples dissected in the book's six case studies are resolutely physical, structures and built objects existing in the world, which Alcock peruses to understand how they influenced those who saw and experienced them firsthand.⁵⁵

Alcock's book was a welcome reminder that the built environment can be as important to a society's memory of the past as texts like official histories or chronicles, but the ancient past at its most powerful is not confined to representation solely in physical structures or solely in texts. Particularly in late ancient Christian culture both are necessary components, historiographies and hagiographies working together with found places and created structures to form not just a conception of the past, but an expectation that the past and the present are aligned and progressing toward triumph. The phrase 'working together' here indicates that the meaning of even the most enduring of structures can change based on the texts, broadly speaking, with which it is associated.⁵⁶ This article has examined how the staying power of the legend of Arius' death exemplifies texts and structures working together to consolidate

⁵² Susan E. Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscapes, Monuments and Memories* (Cambridge, 2002), 1–2.

⁵³ Alcock, *Archaeologies*, 2.

⁵⁴ Pierre Nora, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History', in Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York, 1996), cited in Alcock, *Archaeologies*, 21.

⁵⁵ To be clear, Alcock allows that monuments and landscapes can mean different things at different times to different people, but her focus remains on those experiencing these structures first-hand (Alcock, *Archaeologies*, 34–5).

⁵⁶ An excellent example of this phenomenon is discussed by Laura S. Nasrallah in 'Empire and Apocalypse in Thessaloniki: Interpreting the Early Christian Rotunda', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, xiii (2005).

a particular view of the past. Starting with Athanasius' anti-Arian campaign, ancient Christian heresiology had insisted that theological compliance was the central issue for Christian communities, more important to Christian unity than imperatives to moral action or ritual accuracy. The legend of Arius reduced the consequences of theological deviance to a single illustrative event, inextricably linking that event to the discourse of imperial power evoked by the Forum of Constantine. Such a space represented a particular version of the past for far more people than had ever been present in the Forum itself; it was a representational space, built to signify, but it was also a represented space, imagined across the empire through the symbol of the porphyry column.

Defining the city of Constantinople as the place where Arius died so dramatically also defined the city and those associated with it as the place that rejected Arius, his theology, and any Christians whose theology (accurately or not) was associated with Arius', both for the past as conceived within Christian tradition as well as, to a certain extent, the past as reconstructed by historians of early Christianity. The nature of the imagined city, now inhabited by a filthy, dying body of a heretic, made it very difficult to recount the city's history as one that included theological diversity among Christians and their supporters. This applied to many imperial figures in late antiquity, several of whom did support diverse religious communities and, when Christianity became the dominant religious tradition, supported non-Nicene Christian communities. First among them was Constantine himself, whose surviving material building programme was ambivalently Christian at best and whose participation in the story of Arius — he was the emperor who ordered that Arius be accepted into communion — became increasingly questionable as Arius was recast as the heretic of all heretics. Redefining the city's past this way also obscured the actions of other, later emperors who supported non-Nicene theologies, from Constantius in the fourth century to Justin I in the sixth.⁵⁷ The filth associated with Arius' death and the assumption that it had always been located in the

⁵⁷ Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 133–68. Ayres explains how Constantius supported a theology of similarity, which by later Christians was lumped with other theologies found objectionable and tagged 'Arianism'. For the sixth century, see G. Greatrex, 'Justin I and the Arians', *Studia Patristica*, xxxiv (2001).

city's centre — '*l'omphalos de la cité constantinienne*', as one scholar put it⁵⁸ — made it difficult also to remember the diversity of Christian communities in the past of the city. The pro-Nicene community in Constantinople actually remained rather small through the middle part of the fourth century; it was nothing like the robust community one would expect to emerge after there had been such a clear divine judgement of their opponent as was remembered as happening to Arius.⁵⁹ When several 'Arian' churches in the city were finally seized in 538 CE, they were flush with goods and wealth, suggesting the presence of a stable community; outside the city were other robust communities of 'Arians'.⁶⁰ All of these historical presences were overshadowed by the starkly imagined event of Arius losing his continence and his life in the most iconic place in the city.

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⁵⁸ Cyril Mango, *Le développement urbain de Constantinople (IV^e–VII^e siècles)* (Paris, 1985), 25.

⁵⁹ Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 244–51.

⁶⁰ Greatrex, 'Justin I and the Arians'. Matthew R. Crawford offers several sources for the history of Eunomian and Arian communities in his 'The Triumph of Pro-Nicene Theology over Anti-Monarchian Exegesis: Cyril of Alexandria and Theodore of Heraclea on John 14.10–11', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, xxi (2013), 538 n. 1.

