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GONE LIKE SMOKE OR MIST – THE BEAUTY AND WONDERS OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN VERNACULAR LAMENTS ON ITS FALL IN 1453

Abstract. In this paper, I will focus on the images of Constantinople's past glory in literary texts written between the fifteenth and seventeenth century in vernacular Greek to express the sorrow after the fall of the City in 1453. To depict the images of Constantinople in the collective memory of the Greeks, I am going to discuss the following anonymous vernacular laments: *Ανακάλημα τῆς Κωνσταντινούπολης*, *Ἄλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, *Θρήνος και κλαυθμός περί τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως* and *Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*. The four texts deserve attention not only for linguistic and literary reasons, but also for providing a number of interesting insights into the relationship between the East and West and the way the Greeks perceived the past glory of Byzantium. For further exemplification, I will also use some monodies written in a rhetorical style in classicizing Greek. The comparative analysis will reveal common patterns of perception of Constantinople's past glory in the Greek world after the fall of the City, as well as common ways in which Constantinople was conceptualised in the post-Byzantine period, in various, sometimes distant regions of the Greek world, where the City had already been largely perceived in mythical terms.

Keywords: Laments, Threnodies, the Fall of Constantinople, 1453, Greek vernacular literature, post-Byzantine Greek literature

Vernacular Greek texts, written after the fall of Constantinople and referring to its capture by the Turks in 1453 are relatively rarely studied¹. Still, they

¹ The most important studies conducted in recent years include: A. PΑΡΑΥΙΑΝΝΙ, *He Polis healo: The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 in Post-Byzantine Popular Literature*, *Al-Mas* 22.1, 2010, p. 27–44; A.J. GOLDWYN, *I come from a cursed land and from the depths of darkness: Life After Death in Greek*



deserve attention not only for literary or linguistic reasons, as they are rare examples of the use of spoken Greek in the post-Byzantine period, but for historical reasons as well. They may serve as an important source of the relations between East and West in the era following the fall of “the City” (Πόλις – as Constantinople was referred to by the Greeks), as well as for understanding the attitude of the Greeks of different parts of the Greek-speaking world of the event considered as the turning point in the history of Hellenism. Significantly, most of the texts are personal in tone, revealing the attitude of usually anonymous authors towards events distant in time for the narrators. Thus, they seem, as is sometimes emphasised, as more authentic than monodies or poetic lamentations created in classicizing Greek, in accordance with the established rhetorical tradition².

The research on vernacular laments has usually focused on genre-based issues or on their dating and origins. Attention has also been paid to mutual relationship between individual works and scholarly and demotic traditions, as well as the sociocultural context and complex mechanisms of the collective cultural trauma caused by the fall of Constantinople³. In sporadic cases, the focus was on the City itself and the images of its destruction or descriptions of the suffering inhabitants, enslaved by the Turks⁴. The question of the relation between the vernacular laments and the writings of late Byzantine historians describing the capture

Laments About the Fall of Constantinople, [in:] *Wanted: Byzantium. The Desire for a Lost Empire*, ed. I. NILSSON, Uppsala 2014, p. 93–108; A. KARANIKA, *Messengers, Angels, and Laments for the Fall of Constantinople*, [in:] *The Fall of Cities in the Mediterranean. Commemoration in Literature, Folk-Song, and Liturgy*, ed. M.R. BACHVAROVA, D. DUTSCH, A. SUTER, Cambridge 2016, p. 226–249; E. ΚΕΦΑΛΑ, *The Conquered. Byzantium and America on the Cusp of Modernity*, Washington 2020, p. 27–70.

² See A.J. GOLDWYN, *I come from a cursed land...*, p. 94: *But the poems are much more than simple amalgamations of conventional forms and themes. Rather, it is through the sophisticated manipulation of these generic constraints in their laments that the authors express their own personal anguish and offer an individualized interpretation of the events themselves and their ramifications in the lives of the first generations of post-Byzantine Greeks.* Goldwyn in his narratological analysis of Kaminiates' letters convincingly described how seemingly conventional texts written in formal language may convey emotion. See IDEM, *Prison literature and slave narratives in Byzantium: John Kaminiates' Capture of Thessaloniki*, [in:] IDEM, *Witness Literature in Byzantium. Narrating Slaves, Prisoners, and Refugees*, Cham 2021, p. 71–140.

³ See A. ΠΑΡΑΥΙΑΝΝΙ, *He Polis healo...*, p. 27–44; Γ. ΚΕΧΑΓΙΟΓΛΟΥ, *Λίγα ακόμη γύρω από το Ανακάλημα της Κωνσταντινούπολης*, [in:] Ε. ΚΡΙΑΡΑΣ, *Ανακάλημα της Κωνσταντινούπολης. Επιμέλεια Ε. ΚΡΙΑΡΑΣ; Επίμετρο Γ. ΚΕΧΑΓΙΟΓΛΟΥ*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2012 (cetera: *Λίγα ακόμη γύρω από το Ανακάλημα της Κωνσταντινούπολης*), p. 35–100; A. KARANIKA, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 226–230; E. ΚΕΦΑΛΑ, *The Conquered...*, p. 27–70. The conquest of a city as a topos that fits into cultural trauma is, of course, well known from Byzantine literature. An interesting example is John Kaminiates' *Capture of Thessaloniki*, thoroughly analysed by Goldwyn, in which he examines the topos of the trauma of the conquered city's inhabitants. See A.J. GOLDWYN, *Prison Literature...*, p. 133–136.

⁴ See A.J. GOLDWYN, *I come from a cursed land...*, p. 93–108; E. ΚΕΦΑΛΑ, *The Conquered...*, p. 56–60.

of the City, and the monodies in classicizing Greek, have usually remained on the margin of research⁵.

To collect the sources for this article, I have examined the most important items of the rich corpus of vernacular texts, referred to as “laments” or “threnodies” on the decline of Constantinople⁶. It should be noted, that the term may not always correspond to the content of individual works, as some of them are longer compositions, with the lamentation as a part of the whole work.

It is not my intention to discuss the lament as a literary genre, as it has already been done by numerous authors, such as Margaret Alexiou in her influential monograph⁷. Nor am I going to address the question whether the lament on the fall of Constantinople is part of an earlier tradition or it constitutes of an entirely new genre, by referring to the already established one⁸.

In my article I am going to focus on an issue which, to my best knowledge, has not yet been the subject of separate papers or studies, namely on the images of Constantinople’s past glory in some selected vernacular texts, written between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century. In order to show the image of Constantinople in the collective memory of the inhabitants of different parts of the Greek-speaking world, I am going to present four anonymous vernacular laments: *Ανακάλημα τῆς Κωνσταντινπόλης*, *Άλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, *Θρήνος και κλαυθμός περί τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως* and *Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*. The selection of the texts is quite arbitrary, but it can be briefly explained as follows: all of them include extensive passages, depicting the image of Constantinople’s lost glory. The works have not been selected due to their popularity: the first two of them are well-known, frequently quoted and referred to, while the remaining two are rarely discussed, particularly in the context of lamentations.

⁵ The most important source texts on the fall of Constantinople have been collected and translated into Italian by A. Pertusi in three separate volumes: A. PERTUSI, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. I, *Le testimonianze dei contemporanei*, Milano 2006; IDEM, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. II, *L’eco nel mondo*, Milano 2003; IDEM, *Testi Inediti e Poco Noti sulla Caduta di Costantinopoli*, ed. A. CARILE, Bologna 1983. See also A. KARANIKΑ, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 228–230; A. ΠΑΡΑΥΙΑΝΝΙ, *He Polis healo...*, p. 27–34.

⁶ The most important laments and monodies on the fall of the City are enumerated by Lambros. See Σ. ΛΑΜΠΡΟΣ, *Μονωδία και θρήνοι ἐπὶ τῇ ἀλώσει τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, NE 5, 1908, p. 193–200. Karanika says there are more than a hundred similar works. See A. KARANIKΑ, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 229.

⁷ See M. ALEXIOU, *Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, rev. D. YATROMANOLAKIS, P. ROILOS, Cambridge 2002. About the historical overview and sources of the laments for Constantinople, see also A. KARANIKΑ, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 228–230.

⁸ Certainly, the question of the interrelationship between later folk songs on the fall of cities and the aforementioned laments remains unexplored. This is evidenced by the fact that no one has so far made a holistic attempt to collect the preserved items belonging to this theme and to study them as a whole. For more on laments in the context of post-Byzantine vernacular literature, see B. KNÖS, *L’histoire de la littérature néo-grecque: la période jusqu’en 1821*, Stockholm 1962, p. 158–168; H.G. BECK, *Ιστορία της Βυζαντινής δημώδους λογοτεχνίας*, μετ. Ν. ΕΙΔΕΝΕΙΕΡ, Αθήνα 2009, p. 256–264.

As the relationship between the laments written in demotic and the works in classicizing Greek is not always clear, and it is also unclear whether the anonymous authors were familiar to the rhetorical tradition or just the opposite: the educated authors took from folk tradition which has not been preserved – therefore the analysis, at least to some extent, must take both traditions into account. So for comparison, I will need to make use of some monodies written in prose in either classicizing or koine Greek in a rhetorical style (e.g., Doukas, Andronikos Kallistos)⁹.

The passages taken from the above texts refer to either the material or spiritual heritage of Constantinople. The fragments with coherent content have been cited in full, while from the others I have quoted only the most characteristic expressions and phrases referring to the lost heritage. The compilation has been made in order to attempt to answer the question of how consistent the vision of lost Constantinople in vernacular texts written after 1453 in the Greek-speaking areas actually was.

Τὸ Ἀνακάλημα τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως – *The Lament on Constantinople* (15th century)

This lament is probably the most frequently quoted of all vernacular works relating to the decline of the City¹⁰. The contemporary edition of Kriaras with commentaries by Kechagioglou is the primary point of reference¹¹. The lament was composed in 118 iambic verses of fifteen syllables (“political verse”, πολιτικός στίχος) and was written most probably in Cyprus or its author was Cypriot¹².

Without going into the detailed analysis, it should be emphasized that the work has a complex narrative structure. Verses 1–56 are a news of the fall of the City,

⁹ In the article, I usually omit references to Greek historiography, which deals with the fall of the City in 1453 (Doukas, Sphrantzes, Kritovoulos, Chalkokondyles). An exception is the lament on the capture of Constantinople by Doukas, which is included in his work *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, to which I refer in several instances.

¹⁰ Preserved in only one codex (Codex Parisinus Graecus no. 2873, ff. 187r–191r) it was first published by E. Legrand. See E. LEGRAND, *Les Oracles de Léon le Sage, la Bataille de Varna, la prise de Constantinople*, Paris–Athènes 1875, p. 85–100. The most comprehensive analysis of the entire work in the context of cultural trauma mechanisms is provided by Kefala. See E. ΚΕΦΑΛΑ, *The Conquered...*, p. 27–70.

¹¹ *Ανακάλημα της Κωνσταντινόπολης*, [in:] E. ΚΡΙΑΡΑΣ, *Ανακάλημα της Κωνσταντινόπολης...*, p. 21–27.

¹² The title noun ανακάλημα (*anakaλίma*) in the sense of ‘lament’ is found only in Cyprus. More words and expressions of Cypriot origin are enumerated by Kriaras, see E. ΚΡΙΑΡΑΣ, *Ανακάλημα της Κωνσταντινόπολης...*, p. 12–13. Kechagioglou emphasises that the text of the lament was found in the manuscripts belonging to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, a minister of Louis XIV. However, the codex from which the lament comes has not been sufficiently studied, and contains more texts written in vernacular Greek. See Γ. ΚΕΧΑΓΙΟΓΛΟΥ, *Λίγα ακόμη γύρω από το Ανακάλημα της Κωνσταντινόπολης*, p. 77–78.

as a dialogue between a ship and a galley¹³. The role of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI Palaiologos (Dragases)¹⁴ is highlighted. As Kefala emphasises, the work is dominated by powerful visual and aesthetic images, appealing to the senses¹⁵. The subsequent verses (v. 57–88), are a proper lament on the destruction of Constantinople and the suffering of its inhabitants, resembling a conventional threnos¹⁶. The final part (v. 89–118) refers to the recollections of the former beauty of the City, to which Constantine the Great and Justinian contributed.

All in all, the composition is in a gloomy tone, with no hope for a change in the future. There are some allusions to Western Europe and warnings to Catholics, characteristic of other similar works. The anonymous author emphasises the images of destruction and enslavement of the Greeks, from which one can imply that the loss must have been painful to the author as well. The story begins with the voice of an external narrator who, as one may conclude, expresses the collective consciousness and the sense of collective loss for the Greeks¹⁷:

Θρήνος, κλαυμός και ὄδυρμός και στεναγμός και λύπη,
θλίψις ἀπαραμύθητος ἔπεσεν τοῖς Ρωμαίοις.
Ἐχάσασιν τὸ σπίτιν τους, τὴν Πόλιν τὴν ἅγια,
τὸ θάρρος και τὸ καύχημα και τὴν ἀπαντοχὴν τους. (v. 1–4)¹⁸

¹³ Although Goldwyn's suggestion that we deal with a veiled dialogue between the dead and the living may seem attractive, in my opinion it lacks a sufficient basis. See A.J. GOLDWYN, *I come from a cursed land...*, p. 96–97. I find no parallels in the literature that I know of to the eschatological context that Goldwyn points to. Moreover, later folk songs extremely rarely contain allusions to death and the afterlife in a maritime context. There are many attempts to interpret this passage. For example, Pertusi looks for an analogy in the accounts of contemporaries, including N. Barbaro, about the ships that may have sailed from Constantinople at that time. See A. PERTUSI, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. II, p. 484. Karanika, in turn, refers to the motif of the messenger, drawing attention to the symbolism of light and darkness. See A. KARANIKA, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 233. Pertusi cites an interesting note preserved in manuscripts about the arrival of three ships from Constantinople to Crete on June 29, 1453, and spreading the news of the capture of the City. See A. PERTUSI, *Testi Inediti e Poco Noti...*, p. 213–215. See also E. KEFALA, *The Conquered...*, p. 41–47.

¹⁴ There are many legends in Greek folk tradition associated with the figure of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI Palaeologos. The best-known says he did not fall in battle defending Constantinople, but was transformed into marble and is waiting for the right moment to go into battle again. See D.M. NICOL, *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans*, Cambridge 1992, p. 95–120. Another, referred to by the anonymous author of this lament, tells of the emperor's request that the Cretans should cut off his head and take it to Crete (v. 37–56). A legend of unclear provenance, echoed by Doukas (39.13), about the emperor's head being taken to Crete, has contributed to the hypothesis of the Cretan origin of the lament. See also A. PAPAIIANNI, *He Polis healo...*, p. 41–43.

¹⁵ See E. KEFALA, *The Conquered...*, p. 47–48.

¹⁶ See *ibidem*, p. 56.

¹⁷ See A. KARANIKA, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 232.

¹⁸ *Ανακάλυμμα της Κωνσταντινόπολης*, p. 21.

Mourning, weeping, and lamentation, and groaning and grief,
 Inconsolable sorrow has fallen upon the Romaiοi.
They have lost their home, the holy City
their courage and pride, and all their hope.¹⁹

It is not until a few dozen verses later that we learn something which in fact constitutes the most significant part of Constantinople's heritage for the narrator. An invocation to the sun, begging not to illuminate²⁰ the crimes committed by the Turks, reveals the most precious artefacts of the City:

νὰ ποίσου στάβλους ἐκκλησιές, νὰ καίουν **τὰς εἰκόνας**,
 νὰ σχίζου, νὰ καταπατοῦν **τὰ Ἰόχρουσα βαγγέλια**,
 νὰ καθυβρίζου **τοὺς σταυροὺς**, νὰ τοὺς κατατσακίζου,
 νὰ παίρνουσιν **τ' ἀσήμια τοὺς** καὶ **τὰ μαργαριτάρια**
 καὶ τῶν ἀγίων **τὰ λείψανα** τὰ μοσχομυρισμένα
 νὰ καίουν, ν' ἀφανίζουσιν, στὴν θάλασσα νὰ ρίπτου,
 νὰ παίρνουσιν | **τὰ λιθάρια τῶν** καὶ τὴν εὐκόσμησίν τῶν
 καὶ **στ' ἄγια δισκοπότηρα** κοῦπες κρασί νὰ πίνου. (v. 63–70)²¹

and turn churches into stables and burn **the icons**,
 and tear and trample on **the golden gospels**,
 and dishonour **the holy crosses** and break them into pieces,

¹⁹ The English version of *Anakalima* is cited from Eleni Kefala's translation. See E. ΚΕΦΑΛΑ, *The Conquered...*, p. 30–37. The other Greek texts have been translated by the author of this article.

²⁰ Kriaras sees a parallel here with the verses of Ἰωάννης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως (*The capture of Constantinople*), which will be discussed later in the article: Πλανήνται, μὴ ἀνατείλετε τὸν κόσμον νὰ φωτῆτε / εἰς Πόλης τὰ περίγυρα μὴ λάμψετε, μὴ σταθῆτε, / μὴ ματωθοῦν οἱ ἀκτίνες σας, ἄς τὸ αἶμα τῶν Ρωμαίων (v. 406–408). See E. ΚΡΙΑΡΑΣ, *Ανακάλυμμα τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως...*, p. 24. According to Kriaras, analogies can also be seen with Christonymos' monody: Καὶ ἦν ιδέσθαι θέαμα ἐλεεινὸν καὶ δακρῶν ἄξιον καὶ τοῖς ἰδοῦσι μόνον πιστὸν, μᾶλλον δὲ κἀκεῖνοις οὐ πιστευόμενον [...]. *Ibidem*. For the entire monody of Christonymos, see M. ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝΥΜΟΣ, *Μονωδία ἐπὶ τῇ ἀλώσει τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, [in:] A. ΠΕΡΤΥΣΙ, *Testi Inediti e Poco Noti...*, p. 322–325.

²¹ *Ανακάλυμμα τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, p. 25. In the *Chronicle of the Turkish Sultans* edited by Zoras and written in demotic Greek in the sixteenth century, we find a similar image, but devoid of the element of horror mentioned in the lament: Τότε ἐδράμανε εἰς τὴν Ἁγίαν Σοφίαν τὴν περιβόητην καὶ τὴν ἐκουρσέψανε καὶ ἐπήρανε τὶς ἀγίες εἰκόνες καὶ τὶς ἐτζακίζανε καὶ τὶς ἐτζαλοπατοῦσανε. Καὶ τοὺς ἀγίους τοὺς ζωγραφισμένους τοὺς ἐβγάλλανε τὰ ὀμμάτια τοὺς. Ὁμοίως ἐδιάβησαν καὶ εἰς ἄλλες ἐκκλησιές καὶ εἰς τὰ μοναστήρια καὶ τὰ κουρσεύανε καὶ ἐπαίρνασι τὰ σκεῦη, χρυσὰ καὶ ἀργυρὰ δισκοπότηρα, καὶ ἀναλλαῖν τῶν ἱερῶν. [Then they stormed the famous Hagia Sophia, ransacked it, took away the holy icons, and threw them on the ground and trampled on them. And they gouged out the eyes of the painted saints. They did the same in other churches and monasteries, ransacking them and taking the vessels, golden and silver chalices, and the vestments of the priests]. See Γ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Χρονικὸν περὶ τῶν Τούρκων σουλτάνων (κατὰ τὸν Βαρβερῖνον ἐλληνικὸν κώδικα 111)*, Athina 1958, p. 92. It is worth mentioning that the author, who writes in demotic Greek and does not use any learned forms of Greek at all, knows well the topography of Constantinople, yet in the description of plundering the City, apart from Hagia Sophia, does not give any specific topography of significant places that were destroyed.

and take their **silver** and their **pearls**,
 and the fragrant relics of holy men,
 to burn and destroy, and throw them into the sea,
 and take their **precious stones** and their **decorations**,
 and drink wine from **the holy chalices**.

One may get the impression that we are to do with a register of sacred objects and artefacts, invaluable to the Byzantine civilisation: churches, icons, holy books, crucifixes, liturgical vessels, and relics – disgraced, stripped of their costly ornaments and destroyed²². Notably, there is no specific topography here, no names of churches or clear locations. It is a general picture of destruction – it could have happened to any other Christian city conquered by the Turks. The images are dynamic, which is attained by the accumulation of verb forms and a peculiar rhythm, more reminiscent of verses from the Greek folk poetry, known from 19th-century collections than the literarily polished learned compositions. The language is entirely demotic, with none of the trappings of the scholarly register. This does not indicate, of course, that the author was an uneducated person, but is more indicative of the target audience – the Greeks, not confronted with the Attic dialect of scholarly Byzantine texts.

Despite the generality of the images of destruction, the author recalls a few historical facts and mentions a place, we would say “exemplary” for Byzantine heritage. Although there is a mention of two historical figures, the founder and the builder of Hagia Sophia, we do not learn any further details nor are any other significant buildings mentioned:

Αὐτὸς λοιπὸν ἐκόσμησε ὁ Μέγας Κωνσταντῖνος
 τὴν Πόλιν τὴν ἐξάκουστην, ἣν βλέπεις καὶ ἀκούεις,
 καθὼς τὴν κλησιν ἔλαβεν καὶ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν·
 Ὅμοίως Οὐστινιανὸς | ἐκόσμησεν μεγάλως,
 ἔκτισεν τὴν Ἁγίαν Σοφία, τὸ θέαμαν τὸ μέγα·
 παραπλησίον γέγονε Σιὼν τῆς παναγίας.
 Ἐκεῖνοι ἦσαν ἥλιος κ' ἡ Πόλις ἡ σελήνη. (v. 95–101)²³

It was **Constantine the Great** who made beautiful
the famous City that you see and hear about,
 which took its name and was called after him;
 similarly, **Justinian adorned it greatly**,

²² Kefala, analysing this passage in the context of the text from Kritoboulos (*Historiae*, 72–73, 61.1.26–62.2.8), which is strikingly similar, emphasises that this similarity may be purely coincidental and may result from the universality of the topos. According to her, it is impossible to say with certainty whether the author of *Anakalima* knew Kritoboulos’ text, and that most likely both authors drew on some common source that has not been preserved. See E. KEFALA, *The Conquered...*, p. 57–62.

²³ *Ανακάλυμμα της Κωνσταντινόπολης*, p. 26–27.

he built **Hagia Sophia, the great sight,**
 which was comparable to the all-holy Zion.
 Those [emperors] were the sun and the City is the moon.

The whole passage does not add any significant details, as far as the individual image of Constantinople is concerned. The iconic image of the Church of the Holy Wisdom, the hallmark of the City, in the following centuries became, on the one hand, a kind of cliché and one of the few Byzantine monuments mentioned by almost all travellers to the Ottoman Empire on the other. However, the symbolic dimension of Hagia Sophia, as pointed out by the anonymous author, should not be forgotten.

At the end of the lament, there is a reference, albeit veiled, to the well-known legend of an angel, supposed to oversee the building of the temple²⁴. In some versions it was the son of the foreman himself. When the angel appeared, the man left²⁵. The allusion to the “forerunner of Antichrist” (πρόδρομος Ἀντιχρίστου, v. 117), a reference to Mehmet II, leaves no doubt about the apocalyptic and eschatological dimension of the lament²⁶.

²⁴ See A. KARANIKA, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 238–239.

²⁵ *Ibidem*. Karanika mentions the account of Pero Tafur, who noted, most likely soon after 1453, that “the angel has returned” and the child left, which corresponds to the version in *Anakalima*. As Pero Tafur writes: *Lord, the Greeks say as follows: when Constantine built his church, many men were employed on the work, and one day, as all were going to dinner, the chief master-builder ordered a child to stay and guard the tools. The child did so, and a very beautiful man on horseback appeared and asked: ‘Why do you not go to eat with the others?’ and the child replied: ‘Lord, they ordered me to remain here to guard the tools.’ But the horseman replied: ‘Go and eat’, and the child replied that he dare not. Whereupon the horseman said: ‘Go without fear. I promise you that I will guard the church and the city until you return.’ And the child went, but afterwards he did not return, being afraid of punishment, so that the horseman remained in fulfilment of his promise, and they say that it was an angel. But it might be said now that the child has returned, and the angel has ceased his guard, for the city is now captured and occupied. But for that time the Turk has departed.* See P. TAFUR, *Travels and Adventures 1435–1439*, trans., ed. with an Introduction by M. LETTS, Piscataway, NJ 2007, p. 144–145.

²⁶ After the fall of Constantinople, prophecies about the end of the world and the coming of the Antichrist were revived. An interesting text of the prophecy from the 15th century, which is a reworking of some earlier texts, is cited by Pertusi. The figure of the Antichrist recurs in it many times, for example: [...] Πληρουμένου δὲ τούτου φανήσεται ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, ἧτοι ὁ Ἄντιχρίστος. See A. PERTUSI, *Fine di Bisanzio e fine del mondo: significato e ruolo storico delle profezie sulla caduta di Costantinopoli in Oriente e in Occidente*, ed. E. MORINI, Roma 1988, p. 189. See also DOUKAS, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, [in:] D. ΜΟΝΙΟΥ, *Μνήμες Αλώσεως Κωνσταντινούπολη 1453, μέσα από τις διηγήσεις των ιστορικών της εποχής*, Αθήνα 2007, p. 112: Ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ πρόδρομος τοῦ Ἄντιχρίστου, ἀναβὰς ἐπὶ τῆς ἀγίας τραπέζης, ἐποίησε τὴν προσευχὴν (40, I). Kefala notes that the author of *Anakalima* may be referring to Cardinal Isidore’s letter, in which Mehmet is mentioned as the Antichrist for the first time. See E. ΚΕΦΑΛΑ, *The Conquered...*, p. 67.

Άλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως – The Capture of Constantinople (16th century)

One of the most extensive laments, comprising 1045 verses, was written probably at the end of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th century and has been preserved in only one manuscript (Codex Parisinus Graecus, no. 2909)²⁷. There are speculations that it was the first work written by Emmanouil Limenitis, a native of the island of Rhodes, just a few years after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453²⁸.

It is difficult to summarize a voluminous piece like that in a satisfactory manner, but in general, the author's aim seems clear. He aims at stirring the conscience of the Catholics of the West so that they organize a new crusade and expel the Turks from Europe and, at the same time, safeguard against the further extension of the Ottoman Empire to the west²⁹.

The sense of loss is revealed in rhetorical questions, always beginning with the question adverb “where” (ποῦ), which is equally characteristic of monodies written in prose in classicizing or koine Greek³⁰. Although this lament is one of the longest compositions of this genre, we find some traces of the specific topography of the City and the references to particular buildings or artefacts. There is a catalogue,

²⁷ It was previously attributed to Pseudo-Georgillas and now it is to Emmanouil Limenitis. See H.G. BECK, *Ιστορία της Βυζαντινής...*, p. 260. It was first published by Elissen (1857) and later in the well-known edition by Zoras (1956), which is used in the present paper: *Άλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, [in:] Γ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Βυζαντινή ποίησης*, Αθήνα 1956 (cetera: *Άλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*), p. 177–197. To date, the composition has not received a critical edition. Kechagioglou provides only fragments of it and accompanies them with a philological commentary. See G. ΚΕΧΑΓΙΟΓΛΟΥ, *Συνοδευτικά έμμετρα κείμενα. Επιλογή G. Kechagioglou*, [in:] Ε. ΚΡΙΑΡΑΣ, *Ανακάλημα της Κωνσταντινούπολης...*, p. 103–113. See B. ΚΝÖS, *L'histoire de la littérature néo-grecque...*, p. 165–166.

²⁸ Henrich believes that Limenitis, who was probably born between 1430 and 1435, wrote this work about the age of twenty. See G.S. HENRICH, *Εισαγωγή*, [in:] *Εμμανουήλ/Μανόλης Λιμενίτης. Επιμέλεια G.S. HENRICH*, Thessaloniki 2015, p. 35.

²⁹ A comprehensive summary has been provided by, among others, Knös. See B. ΚΝÖS, *L'histoire de la littérature néo-grecque...*, p. 165. See also A. ΠΑΡΑΥΙΑΝΝΙ, *He Polis healo...*, p. 39. See also Γ.Θ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Περί την Άλωσιν της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, Αθήνα 1959, p. 271. Zoras believes the piece must have been written before 1456, when Pope Callixtus III organized a crusade to retake Constantinople from the Turks. *Ibidem*. In the early 16th century, Greek emigrants sent poems written in Greek and Latin to European monarchs, petitioning them for support and assistance in organising a new crusade. See D. ΣΤΑΘΑΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *A Short History of the Byzantine Empire*, London–New York 2014, p. 203. See also Ε. ΚΕΦΑΛΑ, *The Conquered...*, p. 121.

³⁰ See A. ΚΑΛΙΣΤΟΣ, *Μονοψόδια επί τῆ δυστυχῆ Κωνσταντινουπόλει*, [in:] Α. ΠΕΡΤΥΣΙ, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. II, p. 356: Ποῦ δ' ἄν ἴδοις νεῶς τοσοῦτους κάλλει τε καὶ μεγέθει [...]; Ποῦ δὲ λιμένα τοσοῦτον ἐξεύροις περικαλλῆ τε καὶ μέγαν [...]; Ποῦ δὲ νοσκομεῖα καὶ γηροκομεῖα καὶ πτωχοτροφεία [...]; It is worth noting, however, that there is an important difference between the vernacular lament, where the meaning is “where did they go?” and Kallistos' monody, where the question is more about “where else (than in Constantinople) could one see/find etc. all these things?”. See also ΔΟΥΚΑΣ, *Lamentatio de clade Constantinopolitana*, [in:] Α. ΠΕΡΤΥΣΙ, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. II, p. 344: Ποῦ τὰ τῶν ὀσίων λείψανα, ποῦ τα τῶν μαρτύρων; Ποῦ τὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν βασιλέων πτώματα;

an enumeration of the most characteristic features – not only of Constantinople, but of Byzantium as a whole – which have been lost. These are faded impressions, the echoes of a bygone glory – most understandably centred around the religious sphere, liturgy etc. It is more of a reminder of what the unparalleled greatness of the Empire was based on and what made it famous in the world. As the work is very long, I have selected the verses referring to the past glory of Constantinople:

Ὁ Ρωμαῖοι εὐγενικοί...

(v. 73–77)³¹

Ποῦ εἶναι...;

ἡ παρρησιά σας

τὸ κράτος

ἡ αὐθεντιά σας

ἡ κοσμοκρατορία σας

ἡ μεγάλη δόξα

ἡ γνῶσις ἡ ἄμετρος

φρόνησις ἡ μεγάλη

ἡ ὑπερέχουσα παντὸς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων

ἀνθρώπων;

O gentle Romans...

(v. 73–77)

Where are...?

your pride

the state

your authority

your world domination

your great glory

your immeasurable knowledge

great wisdom

you, surpassing all things and other men?

The artefacts named in the poem are characteristic: relics of saints, icons and monasteries. Other things relate to Orthodoxy as well: its liturgy and customs. Ecclesiastic offices, philosophers and rhetoricians³². Still, except Hagia Sophia and Hodeghetria being named, there is no other clear indication that the poem is about Constantinople – the listed things may well refer to any other lost and plundered city.

(v. 136–137)³³

τὰ λείψανα

αἱ ἅγια εἰκόνες

ἡ ὁδηγήτρια ἡ κυρά, ἡ δέσποινα τοῦ

κόσμου

(v. 136–137)

the relics

the holy icons

the Lady Guide, the Lady of the World

³¹ Ἄλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως..., p. 178–179.

³² As Papayianni notes, almost all vernacular texts contain allusions to the destruction of churches and artefacts therein, but also of academic institutions and libraries in the City. See A. PΑΡΑΥΙΑΝΝΙ, *He Polis healo...*, p. 35.

³³ Ἄλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως..., p. 180.

(v. 144–151) ³⁴	(v. 144–151)
τὰ μοναστήρια	the monasteries
ἡ ὀρθοδοξία	orthodoxy
οἱ ὕμνοι	the hymns
αἱ ψαλμωδία	the psalms
οἱ δομέστικοι	the domestiques
ἡ μελωδία ἀγγέλων	the melody of angels
ὁ ὕμνος τῆς ἀγίας Σοφίας	the hymn of Saint Sophia
οἱ μυρωδιές	the scents
θυσίες	sacrifices
ἡ ψαλτική	the chant
οἱ καλῆς προσωδιές	the beautiful prosodies
οἱ φιλόσοφοι	the philosophers
ρητορικοὶ Ῥωμαῖοι	Roman orators
οἱ νηστείες...	the fasting days...

We learn more details when the narrator addresses the city of Venice, emphasising the loss of gains from Constantinople:

(v. 303–306) ³⁵	(v. 303–306)
Τί ἐγένετον ὁ μπάϊλος;	What has become of the bailo ³⁶ ?
πού οἱ πραγματεντάδες	Where are the merchants?
τὸ λογάρι τὸ ἄμετρον	the immeasurable account
οἱ πραγματείες	The merchandise
λιθομαργαριτάρια	precious stones and pearls
ἄσημιν καὶ χρυσάφιν	silver and gold
στολισιές και φορεσιές	ornaments and gowns

These are all general images, referring to the lost wealth of the City. However, given that the reader might be a Western Catholic and the whole work is supposed to be a warning against the Turkish power³⁷, such a general register seems easy to understand. Constantinople, from the Western perspective, appeared not only distant but also somewhat forgotten at that time. Its former power outlined by the author can therefore be seen as a kind of mirror. In other words, by reminding the West of the essential qualities of the Byzantine civilisation, which came to an

³⁴ Ἄλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως..., p. 180.

³⁵ Ἄλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως..., p. 183.

³⁶ Bailo – a Venetian term for a resident ambassador or governor, most famously the Venetian representative to the Byzantine and Ottoman courts in Constantinople.

³⁷ A. ΠΑΡΑΥΙΑΝΝΙ, *He Polis healo...*, p. 39.

end in 1453, the author simultaneously keeps hinting that all those assets can be lost if the West does not unite against the Turks³⁸. Regarding that, it is not surprising that there is a complete lack of details when it comes to the most important monuments of Constantinople – specific topographical locations are not necessary in the context of the author's intention and would be incomprehensible to the audience in the West.

It should also be taken into account that in addition to the warning, *Alosis*... is also critical of the West. While in the other laments anonymous authors blame the Byzantines and Constantine XI himself, here it is the West to be blamed. From the perspective of the narrator, the City fell (v. 231–235) because the aid which had been supposed to come from the West never came up. Moreover, as he bitterly adds, it was Constantinople, like no other city in the world, that was “a home to both Catholics and Orthodox” (διατ’ ἦτον σπῖτιν ὀλωνῶν, Ρωμαίων καὶ Λατίνων, v. 236)³⁹. That is why, according to the author, its loss was painful for the West, too and should move the consciences of the people there.

Θρήνος και κλαυθμός περί της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως – Mourning and Lamentation for Constantinople (17th century)

First published by Émile Legrand in 1881, the lament is one of the less frequently quoted and even more rarely commented on. Written by Matthaïos, the Metropolitan of Myron before 1618, it is a fragment of a larger composition⁴⁰. A part of it (v. 2359–2720) was imitated in a work attributed to Papa Synadinos (born c. 1600), a clergyman from the Macedonian town of Serres, who chronicled the events from his town a few years after 1640 (*Χρονικὸ τῶν Σερρῶν*)⁴¹.

In *Mourning and Lamentation*... we have the relics of saints, which seem particularly relevant to most of laments. It seems that the image of the earthly remains

³⁸ See G.S. HENRICH, *Εισαγωγή*..., p. 41–42. In his opinion, Limenitis, who was then in the service of the Ioannites, could not reveal his authorship for the fear of the Turks, so he hid his name in the last verses.

³⁹ *Ἄλωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*..., p. 182.

⁴⁰ B. ΚΝÖS, *L'histoire de la littérature néo-grecque*..., p. 418. In this article, I quote this lament from: *Θρήνος και κλαυθμός περί της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, [in:] Γ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Βυζαντινή ποίησις...* (cetera: *Θρήνος και κλαυθμός περί της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*), p. 207–216. See *Περί ἀρπαγῆς και ἀδικίας. Καὶ θρήνος και κλαυθμός περί τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, [in:] E. LEGRAND, *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire*, t. II, Paris 1881, p. 313–328. See Γ.Θ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Περί την Ἄλωσιν*..., p. 277.

⁴¹ For the whole text, see PAPA SYNADINOS, *Περί τὸ γένος τῶν Ῥωμαίων*, [in:] Σ. ΛΑΜΠΡΟΣ, *Μοναχία και θρήνοι ἐπὶ τῇ ἀλώσει τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, NE 5, 1908, p. 250–256. For a critical edition of Papa Synadinos, see P. ODORICO, *Conseils et mémoires de Synadinos, prêtre de Serrès en Macédoine (XVII^e siècle)*, Paris 1996. *The Lamentation for Constantinople* in Synadinos' work see *ibidem*, p. 56–66. See B. ΚΝÖS, *L'histoire de la littérature néo-grecque*..., p. 418. See also Γ.Θ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Περί την Ἄλωσιν*..., p. 279–280. See also P. ODORICO, *Conseils et mémoires*..., p. 35, 327–328.

of saints common and universal to Christianity might appeal to the imagination of Christians in the West⁴² more than the edifices, mostly forgotten by that time:

Ποῦ καὶ τὰ θεῖα λείψανα πολλῶν σοφῶν ἁγίων,
ὅπου ἐξοῦσαν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀγγελικὸν τὸν βίον; (v. 2403–2404)⁴³

Where are **the holy relics** of the many wise saints,
who lived angelic lives on earth?

However, unlike the other lamentations cited above, the author of this work gives us several specific locations in the topography of Constantinople. It is difficult to say to what extent they evoked any associations for the author and to what extent they still could have been associated by the 17th-century Greeks. Both buildings mentioned in the lament had different histories during the Ottoman period: the church in Blachernae (τῆς Βλαχέρνας ὁ ναός) was burned down before the fall of Constantinople and eventually forgotten, while the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator (the biggest former Byzantine church building after Hagia Sophia, preserved in Istanbul) was converted into a mosque. The author of the lament thus provides rather “encyclopaedic” information about Constantinople, most recognizable landmarks of its topography, known to the Greeks for centuries but then slightly forgotten.

Ποῦ τῆς Βλαχέρνας ὁ ναός, ἡ βρύσις τῶν θαυμάτων,
ἐξ οὗ ἀπολαμβάνομεν πηγὴν τῶν ἰαμάτων;
Ναὸν τοῦ Παντοκράτορος τὸν περιφουμισμένον
Τώρα τὸν βλέπω ἔρημον καὶ καταφρονεμένον. (v. 2425–2428)⁴⁴

Where is **the temple of Blachernae**, the fountain of miracles,
whence we enjoy the source of the healing waters?

The temple of Pantocrator, the famous
Now I see it desolate and despised.

The subsequent poetic images in the lamentation refer to Constantinople as a unique place of education and wisdom, the motif repeated so frequently that it seems to be another cliché⁴⁵. In the author’s view, it was one of the most painful losses. The questions that follow emphasise an almost biblical dimension of the

⁴² According to Zoras, the goal of the Metropolitan of Myron is to snap Greeks out of their numbness and belief in idle predictions and foreign help (especially from the West) and force them to act. See Γ. Θ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Περὶ τὴν Ἀλωσιν...*, p. 277.

⁴³ *Θρήνος καὶ κλαυθμός περὶ τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, p. 209.

⁴⁴ *Θρήνος καὶ κλαυθμός περὶ τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, p. 209.

⁴⁵ See A. ΚΑΡΑΝΙΚΑ, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 237.

disaster. By the comparison to Babylon, the author points to the Book of Jeremiah, to which vernacular laments sometimes also allude⁴⁶:

Ποῦ εἶν' τὰ μοναστήρια πού ἦσαν κοντά σου,
 τώρα τὰ βλέπω ἔρημα διὰ τὸ ὄνομά σου!
 Ποῦ εἶν' τὰ σπουδαστήρια κ' ἡ γνώσις τῶν γραμμάτων,
 καὶ τῆς σοφίας ἡ πηγὴ, βάθος τῶν νοημάτων; [...]
 Ποῦ εἶν' τὰ τόσα ἀγαθὰ, πού ἦσαν στολισμένη;
 Ὡσάν αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανὸν ἦσαν ζωγραφισμένη.
 Ὅλα τὰ ἐστερηθήκες, ὡσάν τὴν Βαβυλῶνα,
 τὸν στέφανόν σου ἔχασες καὶ τὴν χρυσοῦν κορώναν·
 ἐκείνην τὴν βασιλείον δραχμὴν ἀπώλεσές την
 ἄρα νὰ τὴν εὕρῃς ποτὲ ἢ μόνον ἔχασές την; (v. 2429–2442)⁴⁷

Where are **the monasteries** that were close to you,
 now I see them desolate for your name's sake.
 Where are **the schools** and the knowledge of letters,
 and the fountain of wisdom, the depth of understanding? [...]
 Where are **the many goods you were adorned with,**
like a painted sky?
You have lost them all, like Babylon;
 your crown is gone, your golden diadem.
 That royal drachma is lost—
 shall you ever find it again, or is it lost forever?

There is no doubt that what we see is the vision of an apocalypse, albeit roughly outlined and written with a rhetorical exaggeration. The allusions to prophetic literature associated with the fall of the City can also be seen in the evocation of Babylon. In the texts written between the 10th and 15th century, known as “*Visiones Danielis*”, the future fate of the City is often precisely associated with the fall of Babylon and referred to as a “Babylon of the seven hills” (*Babilonia dei sette colli*)⁴⁸.

Significantly, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 is perceived as a much greater disaster than that biblical catastrophe⁴⁹. More than a lament, its composition resembles a reflection of a fulfilled prophecy. The author, who was certainly aware

⁴⁶ See *ibidem*, p. 228.

⁴⁷ Ἐρήνος καὶ κλαυθμὸς περὶ τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, p. 209–210.

⁴⁸ A. PERTUSI, *Fine di Bisanzio e fine del mondo...*, p. 52, 86, 95, 97. See A.J. GOLDWYN, *I come from a cursed land...*, p. 104.

⁴⁹ See [...] *Urbs Constantinopolitana, quae quondam felix et imperatrix omnium fuit urbium, nunc autem misera et infelicissima, capta est, die 29 Maii. Cuius captivitas omnes ab initio saeculi captivitates superat et excedit: Jherosolimorum sub Nabugodonosor rege pauca equidem et parva fuit respectu tantae et tam magnae. [...] Similiter et comparatio nulla in aliam civitatem potest fieri quae huic potest adaequari*. See ISIDORE OF KIEV, *Lettera a Nicolò V*, [in:] A. PERTUSI, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. I, p. 98. See also A.J. GOLDWYN, *I come from a cursed land...*, p. 104.

of the *topoi* of prophetic literature and, at the same time, familiar with the scholarly tradition from which the monodies for the fall of the City originated, made a kind of synthesis of various motifs and themes. Although the composition was written in demotic Greek, it shows familiarity with the rhetorical tradition through its characteristic metaphors: ἡ βρύσις τῶν θαυμάτων (the fountain of miracles); πηγήν τῶν ἰαμάτων (the source of healing); τῆς σοφίας ἡ πηγή (the source of wisdom).

The metaphor of the “royal drachma” seems interesting and significant, as it appears to refer in a rather original way to the common belief that Byzantium was both the heir and custodian of the heritage of ancient Greeks. The anachronistic use of “drachma” in conjunction with the imperial power of Byzantium has an interesting effect, directing the reader’s attention not only to Constantinople, but also broadening the perspective to the entire Greek heritage that fell with the conquest of the City.

Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως – The Lament over Constantinople (17th century)

This composition has been preserved in two versions, one of 128 lines and the other of 140 ones⁵⁰. It was written in the form of a dialogue between the city of Venice and that of Constantinople. The form is not entirely atypical, as it occurs in other laments, such as in the well-known *Θρήνος τῶν τεσσάρων Πατριαρχείων: Κωνσταντινούπολης, Αλεξανδρείας, Αντιοχείας καὶ Ἱερουσαλήμ*⁵¹. Significantly, in the *Lament over Constantinople*, it is Venice that laments upon the fall of the City, sympathises with its loss and has a sense of guilt. This lament can be read as an indictment of Constantinople by the West. In this context, we can read Constantinople’s words to Venice as a kind of defence: it is not the city that is to blame, but Hodegetria, who, instead of guarding it, returned to heaven (v. 64–69)⁵². Similarly as the case of the *Alosis...* cited above, we deal once again with the West European perspective of an anonymous author.

The lament is unique when it comes to remembering the past beauty of Constantinople. Yet, it is not just about the obvious religious aspects of the Byzantine heritage observed before: the relics of saints, monasteries or particular churches.

⁵⁰ The version of 128 verses comes from Cod. Hieros. Patr. 160 (*Χρησολόγιον Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*) and cod. 279 of the Archaeological Museum of Bucharest, while that of 140 verses is in a single manuscript: Codex Atheniensis (no. 3113). See A. PERTUSI, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. II, p. 364; A. ΠΑΚΑΔΟΚΟΥΛΟΣ-ΚΕΡΑΜΕΥΣ, *Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, BZ 12.1, 1903, p. 268–269. The lament was first published by A. ΠΑΡΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ-ΚΕΡΑΜΕΥΣ: *Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, [in:] A. ΠΑΚΑΔΟΚΟΥΛΟΣ-ΚΕΡΑΜΕΥΣ, *Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, BZ 12.1, 1903, p. 269–272.

⁵¹ *Θρήνος τῶν τεσσάρων Πατριαρχείων: Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Αλεξανδρείας, Αντιοχείας καὶ Ἱερουσαλήμ*, [in:] Γ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Βυζαντινὴ ποίησις...*, p. 204–207.

⁵² H.G. ВЕСК, *Ἱστορία τῆς Βυζαντινῆς...*, p. 261–262. See Γ.Θ. ΖΩΡΑΣ, *Περὶ τὴν Ἄλωσιν...*, p. 274.

In addition to the unique architecture of the temples, we are offered the images of secular architecture, gardens, running waters and springs. The passage below gives the impression of an almost *locus amoenus*, in the context of Constantinople, the image known rather from the monodies⁵³. This praise is further reinforced when we consider that the words have been uttered by Venice, who has “been all over the world” (Πόλη μου, ἐτρυγύρισα γῆς τὸν τροχὸν καὶ τόπον / δεν ἤῤῥα εὖμορφίτερον νὰ σὲ παρομοιάσω, v. 51–52)⁵⁴. Here is how Venice laments over Constantinople:

ὄπου ἔχες χίλιες ἐκκλησιᾶς καὶ χίλια μοναστήρια,
ὄλα τετραπεντάτρουλλα μὲ θόλους ἐκτισμένα,
καὶ σπίτια δίπατα μ’ αὐλὲς χρυσομαρμαρωμένες.
Εἶχες νερὰ τρεχάμενα, εἶχες πανώριες βρύσες,
καὶ περιβόλια εὖμορφα μὲ τὰ καρπίσια δένδρα. (v. 39–43)⁵⁵

where there were thousands of churches and thousands of monasteries,
all four- and five-domed, dome-shaped,
with two-storey houses, with golden and marble courtyards.
You had running waters, you had beautiful springs
and beautiful gardens with fruit-bearing trees.

There is no doubt that the anonymous author gives a general idea of Constantinople rather than refers to a particular historical reality. Although in subsequent verses we find references to some specific places, which, as I have mentioned, is relatively rare in vernacular laments⁵⁶, it is still a very general image. What we get are mostly allusions, distilled from the rich past, the charms and features that made it unique. The suggestive images, charged emotionally, bring to mind the echoes of a lost paradise, an ideally ordered world rather than a particular city. We may not forget that the verses can also be read as a warning to Venice, whose power began to fade in the 17th century.

⁵³ See A. KALLISTOS, *Μονωδία...*, p. 358: [...] καὶ ὁ τόπος παμφόρος τις καὶ εὐγεως ὡς οὐδεὶς ἄλλος. Πεδιὰς γὰρ ἅπαν ἐστὶ τὸ χωρίον, ὄρεσι τε περιεχόμενον καὶ ποταμοῖς ἀρδευόμενον καὶ λίμναις πλείσταις πεποικιλμένον, ὥστε πανταχόθεν ἀφθονία παρῆν τῇ Πόλει. [...] μία δὲ κοινὴ διήγησις πᾶσιν ἦν τὰ τῆς Πόλεως ἀγαθὰ.

⁵⁴ *Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, [in:] A. PERTUSI, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. II, p. 380.

⁵⁵ *Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, p. 380.

⁵⁶ The author typically enumerates Hagia Sophia (v. 47), but adds some topographically interesting places: the Kosmidion (τὸ Κοσμίδη, v. 87), the Golden Gate (τὴν Χρυσέαν πύλην, v. 88), Galata (τοῦ Γαλατᾶ, v. 101), and Skutari, opposite St. Constantine (τὸ Σκούταρι, ἔς τὸν Ἅγιον Κωνσταντῖνον, v. 102).

The words that Venice utters may sound ambiguously within that context:

πλὴν ἢ τρυφή ἐδιάβηκεν, αὐτὴ ἢ παρρησία
παρήλθεν καὶ ἀπέρασεν, ὡσὰν καπνὸς καὶ πάχνη. (v. 57–58)⁵⁷

yet all that delight, all your nobility, is gone;
Gone, vanished, like smoke or mist.

Kefala, in her influential monograph on the universal cultural mechanisms of trauma formation, in which she compares the fall of two completely unrelated capitals of civilisation – Constantinople and Tenochtitlan (today's Mexico City), argues that the authors of texts referring to traumatic events use similar devices. Her conclusion about *Anakalima*, that *the poet imaginatively reconstructed the fall of Constantinople as a massive disruption to the Greeks within and outside the borders of Byzantium*⁵⁸, could also apply to the other texts cited here. Regardless of their place of origin: Cyprus, Rhodes or mainland Greece, the authors use similar *topoi* to convey and emphasize the common loss.

The authors used mostly spoken, demotic language, which may confirm that they addressed a wider audience. Considering that the recipients could be both Orthodox Greek and western Christians, it is possible that the works (at least some of them) were a veiled warning against the expansion of Turkish power.

Some writers, as it can be seen from the above examples, were familiar with the rhetorical tradition, evident in monodies written in prose in classicizing Greek, as well as with prophetic literature, associated with the fall of the City. Still, despite apparent similarities in expression and phraseology, we get the impression of the works belonging to two separate currents, which do not necessarily flow together.

If we consider the monody by Andronikos Kallistos, written shortly after the fall of Constantinople, the picture of the City, which emerges from it, is full of rhetorical exaggerations. Certainly, Andronikos could not have remembered the grandeur of the City he was writing about. Still, as Pertusi notes, the author failed to remember that not only the walls of the City had been in ruin at the time of the Turkish invasion, but the majority of churches, the harbour, arsenals, porticoes, roads and other public places, he enumerated at a single outbreath had at that time been in ruin, too⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Θρήνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, p. 382.

⁵⁸ See E. KEFALA, *The Conquered...*, p. 70.

⁵⁹ See A. PERTUSI, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, vol. II, p. 483–484. See, for instance, A. KALLISTOS, *Μονωδία...*, p. 356: [...] τείχη δ' οὕτως ἰσχυρά καὶ τοῖς ἐναντίοις ἀνένδοτα [...] λιμένα τοσοῦτον ἐξεύροις περικαλλῆ τε καὶ μέγαν [...] νεώρια δὲ ποῦ λαμπρά [...] Ποῦ δὲ στοῶν θέσιν καὶ ὁδῶν τάξιν [...] νοσοκομεῖα καὶ γηροκομεῖα καὶ πτωχοτροφεία [...] ἵππόδρομον. For more on Kallistos' monody, see A.J. GOLDWYN, *I come from a cursed land...*, p. 98–102.

Also Doukas' monody was based on certain rhetorical patterns, well established in the Byzantine tradition, in that case on the well-known Lament of Choniates, inspired by the Fourth Crusade and the sack of Constantinople by western Christians in 1204⁶⁰. Doukas' vision, therefore, was an image of Constantinople's distant past and alluded to the well-established stereotypes about the City. The exalted vision of it as an earthly paradise, spiritual centre and sanctuary of the relics, most sacred to Christianity is anachronistic and not supported by real facts⁶¹.

Still, despite the fact that the vernacular tradition intertwined with the learned one, as indicated by the similarity of motifs and phraseology, a certain regularity can be observed in the laments discussed in this article. The monodies in classifying Greek, feature the detailed images of Constantinople, in which the authors see the City at its "most perfect" peak, in the times when it spread its majesty and grandeur onto the whole world. Meanwhile, the laments written in vernacular Greek maintain a certain level of generality in description, referring to certain common features of Constantinople, rather than to particular artefacts or buildings. In this sense, we can understand all the entities listed above and referring to the bygone glory of Constantinople, as useful devices of channelling memory, appealing to similar aesthetics and drawing on similar sources⁶². Within this context, the presented list of phrases, expressions and terms clearly shows that there exists a similar conceptualisation of Constantinople's past glory in the works written in the period of more than two centuries that followed its fall.

The four vernacular laments, the fragments of which have been presented above, are just a small part of the rich collection of post-Byzantine Greek texts. Usually studied in the context of monodic works, they certainly deserve a separate study, taking into account all the richness of their subject, including – among others – the attitude of the Greeks to the western world, the question of the union of the churches, the relationship with the Turks, prophecies and legends related to Constantinople, and the richness of linguistic, demotic expressions. It is obvious that the analysis of just one of the *topoi*, based on selected examples, does not exhaust this complex subject. One can only hope that it may contribute to a more comprehensive study of the complexity of post-Byzantine Greek tradition, which appears to be more of a hybrid of scholarly and demotic elements, with a blend of features drawn from West and East alike, rather than a simple, linear continuation of Byzantine patterns.

⁶⁰ A. PERTUSI, *La caduta...*, p. 482. See A. KARANIKA, *Messengers, Angels...*, p. 229.

⁶¹ See DOUKAS, *Lamentatio...*, p. 344: [...] ὦ πόλις, πόλις, Χριστιανῶν καύχημα καὶ βαρβάρων ἀφανισμό! ὦ πόλις, πόλις, ἄλλη παράδεισος φυτευθεῖσα πρὸς δυσμά; ἔχουσα ἔνδον φυτὰ παντοῖα βριθόντα καρποῦς πνευματικῆς! Ποῦ σου τὸ κάλλος, παράδεισε; [...] Ποῦ τὰ τῶν Ἀποστόλων τοῦ Κυρίου μου σώματα, τὰ πρὸ πολλοῦ φυτευθέντα ἐν τῷ ἀειθαλεῖ παραδείσῳ [...] Ποῦ τὰ ὀσίων λείψανα, ποῦ τὰ τῶν μαρτύρων; Ποῦ τὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν βασιλέων πτώματα.

⁶² See E. KEFALA, *The Conquered...*, p. 52.

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