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Outside and Inside the Fourth Crusade

AT A SESSION on Byzantium and the West at a recent meeting of the International Congress on Medieval Studies, the second of the three panellists read a paper on the Bulgarian 'emperor' Ioannitsa, in which she praised him for his military genius and illustrated it by his victory over an army of the Fourth Crusade. Although the crusade was not the subject of the paper, the author did remark on what she saw as Venice's cynical perversion of a holy enterprise for its own purposes. Afterwards, when the chairman asked for comments, and I challenged this statement, the author became indignant. Repeatedly she professed that she was following the sources, although she was not able to name any. As it happened, Donald E. Queller was present. He then rose and spoke as he has written: asking scholars to overcome their prejudices by examining the events of the Fourth Crusade carefully, with detachment, and from inside.

When Queller sat down, the chairman stood up and announced that he would now speak. And, indeed he did, with great passion. For the next five minutes, he explained that the very term 'Fourth Crusade' was inaccurate, as the army fought only Christians, never killing a single Muslim; that the doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, had secretly planned to set Christian knights against their Eastern brothers to slake a desire for personal revenge and to feed the Venetians' hunger for spoils. In response to his conclusion, half of the room broke into loud applause and Queller stood up again. (The original paper was by now forgotten.) He remarked that he saw that he had fallen among Byzantinists, addressed the chairman's points, or tried to do so, for the chairman often interrupted him, and when he had finished, sat down to just as loud applause from the other half of the room. The lines had been drawn, the leaders had led the way into battle, and their followers joined in the fray.

I need not relate all that was said. Tempers became so heated and voices so loud that it was impossible for anyone to be clearly heard, and the chairman, who should have kept order, was among the loudest and most excited. When a student of James A. Brundage pointed out that a crusade was not a war against Islam but rather a

papally sanctioned war against the enemies of the faith, the chairman protested that he was not an enemy of the faith. Although there was an unreal air about it all, as if we had all suddenly become Latin crusaders or Greek magnates, I began to fear that a fight would break out. Finally, when the noise had reached deafening levels, a woman sitting in the corner called out that, fascinating as the quarrel might be, she had come to hear the third paper. Silence descended with a thud. The chairman fumbled through his papers and introduced the last speaker, who now scarcely had enough time to scramble through her paper. The audience sat in stony silence.

* * *

The row illustrates clearly the division between students of the Fourth Crusade. It is not simply a division between East and West. Some crusaders suspected at the time that Venice had used the army for its own purposes¹ and, in the thirteenth century, some western Europeans questioned the crusade's sanctity and worried over its legacy of destruction.² Similarly, many modern historians of western Europe have taken the side of Byzantium, blaming Venetian greed, papal ambition, or Hohenstaufen guile for diverting the Fourth Crusade from Cairo to Constantinople. The gulf that separates scholars separates them not just on grounds of regional or religious sympathy (although they do matter), but separates those who examine the crusade closely from inside and those who look at it from outside, from a distance.³

From a distance, the Fourth Crusade loses much of its detail, but fits neatly into the landscape of the previous century's relations between Byzantium and the West. Reunification of the Church was a papal priority, particularly for Innocent III. Frederick I Barbarossa had threatened Constantinople and his successors had dreamed of its conquest. Venice had been injured by the seizure of its citizens at Constantinople and their Byzantine property in 1171, and was worried about the precariousness of the arrangements governing its trade at

¹ E.g., Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, *Hystoria Albigensis*, ed. Pascal Guebin and Ernest Lyon (Paris, 1926-30), i. 107-8. See also Donald E. Queller and Irene B. Katele, 'Attitudes towards the Venetians in the Fourth Crusade: The Western Sources', *International History Review*, iv (1982), 21-34.

² E.g., Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, 21: 240.

³ It is the purpose of this essay to look at recent scholarship. For an introduction to earlier studies of the Fourth Crusade, see Augustin Frolow, *Recherches sur la déviation de la IV^e croisade vers Constantinople* (Paris, 1955); Donald E. Queller and Susan J. Stratton, 'A Century of Controversy on the Fourth Crusade', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, vi (1969), 235-77; *The Latin Conquest of Constantinople*, ed. Donald E. Queller (New York, 1971); Charles M. Brand, 'The Fourth Crusade: Some Recent Interpretations', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, xii (1984), 33-45.

Constantinople thereafter. All of these facts make excellent antecedents for the conquest of Constantinople. If one knew nothing about the Fourth Crusade except the outcome, one could easily suppose that, given the friction between the Latin West and the Greek East, an attack on Constantinople was inevitable. Many scholars have made this assumption, George Ostrogorsky for one, who states in *A History of the Byzantine State* (1952) that more than a century of scholarly debate about the Fourth Crusade is beside the point: 'In actual fact it [the diversion of the crusade] presents no problem. It was the almost inevitable result of early developments.'¹ Likewise, for John V. A. Fine, in *The Late Medieval Balkans* (1987), 'it seemed probable that it was only a matter of time before the West attacked schismatic and (probably more important) wealthy Constantinople.'² And for Robert Browning, in the revised edition of *The Byzantine Empire* (1992), 'the coming together of these various interests made it almost inevitable that the proposed crusade would turn out to be an instrument for the conquest of the Christian east, and that the Moslems would be quietly forgotten.'³ Assumptions such as these release the historian from the responsibility of knowing very much about the Fourth Crusade, as its outcome is sufficiently explained by long-term historical trends. And the trends themselves cause little controversy. The task left undone, however, is to show how they influenced the aims, decisions, and actions of the crusaders, as they struggled to keep their troubled enterprise intact.

Although Innocent III dreamed of the reunification of the Church and Philip of Swabia wanted to help his young brother-in-law, Alexius, to the throne of Byzantium, neither of them was a crusader. Venetians were. Venice, therefore, has long been the villain of choice when explaining the diversion of the crusade from Cairo to Constantinople. As Venice had important and often strained relations with Byzantium, and as the Venetians were seafaring merchants who traded with the Muslim states, it is not surprising that they would fall under suspicion of diverting the crusade from the destruction of the infidels to the subjugation of their fickle partner, the Byzantine Empire. Lastly, the Venetians were unabashed capitalists, which hardly endears them to many scholars and leads some to assume that Venetian entrepreneurialism is evidence enough of greedy cynicism and dirty tricks.

¹ George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. from the 2nd German ed. of 1952 by Joan Hussey with revisions by the author (New Brunswick, N.J., 1956).

² John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor, 1987), 60.

³ Robert Browning, *The Byzantine Empire*, rev. ed. (Washington, 1992), 188.

Suspicions are strengthened when one considers the alleged character of Doge Enrico Dandolo. According to Nicetas Choniates, a Byzantine senator at Constantinople during the crusade, the blind and elderly doge was 'a sly cheat who called himself wiser than the wise and, madly thirsting after glory as no other, he preferred death to allowing the Romans to escape the penalty for their insulting treatment of his nation'. Dandolo, Nicetas reports, had laboured over 'secret plans' to lure other Westerners into his plot to destroy Byzantium.¹ The doge, apparently, was not unique in Venice, for all Venetians, Nicetas assures us, were 'vagabonds', 'cunning of mind', 'arrogant and impudent'.² They had been 'gradually turning against the Romans, waiting for the opportune moment to even the score'.³ The anonymous entry in the *Chronicle of Novgorod*, probably written by a Russian cleric at Constantinople in 1204, tells a different story that reaches a similar conclusion: when an imperial soothsayer warned Manuel Comnenus in 1172 that Dandolo would 'do much harm to your Empire', Manuel gave orders that Dandolo, who was a Venetian ambassador to Constantinople at the time, should be blinded. As a result, 'this doge had planned many attacks on the town and all used to obey him'.⁴

It is not surprising that scholars trained in Byzantine history give great weight to the testimony of Nicetas Choniates. His characterization of the Venetians and his assessment of Dandolo form the foundation of many accounts of the Fourth Crusade, particularly those written by scholars who work towards it from outside. They follow Nicetas in pointing to the seizure of Venetian residents at Constantinople and their goods in 1171 as the spark that would ignite the flame of 1204. Although Venetian merchants had been allowed back to Constantinople, they had not yet been fully compensated for their losses, and Emperors Isaac II (1185–95) and Alexius III (1195–1203) favoured the Pisans, the Venetians' rivals.⁵

The anti-Latin pogrom at Constantinople in 1182 is the second event frequently cited as demanding revenge. As Sir Steven Runciman

¹ Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. Jan-Louis Dieten, in *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* (Berlin, 1975), xi, pt. 1, 538; English translation by Harry J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984), 295.

² Nicetas, *Historia*, 171.

³ Nicetas, *Historia*, 538; Magoulias, *Byzantium*, 295.

⁴ *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*, trans. R. Michell and N. Forbes, Camden Third Series, xxv (London, 1914), 48.

⁵ Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice* (Cambridge, 1988), 104–23; Donald E. Queller and Thomas F. Madden, 'Some Further Arguments in Defense of the Venetians on the Fourth Crusade', *Byzantium*, lxii (1992), 452–5.

writes, 'there was a massacre of the Latins in Constantinople (1182) in which the Venetians were the chief victims and which Venice never forgot or forgave ... So we come to the tragedy of 1204, the grand ambitious revenge of Venice on Byzantium.'¹ Hans Eberhard Mayer, in his excellent study of *The Crusades*, goes even further, claiming that Venetians 'suffered time and again from violent anti-Latin pogroms, most recently in 1182'.² While it is fair to point to the events of 1171 as a cause of dispute between Venice and Byzantium, the unshakeable belief among some scholars (and Runciman and Mayer are only the most famous) that relations between the two states gradually deteriorated to the point of war is mistaken. In fact, only a handful of Venetians were present in Constantinople in 1182, as they were prohibited at that time from doing business there.³ The massacre of Pisans and Genoese was a stroke of good fortune for Venice, as it obliged Andronicus I (1183-5) to turn to Venice during his short reign for military support against the Normans, Genoese, and Pisans.

Scholars who blame Venice for the diversion of the Fourth Crusade find a more obvious target in Dandolo. Building on Nicetas Choniates and the *Chronicle of Novgorod*, they have devised a personality for the doge that goes far beyond the sources. To Mayer, Dandolo was a man 'whose cool assessment of *Realpolitik* meant that he was indifferent to the emotion engendered by the crusading ideal'.⁴ To Ostrogorsky, he was 'completely unmoved by the genuine crusading spirit'; a man who realized that the 'permanent security of Venetian pre-eminence in the East could only be obtained by destroying the Byzantine Empire'.⁵ According to A. A. Vasiliev, 'when the majesty, welfare, and benefit of the Republic of St Mark were involved, Dandolo had no scruples regarding the means. Possessing the art of dealing with men, as well as extraordinary will power and circumspection, he was a remarkable statesman, an ingenious diplomat, and, at the same time, an expert economist ... In the mind of the keenly discerning and clever Dandolo, a plan was ripening to conquer Byzantium in order to

¹ Steven Runciman, 'Byzantium and the Crusades', in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, ed. Vladimir P. Gozz and Christine Verzar Bornstein (Kalamazoo, 1986), 22.

² Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades*, rev. German ed., 1988, trans. John Gillingham (Oxford, 1990), 201.

³ Charles M. Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 196; Louise Buenger Robbert, 'Venice and the Crusades', in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton (Madison, 1985), v. 408-9.

⁴ Mayer, *Crusades*, 201.

⁵ Ostrogorsky, *Byzantine State*, 413. Apparently the tears that Dandolo shed during his emotional crossing were pure subterfuge.

secure definitely the Oriental market for Venice.¹ Fine agrees: 'He [Dandolo] hated the Byzantines and felt that Venetian trade was in danger as long as the empire survived.'² So does Charles Brand: 'Dandolo, who hated the Byzantines, easily induced his fellow townsmen to join a crusade which might be diverted against Constantinople.'³ And Browning goes further: 'The Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, who had long smarted under an insult, real or imagined, which he had received in Constantinople years before, was not in the least interested in ousting the Moslems, with whom Venice carried on a lively and profitable trade. But he was eager to eliminate the empire, which he saw as the last obstacle to securing Venetian supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean.'⁴

No contemporary scholar has written as much about Dandolo's culpability in the diversion of the Fourth Crusade as Donald M. Nicol. In his chapter in the *Cambridge Medieval History* and in his book on *Byzantium and Venice* (1988), Nicol argues that Venetian greed and Dandolo's desire for revenge brought the Fourth Crusade to the Bosphorus. Like other Byzantinists, Nicol accepts Nicetas' assessment of Dandolo wholeheartedly: 'the Greeks at the time were right in suspecting that it was Enrico Dandolo who led the crusaders to Constantinople and then arranged things in such a way that they had a moral pretext for conquering it.' Why did the Greeks perceive what Dandolo's friends and compatriots did not? Simple enough. The doge 'hid his purpose under a cloak of piety. But Constantinople was in his mind from the outset.'⁵ Like many others, Nicol believes that Dandolo harboured a 'personal grudge' against Byzantium for the loss of his eyesight: 'As his eyesight faded so his wits sharpened and his hatred of the Greeks became obsessive.'⁶

The manufacture of the caricature that is passed off as the personality of Dandolo is one of the most fascinating aspects of the historiography of the Fourth Crusade. He has been described in such colourful terms as a 'successful buccaneer' and even a 'twelfth-century version of the Homeric Odysseus'.⁷ Historians have gone far beyond

¹ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324-1453*, 2nd Eng. rev. ed. (Madison, 1952; repr. in two volumes, 1958, 1962), ii. 452-3.

² Fine, *Medieval Balkans*, 61.

³ Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, 206.

⁴ Browning, *Byzantine Empire*, 187.

⁵ Donald M. Nicol, 'The Fourth Crusade and the Greek and Latin Empires, 1204-1261', *Cambridge Medieval History*, iv, pt. 1 (Cambridge, 1966), 275-330, 412.

⁶ Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 119-20.

⁷ William H. McNeill, *Venice: The Hinge of Europe, 1081-1797* (Chicago, 1974), 248-9 n. 45; William Roscoe Thayer, *A Short History of Venice* (New York, 1905), 59.

Nicetas and the *Chronicle of Novgorod*, attributing to Dandolo motives and desires for which there is no evidence. Each new description adds a bit more to the image, until he appears to be more a prescient demon than a fallible man.¹ One would suppose, therefore, that an abundance of evidence exists on which to base detailed descriptions not only of his personal attributes but also of his clandestine designs. In fact, there is a dearth. Aside from the testimonies of Nicetas and the author of the *Chronicle of Novgorod* (neither of whom ever met Dandolo), the only contemporary sources for Dandolo's character are participants in the Fourth Crusade. Geoffrey de Villehardouin, who knew him personally, describes him as 'an old man' who 'could not see, but was very wise, brave, and vigorous'.² Robert of Clari mentions him twice as 'a right worthy man'.³ And Gunther of Pairis, who based his work on the memory of his crusading abbot, praises Dandolo for his intelligence and wisdom.⁴

Although we may conclude that Gunther was right on that score, given Dandolo's actions during the Fourth Crusade, the real Dandolo remains illusive. Venetian historians do not know with certainty when or where he was born, because the surviving archival evidence from twelfth-century Venice is so fragmentary that Dandolo is not mentioned in it until he is in his fifties. We know of a few embassies that he took part in, but very little about their purpose, and we can only guess at why the Venetians elected an old, blind man as doge in 1192.⁵ In short, the sources tell us little about a man that some modern historians pretend to know intimately. How are Byzantinists able to penetrate to well-guarded secrets of the heart, to clandestine plans, and

¹ Prescience is one of the principal abilities attributed to Dandolo. 'Prescient Dandolo Theorists' prove Dandolo's culpability by asserting what he 'probably knew'. For example, concerning the treaty of 1201, '[the Frankish envoys] estimated that their army would number well over 30,000 men, a figure which the Doge probably knew to be unrealistic': Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 127. On the Treaty of Zara: 'Dandolo knew quite well that the prince would never be able to fulfil his promises. But he kept his peace': John Godfrey, *1204: The Unholy Crusade* (Oxford, 1980), 80. '[Dandolo] must have known that no Byzantine Emperor could fulfil the promises that Alexius Angelos was making': Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 134. Brand concludes, on the basis of instructions that Dandolo gave to envoys in c. 1197, that the doge was 'foreseeing ... It is reasonable to think that he applied the same skill to his relationship with the crusaders': Brand, 'Fourth Crusade', 35.

² Geoffrey de Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. E. Faral (Paris, 1938-9), ii. 172, sec. 364.

³ Robert of Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris, 1924), sec. 11, p. 10; sec. 93, p. 91.

⁴ Gunther of Pairis, *Historia Constantinopolitana*, ed. Paul Riant, in *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae* (Geneva and Paris, 1877-1904), i. 91.

⁵ See Giorgio Cracco, s.v. 'Dandolo, Enrico', *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, xxxii (Rome, 1986).

to dark desires for revenge, when historians of Venice are still trying to piece together the barest outline of a life? Nor does what little we know confirm the myth. For example, he was not blinded by Manuel Comnenus or, for that matter, by any Byzantine. And he spent much of his adult life working to maintain peace between Venice and Constantinople, rather than seeking the ideal moment for war.¹

* * *

The alternative and more fruitful way to look at the Fourth Crusade is shown to us by Donald E. Queller, who looks from inside, rather than from outside, at the dynamics at work among the crusaders. Rather than accept Nicetas' judgement, he turned to those who knew the Venetians and accompanied them on the crusade, and who convinced him that no one could have – or had – foreseen, or guided to a predetermined end, the events that befell the crusaders. Queller disregards the schism of 1054, the Norman attacks on Thessalonika, and the reparation payments still owed to Venice because the crusaders themselves paid no attention to them. To understand why the Fourth Crusade went to Constantinople, one should travel with the crusaders, whose actions were not determined by centuries-old events: they were an enthusiastic, but struggling, group preoccupied with the day-to-day problems that continually threatened the survival of their enterprise. 'It would be exciting to regale the reader with a tale of a dark plot to conquer Constantinople concocted at Hagenau by Philip of Swabia, Boniface of Montferrat, and the young Alexius, but I am absolutely convinced that it was not so. A retelling of the myth of the Venetians, who had no religion but profit and the state, and of the devious Dandolo, who spun a web to entrap the naïve northerners to achieve his ends, also would be intriguing, but it too is not true.'² The truth was less fantastic. Men with good intentions but diverse interests were caught up in a chain of events that led them step-by-step to Byzantium. They sailed to the Bosphorus to perform an act of Christian charity, the enthronement of Alexius IV, for a promised reward in money and reinforcements. The Venetians, Queller maintained, were just as pious as the northern crusaders, and just as anxious to reach Egypt. Although Dandolo had good reasons to take up the offer made by Alexius, he was hardly alone in that and he never contemplated the outright conquest of Constantinople itself.

¹ Thomas F. Madden, 'Venice and Constantinople in 1171 and 1172: Enrico Dandolo's Attitude towards Byzantium', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, viii (1993), 166-85.

² Donald E. Queller, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople, 1201-1204* (Philadelphia, 1977), x.

Queller's *The Fourth Crusade* (1977) quickly became the standard work on the subject and, in the last eighteen years, his version of the 'theory of accidents' has been widely accepted by scholars. The judgement of Jonathan Riley-Smith, in *The Crusades: A Short History* (1987), is typical: 'The capture of Constantinople seems to have been the result of a series of accidents ... There is no need even to explain the crusade in terms of the long history of bad relations between crusaders and Greeks; it was a response to a request from a Byzantine prince, made when the crusaders were heavily in debt because of an error of judgment on the part of the six delegates who had negotiated on their behalf with Venice.'¹

Some Byzantinists, however, continue to reject Queller's thesis.² In a historiographical article published in 1984, Charles Brand praises *The Fourth Crusade* for the depth of its scholarship and declares it the standard work on the subject, but criticizes it severely for its scope. Earlier, in his excellent book, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, Brand had examined the crusade from outside, describing it as a 'failure of Byzantine foreign policy',³ and in his article criticizes Queller for looking at it from inside. Indeed, Brand goes so far as to question Queller's motives for refusing to repeat the story of the rivalry between the Latin West and the Greek East: 'His [Queller's] stated reason is that there are already adequate books which will give the reader information on these matters. In reality, these omissions are intentional; they allow him to sustain his favored thesis.' Brand is convinced that the crusaders, swept up in a powerful current of larger events that led to the fall of Constantinople, were not independent actors. Queller's approach, therefore, distorts one's view of the crusade: 'by rigorously excluding any thorough discussion of background, [Queller] makes it seem plausible that a simple sequence of chance events brought the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople.'⁴ Brand is not alone in rejecting Queller's thesis; some do so by simple neglect. Nicol frequently cites Queller in *Byzantium and Venice*, but nowhere takes account of his conclusions.⁵ Runciman and Browning simply ignore him.

To discover John Godfrey's view of the Fourth Crusade, one need

¹ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (New Haven, 1987), 130.

² There are Byzantinists, it is important to point out, who are convinced by Queller's arguments. See, e.g., Mark C. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society, 1204-1453* (Philadelphia, 1992), 6.

³ Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, 232.

⁴ Brand, 'Fourth Crusade', 38-9.

⁵ Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 124-43.

look no further than the title of 1204: *The Unholy Crusade*, the popular work he published in 1980. Godfrey is not a scholar and his audience, he states, is the general reader.¹ He has read Queller's work, but is more heavily influenced by the work of Runciman, Nicol (who read and commented on the manuscript before publication), and Edwin Pears. Unlike Queller, Godfrey sets the Fourth Crusade squarely into the landscape of previous and future events. His narrative begins nine hundred years earlier, in the fourth century, works its way to the crusade itself only in Chapter 5, and by Chapter 14 of 16, has passed on. The remainder of the book offers a superficial history of the Latin Empire and the restored Byzantine Empire up to 1453. At times Godfrey is insightful and the book is well written, but it is poor history. Godfrey has read only a few of the manuscript sources – apparently in translation – and he has digested only a fraction of the literature. He relies heavily on Edwin Pears's *The Fall of Constantinople* (1885), a book criticized for its many errors when it was published over a hundred years earlier.² He also relies heavily on Runciman's *History of the Crusades* (1954), which, while very readable, is riddled with mistakes when dealing with the Fourth Crusade.

Godfrey's footnotes are few; his errors of fact many. To give two typical examples: he cites Geoffrey de Villehardouin in support of a claim that Dandolo was blinded in a brawl, when Villehardouin reports only that the blindness resulted from a blow to the head.³ The story of the brawl comes from Runciman, who cites no evidence for it.⁴ Again citing Villehardouin, Godfrey states that Alexius IV implored the crusaders to leave his lands when they demanded their final payment for placing him on the throne.⁵ Neither Villehardouin nor any other source records Alexius IV's saying anything of the kind.⁶ Godfrey even resurrects the proposition that Venice had made a secret agreement with Egypt to divert the crusade, a claim laid to rest by Gabriel Hanotaux as long ago as 1877.⁷ As Godfrey relies so heavily on the work of others, he is bound to repeat their mistakes.

If it seems uncharitable to hold a popular work to the standards of a

¹ John Godfrey, 1204: *The Unholy Crusade* (Oxford, 1980), vii.

² Edwin Pears, *The Fall of Constantinople* (London, 1885; New York, 1886).

³ Godfrey, *Unholy Crusade*, 64; Villehardouin, *Conquête de Constantinople*, sec. 67, i. 68.

⁴ Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, 1954), iii. 114.

⁵ Godfrey, *Unholy Crusade*, 116.

⁶ On this often misunderstood conversation, see Thomas F. Madden, 'Vows and Contracts in the Fourth Crusade: The Treaty of Zara and the Attack on Constantinople in 1204', *International History Review*, xv (1993), 449–50.

⁷ Ibid., 72. See Gabriel Hanotaux, 'Les Vénitiens ont-ils trahi la Chrétienté en 1202?', *Revue historique*, iv (1877), 87–100.

work of scholarship, one has no choice as long as scholars who are convinced of Venice's complicity in the diversion of the Fourth Crusade look to Godfrey as a counterpoise to Queller. In his chapter on the crusade in *Byzantium and Venice*, Nicol cites Queller and Godfrey together, as if their work carried equal scholarly weight.¹ In *Innocent III: Leader of Europe, 1198-1216* (1994), Jane Sayers fails to cite Queller; Godfrey's is the only monograph she does cite.² And Brand does his best to offer an apology for Godfrey. Although he declares that the book's title is 'historical nonsense', he proposes that Godfrey 'should be held guiltless', owing to the 'effort of thoroughness' shown in the bibliography of forty titles and the few additional works cited in the footnotes. By way of comparison, Queller's *The Fourth Crusade* lists 372 titles in the bibliography, and Brand's own *Byzantium Confronts the West*, with a narrower chronological scope than Godfrey's work, lists 452 titles. Brand considers the fact that Godfrey devotes only one hundred pages to the events of the crusade one of his 'strong suits': he 'thus makes a genuine effort to place the crusade in a broad context'. Even Brand has to admit, however, that 'the details in his background material are often incorrect.' In conclusion, Brand enunciates, perhaps without knowing it, the fundamental division among historians of the Fourth Crusade: 'Godfrey deserves credit for attempting to situate the crusade in a context of East-West relations on a broad scale. Queller's work will remain more valuable to the student and the scholar because of its effort at absolute precision in regard to the day-to-day events.'³

It is not surprising that conspiracy theories permeate popular works like Godfrey's: they are easier to grasp and make a more dramatic story. Ernle Bradford's popularization *The Sundered Cross: The Story of the Fourth Crusade* (1967) is another excellent example.⁴ A cursory glance at a few guidebooks (among the most widely read form of historical literature) confirms the trend. *Frommer's Touring Guide to Venice* (1987) states that 'Enrico Dandolo persuaded the Crusade to

¹ Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 124-43.

² Jane Sayers, *Innocent III: Leader of Europe, 1198-1216* (London, 1994), 204. This book is useful for those interested in Innocent III's earlier life, papal court politics, and the promulgation of canon law. However, Innocent III himself believed that his most important efforts were directed at reuniting the churches and reconquering Jerusalem. Sayers treats these matters almost as an afterthought, in a final chapter entitled 'The Papacy and the Wider World'. Innocent III's negotiations with the Orthodox church before 1203 are ignored. The Fourth Crusade, which consumed so much of the pope's attention and efforts, ranks a mere four-page description (172-5) with important errors.

³ Brand, 'Fourth Crusade', 39-41.

⁴ Ernle Bradford, *The Sundered Cross: The Story of the Fourth Crusade* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968). This book was also marketed under the title *The Great Betrayal*.

postpone its primary objective in favor of going to Constantinople.”¹ The popular *John Kent's Venice* (1988) tells the tourist: ‘This act [the seizure of Venetians in 1171] led to the ignominious 4th Crusade, in which the Venetians extracted their revenge by diverting an invasion force from the Holy Land to the sack of Constantinople in 1204.’² In the video series *The Crusades* by Terry Jones, Enrico Dandolo is cast in the darkest possible light. He is the architect of the diversion of the Fourth Crusade, a man driven by greed and hate. (To be fair, no western European comes out well in the series.)

Queller's work, therefore, can be said to have had great influence upon crusade scholarship, less influence on Byzantine scholarship, and as yet none at all on popular works. What of textbooks? To find out, I examined the treatment of the Fourth Crusade in four medieval history texts and eight freshman surveys.³ None of the former, all designed to be used in upper-level undergraduate courses, relies on a conspiracy theory nor does any single out the Venetians for special blame. R. H. C. Davis in *A History of Medieval Europe* and David Nicholas in *The Evolution of the Medieval World* imply that Venice and others had something to gain, but go no further.⁴ Similarly, Edward Peters's *Europe and the Middle Ages* devotes only two sentences to the crusade and identifies no villain. The best treatment of the four is C. Warren Hollister's *Medieval Europe: A Short History*. One might expect to find the popular conspiracy theories prevalent in freshman surveys, but that is not the case. Most introductory textbooks are written today by a battery of scholars each concentrating on his own field. As a result, the fruits of specialized research are quickly integrated. Only one text out of the eight examined attributed the diversion of the crusade to a Venetian conspiracy.⁵ The other seven can be divided into two groups. Three apportion no blame, seeing the diversion merely as the outcome of a series of separate decisions.⁶ The other

¹ *Frommer's Touring Guide to Venice*, ed. Claude Janicot (New York, 1987), 21.

² John Kent, *John Kent's Venice* (London, 1988), 7.

³ The method of selection was haphazard. I simply used those books that have been sent to me for evaluation over the last three years. Textbooks that do not discuss the crusade have been omitted.

⁴ R. H. C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe from Constantine to St Louis*, 2nd ed. (London, 1988), 332–3; David Nicholas, *The Evolution of the Medieval World: Society, Government, and Thought in Europe, 312–1500* (London, 1992), 270.

⁵ Lynn Hunt, Thomas R. Martin, Barbara H. Rosenwein, R. Po-chia Hsia, Bonnie G. Smith, *The Challenge of the West* (Lexington, 1995), 403.

⁶ Donald Kagan, Steven Ozment, Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, 1995), 271–3; John P. McKay, Bennet D. Hill, John Buckler, *A History of Western Society*, 5th ed. (Boston, 1995), 284; Jiu-Hua L. Upshur, Janice J. Terry, et al., *World History*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis-St Paul, 1995), 335.

four also apportion no blame, but do imply that the greed of the Venetians influenced the decision to sail to Constantinople.¹ All eight contain errors in the description of the Fourth Crusade.

The issue is not settled, nor, as Achille Luchaire lamented in 1907, is it likely ever to be. Luchaire was wrong, though, to call for an end to research because 'science has truly something better to do than to discuss indefinitely an insoluble problem.'² The Fourth Crusade has attracted a host of scholars who have shed further light on the event itself and the circumstances that surrounded it. Since the publication of Queller's *The Fourth Crusade*, many works have appeared that examine in finer detail the history of the enterprise from inside. Here I shall point to a few of particular importance.

No other scholar has given as much attention to the less well-known sources of information on the Fourth Crusade as Alfred J. Andrea, who has produced the best available editions and translations of the *Devastatio Constantinopolitana* and Anonymous of Soissons' *De terra Iherosolimitana*.³ In an ingenious article, he explains the key – the symmetrical structure by which events in the first half are made to foreshadow and contrast with events in the second – to unlocking the hidden meanings of Gunther of Pairis' *Historia Constantinopolitana*,⁴ which he has translated in a forthcoming edition. Andrea has also looked at particular events and at particular individuals. In an article written with Ilona Motsiff, he examines the timing of Innocent III's letter prohibiting the attack on Zara as well as the means by which it was transported to the crusaders.⁵ The letter, when it did arrive, forced the crusaders to choose between obedience to the pope and fulfilling their vows to the Venetians. Two individual crusaders have also come under his scrutiny: Adam of Perseigne and Conrad of Krosigk;⁶ his

¹ Thomas F. X. Noble, Barry S. Strauss, Duane J. Osheim, Kristen Byzantium Neuschel, William B. Cohen, David D. Roberts, *Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment* (Boston, 1994), 416; Anthony Esler, *The Western World* (Englewood Cliffs, 1994), 313; L. S. Stavrianos, *The World to 1500: A Global History*, 6th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, 1995), 208; J. M. Roberts, *History of the World* (Oxford, 1993), 418.

² Achille Luchaire, *Innocent III: la question d'Orient* (Paris, 1907), 97.

³ Alfred J. Andrea, 'The *Devastatio Constantinopolitana*, A Special Perspective on the Fourth Crusade: An Analysis, New Edition, and Translation', *Historical Reflections*, xix (1993), 107–49; Alfred J. Andrea and Paul I. Rachlin, 'Holy War, Holy Relics, Holy Theft: The Anonymous of Soissons' *De terra Iherosolimitana*: An Analysis, Edition, and Translation', *Historical Reflections*, xviii (1992), 147–75.

⁴ Alfred J. Andrea, 'The *Historia Constantinopolitana*: An Early Thirteenth-Century Cistercian Looks at Byzantium', *Analecta Cisterciensia*, xxxvi (1980), 269–302.

⁵ Alfred J. Andrea and Ilona Motsiff, 'Pope Innocent III and the Diversion of the Fourth Crusade Army to Venice', *Byzantinoslavica*, xxxiii (1972), 6–25.

⁶ Alfred J. Andrea, 'Adam of Perseigne and the Fourth Crusade', *Cîteaux*, xxxvi (1985), 21–37; idem, 'Conrad of Krosigk, Bishop of Halberstadt, Crusader, and Monk of Sittichenbach: His

article on the latter, a study of one of the crusade's leading bishops, is a jewel of microhistory. Lastly, after meticulously examining all of the Cistercian sources for the crusade, he disproves in another article Queller's claim that Cistercian accounts of the Fourth Crusade were anti-Venetian.¹

Other illuminating work has been done recently on individual crusaders. Hans W. Kuhn shows that Henry of Ulmen, who pilfered relics from Constantinople after its fall, had agreed like other Germans to the diversion to Constantinople out of loyalty to Philip of Swabia.² Similarly, Monique Zerner-Chardavoine's study of Simon de Montfort and Guy of Vaux-de-Cernay reveals that Simon's participation in the Albigensian Crusade shaped Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay's account of his own role in Fourth Crusade. In Peter's history, the Fourth Crusade is portrayed as a sinful enterprise which Simon abandoned, in contrast to sanctity of the Albigensian Crusade, which Simon led. Further, Zerner-Chardavoine places Simon's actions at Zara in the context of the larger power structure of the Frankish nobility, demonstrating that his influence among the leaders, never great, declined after Boniface of Montferrat and the Venetians took up the cross.³

In tracing the life of the papal legate, Peter Capuanus, Werner Maleczek gives details of Innocent III's efforts to secure a truce between France and England in preparation for the crusade.⁴ He then examines Capuanus's actions as papal legate, and rightly concludes that he played a minor role in the crusade, attributing this to the pope's inaction, owing to his fear of destroying the crusade, and to the wilfulness of the Venetians. Maleczek's views of the Fourth Crusade – which closely resemble Capuanus's: a great army led astray by Frankish disobedience and Venetian greed – and of Byzantium, however, are distorted. He portrays Constantinople as a teetering relic, its inevitable collapse imminent; and Dandolo, perceiving this, as determined that it should fall to him rather than to anyone else⁵ – an interpretation

Ecclesiastical Career, 1184–1225', *Analecta Cisterciensia*, xliii (1987), 11–91.

¹ Alfred J. Andrea, 'Cistercian Accounts of the Fourth Crusade: Were They Anti-Venetian?', *Analecta Cisterciensia*, xli (1985), 3–41.

² Hans Wolfgang Kuhn, 'Heinrich von Ulmen, der vierte Kreuzzug und die Limburger Staurothek', *Jahrbuch für westdeutsche Landesgeschichte*, x (1984), 67–106.

³ Monique Zerner-Chardavoine and Hélène Piéchan-Palloc, 'La croisade albigoise, un revanche: Des rapports entre la quatrième et la croisade albigoise', *Revue historique*, cclxvii (1982), 3–18; Monique Zerner-Chardavoine, 'L'abbé Gui des Vaux-de-Cernay: prédicateur de croisade', *Cahiers de fanjeaux*, xxi (1986), 183–204.

⁴ Werner Maleczek, *Petrus Capuanus: Kardinal, Legat am vierten Kreuzzug, Theologe (1214)* (Vienna, 1988).

⁵ Maleczek, *Petrus Capuanus*, 131–2.

contradicted by both the events of the crusade and recent Byzantine scholarship.

Lastly, Jean Longnon's study of *Les compagnons de Villehardouin* (1978) catalogues hundreds of mostly French soldiers who took up the cross. The book is a glossary of crusaders, arranged by area of origin, which gives details of their families, their roles in the crusade, and, if they survived, their later lives. Although Longnon relies only on published sources, his work will long remain an essential resource for historians of the Fourth Crusade, and will provide a good jumping-off point for scholars delving deeper into the archival records for material on individual crusaders.¹

The Fourth Crusade was a naval expedition, and sea power helped to determine its outcome, as John Pryor shows.² Having reconstructed a three-deck navis – the round-hulled sailing ship used in the thirteenth century by the Venetians primarily as a merchant vessel, but pressed into service to transport the army of the Fourth Crusade – he gives us as complete a picture of the crusaders' transport as we are likely to get. He does the same for horse transports, first developed by the Byzantines but adopted by Venice in the early twelfth century. Transporting horses by sea was difficult and expensive: they had to be secured with straps and lifted with hoists to prevent them from falling on the pitching deck, and they were disembarked by way of ramps that led directly onto the beach and allowed the mounted knight to ride straight into battle. This finding has particular significance for the Fourth Crusade. The Venetians went to great trouble to build horse transports suited to assaulting the unobstructed beaches they would find in Egypt, itself evidence of their original intention. The transports were useless at Constantinople, which was protected by massive sea walls. Pryor's book, *Geography, Technology, and War* (1988), examines the routes taken by medieval ships and the winds they had to contend with. The route through the Adriatic and Aegean Seas from Venice to Constantinople, which was treacherous at points, placed the crusaders firmly in the hands of the Venetians.³

My own contribution to the development of the inside view of the

¹ Jean Longnon, *Les Compagnons de Villehardouin: Recherches sur les croisés de la quatrième croisade* (Geneva, 1978).

² John H. Pryor, 'Transportation of Horses by Sea during the Era of the Crusades: Eighth Century to 1285 AD', *Mariner's Mirror*, lxxviii (1982), 9-30, 103-26 and 'The Naval Architecture of Transport Ships: A Reconstruction of Some Archetypes for Round-Hulled Sailing Ships', *Mariner's Mirror*, lxx (1984), 171-219, 275-92, 363-83.

³ John H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War* (Cambridge, 1988). See also, idem, 'Winds, Waves, and Rocks: The Routes and the Perils along Them', in *Maritime Aspects of Migration*, ed. Klaus Fiedland (Cologne, 1989), 71-85.

Fourth Crusade appears in an earlier number of this journal.¹ If scholars are to understand the transformation of the crusade from a benevolent force that enthroned and safeguarded the Byzantine Emperor Alexius IV into a conquering army, they must exchange deterministic reasoning and generalization for detailed examination of the course of events and the interactions of all the participants. One of the most important attributes of the crusade was the web of oaths and treaties that bound it. When these are examined both individually and in relation to one another, the crusaders' reasons for attacking Constantinople are made clear. A century of occasionally impolite letters between Rome and Byzantium did not put the crusaders on the walls of Constantinople. The truth is simpler and more immediate. When the Byzantines murdered Alexius IV, they not only shocked the crusaders' chivalric sensibilities, they brought down the entire contractual structure of the crusade. Whereas the rank-and-file would demand to be taken to the Holy Land, the crusade leaders could neither cite their contractual obligations as the reason for delaying their departure, nor provide the necessary funds. The crusaders attacked Constantinople because they lacked a realistic alternative, and the Latin clergy made a virtue of necessity by reformulating the crusade as a war against murderers.

It is not sufficient, however, only to look at the crusaders, who became after their arrival on the Bosphorus only half of the story. To explain why the Latins attacked Constantinople does not explain why the Byzantines chose to surrender it. To understand the crusade, scholars need to examine the Greeks' actions and their reactions to the Latins in the light of Byzantine political culture. In *Byzantium Confronts the West*, Brand provides a learned account of the politics of the Byzantine Empire both before and during the crusade. Similarly, Nicolas Oikonomides shows how fragmented the imperial system had become by the time the crusaders arrived.² Constantinople had effective control over only a fraction of the Empire, making it weaker than usual. Rebellious areas were unconcerned about the safety of the capital; indeed, many Greeks would mock the inhabitants of the capital after the surrender.

From the perspective of Jean-Claude Cheynet's *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance* (1990),³ which examines the military and popular

¹ Madden, 'Vows and Contracts in the Fourth Crusade', 441–68.

² Nicolas Oikonomides, 'La décomposition de l'empire byzantin à la veille de 1204 et les origines de l'empire de Nicée: A propos de la *Partitio Romaniae*', in *XVe Congrès international d'études byzantines, Rapports et co-rapports*, i, pt. 1 (Athens, 1979), 3–28.

³ Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (Paris, 1990).

rebellions against imperial authority that became a regular and expected feature of life in Byzantium, the Fourth Crusade becomes merely another palace coup, an armed rebellion led by an imperial claimant and his mercenary army. If the Fourth Crusade resembled previous armed rebellions, the fact was not lost on the residents of Constantinople in 1204.

One of the most important, if least understood, groups at Constantinople in 1203 and 1204 was the Varangian Guard. These Danish and English mercenaries were an unshakeable élite corps of fighters sworn to protect the person of the emperor. By 1203, they were also playing a more important role in palace politics – their approval was sought even before naming the emperor – something exploited on more than one occasion during the crusaders' stay on the Bosphorus. Although Sigfús Blöndal's *The Varangians of Byzantium* is the first detailed history of the Guard, it does not adequately discuss their role in the elevation of Alexius IV, the coup staged by Mourtzouphlus, or the surrender of the city.¹

Twenty-five years ago, Benjamin Hendrickx wrote a number of important essays on Baldwin of Flanders, a crusader magnate who became the first Latin emperor. Recently, he has turned his attention to the events at Constantinople before the fall of the city. The visit of an African king to Constantinople during the crusaders' stay startled and amazed them. In a parallel study of the shadowy figure of Alexius V Mourtzouphlus, written with Corinna Matzukis, Hendrickx pieces together the little information that survives to make a convincing case for Mourtzouphlus' whereabouts and sympathies before he seized the throne. They argue that he was not the leader of the anti-Latin faction at court, merely an opportunist who exploited the people's hatred of the Latins to serve his own purposes.² Similarly, in an analysis of the three fires that raged across the city set by the crusaders, I show the extent of the damage they inflicted, and the effect they had on the population.³ They devastated one-sixth of the city, making one-third

¹ S. Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, rev. and trans. Benedikt Benediktz (Cambridge, 1978).

² Benjamin Hendrickx: 'Les chartes de Baudouin de Flandre comme source pour l'histoire de Byzance', *Byzantina* [Thessalonika], i (1969), 59–80; Boudewijn IX van Vlaanderen, de vrome keizer van Konstantinopel', *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, xlv (1970), 227–32; 'Recherches sur les documents diplomatiques non conservés concernant la Quatrième Croisade et l'Empire Latin de Constantinople pendant les premières années de son existence (1200–1206)', *Byzantina*, ii (1970), 107–84; 'A propos du nombre des troupes de la quatrième croisade et de l'empereur Baudouin I', *Byzantina*, iii (1971), 29–40; 'Un roi Africain à Constantinople en 1203', *Byzantina*, xiii (1985), 895–8; with Corinna Matzukis, 'Alexios V Doukas Mourtzouphlos: His Life, Reign, and Death (?–1204)', *Hellenika*, xxxi (1979), 108–32.

³ Thomas F. Madden, 'The Fires of the Fourth Crusade in Constantinople, 1203–1204: A Damage Assessment', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, lxxxiv–v (1992), 72–93.

of the inhabitants homeless. In the pitiful squalor of the camps of the homeless, Constantinople's legendary will to resist an attack was extinguished.

* * *

Thus, the Fourth Crusade presents historians with a problem similar to the one presented by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Structural causes – the imperialism of capitalism, the arms race, and railway timetables – however compelling, do not explain why the war broke out when it did. To find that out, detailed examination of the events of the July Crisis is required. The two must then be connected. Similarly, the diversion of the Fourth Crusade from Egypt to Constantinople cannot be explained solely from outside, looking from a distance at the *longue durée*. One must move inside, to examine the motives, the opportunities, the fears, and the decisions of the crusaders. Medievalists naturally favour Latin sources, Byzantinists just as naturally favour Greek ones. To find out more about what happened, however, we shall have to make more perceptive use of both, rather than allowing either of them to force us to take sides. And if we do choose to make use of our own late twentieth-century categories of explanation, we should take heed of Donald E. Queller's warning to beware of attributing our own motives to the crusaders by making victims of the Byzantines and a villain of Enrico Dandolo.

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