RELIGIOUS RIPPLES ON THE BOSPORUS
Mediterranean History used as an Analogy for the Nineteenth-Century *Kulturkampf* in Ida Hahn-Hahn's *Eudoxia*

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Abstract

In 1866, the German Countess Ida von Hahn-Hahn published a historical novel titled *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin*. Its protagonists are the fifth-century Byzantine Empress Eudoxia and a Gothic Arian princess named Gunild. Gunild was Hahn's literary alter ego, representing the connection between Gothic and German ethnicities. In the story, the Gothic princess converts from Arianism to Catholicism, symbolizing Hahn's own conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism. Hahn wrote a story based on historical figures of the early Mediterranean Middle Ages to express her nineteenth-century religious ideas. As a Catholic convert and writer, one of her major incentives was to convince her readers of the superiority of the Roman Church. At the time she wrote *Eudoxia*, conflict between Protestants and Catholics was dividing German society, leading to the so-called *Kulturkampf* which would fully escalate later in the 1870s. With her novel, Hahn advocated for the Catholic Church, and argued in favor of the territorial independence of the Papal States. By doing so, she was implicitly criticizing liberal, secular, and Protestant authors who favored an expropriation of the church's earthly possessions. For the author, the *Kulturkampf* represented a confrontation between a controlling, conquering state and the rightful church. To explain her interpretation of current political events, Hahn used semifictional characters like Eudoxia and John Chrysostom to symbolize secular power and Catholicism respectively against a backdrop of Mediterranean history. Her historical novel is, moreover, an example of how female Mediterranean history could be used to create political narratives and how female writers of nineteenth-century Europe interacted with the southern sea's past.

Keywords: Ida Hahn-Hahn, Historical Fiction, Eudoxia, Mediterranean History, *Kulturkampf*

The Byzantine Empire appeared enormous to the writers and readers of the nineteenth century. Controlling most of the eastern Mediterranean,

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the empire of the early Middle Ages had evolved into a symbol of power and wealth in modern historical thinking. Yet, it was also believed to be decadent and overly focused on luxury. As the political center of this supposedly immoral empire, the Byzantine emperors attracted the interest of a nineteenth-century readership. Sometimes, their spouses too became fruitful material for historical fiction. One of these was Eudoxia. At the beginning of the fifth century, Emperor Arcadius (377–408) occupied the Byzantine throne. Seen as having been weak in nature, the young emperor appeared less interesting to a nineteenth-century audience than his wife, Empress Eudoxia (who died in 404).[1]

The empress's story fascinated not only historians but also novelists. In the city of Mainz during the 1860s, a German Catholic author worked feverishly on a manuscript for a novel with the Byzantine female ruler at its center. Ida von Hahn-Hahn (1805–1880) published her novel *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin. Ein Zeitgemälde aus dem fünften Jahrhundert* (Eudoxia, the Empress. A painting of the fifth century) in 1866.[2] Hahn's fascination with the reign of Eudoxia stemmed partly from her predilection for stories of strong historical women, and partly from her affinity for religious material. Because of the author's simultaneous interest for female and religious history, Hahn invented the fictional figure of Gunild, a Gothic warrior's daughter in service to the empress, to insert her own religious identity into the story. As an Arian Goth, Gunild is initially an outsider at Eudoxia's court. Soon, however, she converts to Catholicism and experiences true piety. For Hahn, this narrative reflected her own conversion from German Protestantism to Catholicism. Caught between denominations and living in an age of increasing religious strife, the author felt that she could use the story of Byzantine religious quarrels to explain her personal position in nineteenth-century Europe. In fact, Eudoxia's reign had been marked by religious unrest, and against this background, a power struggle between her and the Constantinopolitan patriarch John Chrysostom (347–407). As an exotic tale, the sectarian tensions of medieval Byzantium offered writers

1 J. B. Burry, *A History of the Later Roman Empire. From Arcadius to Irene* (London, New York: Macmillan and Co, 1889), 98–100.

2 Ida Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin. Ein Zeitgemälde aus dem fünften Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Mainz: Verlag von Franz Kirchelm, 1866). The novel was published in two volumes with each containing around two hundred pages. As was typical for the time, the books were published at the same moment and were meant to be purchased together. Because the use of two volumes instead of one had rather to do with the material format than with differences in style, story, or publication date, I will refer to the novel in its singular form instead of using the plural.

like Hahn the opportunity to indirectly describe the religious politics of their own day, the nineteenth century.[3] Ever since the publication of her *Oriental Letters* (1844), reporting from her travels through the Ottoman Empire including nineteenth-century Constantinople, her role as a connoisseur of Oriental matters was widely accepted. The fifth-century Byzantine Empire provided excellent historical material for an author fond of Oriental stereotypes and Constantinopolitan customs.[4]

Hahn was not the only nineteenth-century female writer who had a fondness for medieval Mediterranean history. British authors, such as Sister Francis Raphael (1823–1894), and Italian novelists like Antonietta Klitsche de la Grange (1832–1912) used Roman, Greek, and Byzantine material for their books. This trend became increasingly widespread after the middle of the century.[5] Female authors around the globe started writing more and more historical fiction and simultaneously highlighting female participation in human history. Interestingly, historical novels became popular enough to undermine official narratives of scholastic historiography, which portrayed the past as a predominantly male sphere. Books like *Eudoxia* were less scrutinized than academic essays since they were considered as a merely entertaining pastime more than as a legitimate representation of the past. The genre, thus, could be used to include the stories of women in an otherwise mostly male historiography.[6]

Against the initial expectations of a twenty-first-century reader, this struggle for more female agency was not always opposed to ecclesiastical institutions. All three of the above-mentioned writers, Hahn, Francis Raphael, and Klitsche, were zealous Catholics and consequently wrote in a pious style. As devout believers, they defended the cause of the church in their books. Historical novels became a tool to propagate a Catholic worldview, to convert non-believers, and to exonerate the church from historical crimes. The novelists' stories were often filled with strong female

3 Andriani Georgiou, "Empresses in Byzantine Society: Justifiably Angry or Simply Angry?," in *Emotions and Gender in Byzantine Culture*, ed. Stavroula Constantinou and Mati Meyer (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 111–40, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96038-8_5.

4 Ulrike Brisson, "Discovering Scheherazade: Representations of Oriental Women in the Travel Writing of Nineteenth-Century German Women," *Women in German Yearbook*, no. 29 (2013): 97.

5 Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, Paperback ed (London: Verso, 2007), 27.

6 Hamish Dalley, "Postcolonialism and the Historical Novel: Epistemologies of Contemporary Realism," *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 1, no. 1 (March 2014): 57, https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2013.3.

characters who professed an unshakeable faith in God. In the novels, these protagonists represented devout women, standing their ground in opposition to their earthly and sinful compatriots. Repeatedly, defending their religion against hostile social surroundings mutated into a fight for female independence. In other words, in the novels, a Catholic apologetic intention overlapped with feminist sentiment.[7]

Hahn's Catholic-feminist novel *Eudoxia* is a perfect example of this, inasmuch as it was a response to a fierce anti-Catholic discourse that had taken hold in the German public sphere. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the so-called *Kulturkampf* ravaged Europe. The Catholic and Protestant churches argued over preeminence on the continent (and the globe), while strengthened liberal secularism rose to become what came to be seen as a third denomination. Religious leaders and state rulers did not so much fight with the sword as they did with the pen. Instead of taking the quarrel over denominational supremacy to the battlefield, they preferred to dabble in editorial warfare. The church, for example, established a central newspaper for its propagandistic program, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, and Protestant and liberal publishing houses had their own outlets, like *Die Gartenlaube*. While journals and newspapers gained cultural salience, literature had an equally pertinent role in the propagandist apparatus of both sides. Authors often instrumentalized their stories to speak out for Catholicism, Protestantism, or secularism. For religious writers, historical fiction evolved into a favorite tool to defend their position in a nineteenth-century discourse. Historical tales could be used to defame the enemy, laud one's own religion, or create an analogy to explain the author's thoughts on the current political situation.[8]

Hahn's historical novel *Eudoxia* must also be seen as a part of the emerging nineteenth-century literary *Kulturkampf.* In her foreword, the author pointed out that she was writing in support of the Roman Church. Her short sermon-like preface considered not only the position of Catholics in Germany but also their increasingly precarious situation in Italy.

7 For example: Augusta Theodosia Drane, *Uriel; or, The Chapel of the Angels* (London: Burns and Oates, 1884); Antonietta Klitsche de la Grange, *Il Navicellaio del Tevere* (Torino, Roma: Pietro di G. Marietti. Tipografico Pontificio-Tip. E Lib. Poliglotta de Propaganda Fide, 1866); Ida Hahn-Hahn, *Maria Regina* (Mainz: Verlag von Franz Kirchelm, 1860).

8 Yvonne Maria Werner and Jonas Harvard, *European Anti-Catholicism in a Comparative and Transnational Perspective*, European Studies 31 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 14; Amerigo Caruso, "Antifemminismo femminile? Luise Hensel, Ida Hahn e Marie Nathusius nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento," *Contemporanea*, no. 4 (2019): 521–22, https://doi.org/10.1409/95109.

The Italian unification process was threatening the Papal States, one of the last remnants of the peninsula's old political system. Spurred on by recent success, Italian liberals and nationalists were calling for an annexation of the Holy See's territorial possessions. From Hahn's conservative Catholic perspective, this policy of annexing church property would only lead to moral degeneration.[9]

With her tale, the author tried to counter an anti-Catholic, anti-feminist narrative. Michael B. Gross has observed how these two forms of Othering were particularly intertwined since Protestant writers often described Catholicism as an effeminate religion. In opposition to the womanish, overly emotional Catholic, the Protestant portrayed himself as a rationally focused individualist. While the papist believer was duped by sweet-talking priests, the Protestant maintained his independent mind. Inevitably, this rhetorical opposition brings to mind a simultaneously developing Orientalism, as described by Edward Said in his famous monograph.[10] In fact, the Catholic and the Oriental were similarly connotated with traits inherently ascribed to the female gender such as effeminacy or high emotionalism. In contrast, the northern Protestant writer depicted himself as a male rationalist. As Michael B. Gross has noted, anti-Catholicism, Orientalist tendencies, and anti-feminism were, thus, deeply interlaced.[11]

Hahn used her novel to argue concurrently against anti-Catholic and misogynist claims. However, she also endeavored to overcome another cultural trend in European literature: a negative Mediterranism. Because of geographical and religious congruities, contemporary authors understood the *Kulturkampf* not only as a fight between Catholicism and Protestantism but also as a confrontation between North and South. *Kulturkampf* did not merely represent a conflict between the German government under Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898) and Pope Pius IX (1792–1878). On the contrary, it constituted a struggle that encompassed the whole of Europe, if not the globe.[12] In this context, stereotypical depictions of Catholicism repeatedly connected the religion to the continent's

9 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin*, III–VI.

10 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

11 Michael B. Gross, *The War against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, 2. paperback ed, Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany (Ann Arbor, Mich: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2008), 11.

12 Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser, "Introduction: The European Culture Wars," in *Culture Wars*, ed. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511496714.001;

Mediterranean south. Both the region as well as the denomination were ascribed qualities such as superstition, backwardness, and intolerance. The German *Los-von-Rom* movement, for example, argued that Protestant Germany needed to rid itself of the Catholic, Mediterranean millstone because of the latter's economic underperformance. In this context, Manuel Borutta observed how anti-Catholicism did not just overlap with anti-feminism, and Orientalism, but also with hostilities towards the European South as a whole.[13]

To better comprehend in what manner Hahn used Mediterranean history, I analyze here the narrative of her book *Eudoxia*. After giving a short biography of the author, I examine the various characters of the novel and their cultural connotations. The reader will observe how Byzantine history became a parable for the *Kulturkampf*, how Hahn played with German and Catholic identities, and how she described female agency. I believe this is a worthwhile contribution to Mediterranean and Gender Studies since it uncovers the power of a female Catholic author countering a Protestant male narrative. The latter has to date enjoyed far more attention from academics, who have often overlooked the female Catholic response. Instead of depicting anti-Catholic, anti-Mediterranean, and anti-womanhood as a one-directional action, I attempt to pinpoint the equal and opposite reactions to their Protestant adversaries of writers like Hahn.

Ida von Hahn-Hahn – A Catholic Feminist?

Ida von Hahn-Hahn is something of an enigma to literary academics of the twenty-first century. Gerd Oberembt, who has written an extensive and detailed biography, locates the author between melancholy Romanticism and conservative Catholicism.[14] Her role in early feminism, however, poses an additional conundrum. According to Gisela Argyle, Hahn was a rebel who used the novel as a medium to speak out, because

Timothy Verhoeven, *Transatlantic Anti-Catholicism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010), 5–7, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230109124.

13 Manuel Borutta, *Antikatholizismus: Deutschland und Italien im Zeitalter der europäischen Kulturkämpfe*, Bürgertum, n. F., Bd. 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 49.

14 Gerd Oberembt, *Ida Gräfin Hahn-Hahn. Weltschmerz und Ultramontanismus. Studien zum Unterhaltungsroman im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980).

as a woman she had no other access to historical discourse.[15] Traci S. O'Brien, on the other hand, sees her feminism as troublesome, considering that Hahn had, at least by today's standards, a problematic view of "Oriental races".[16] Finally, Amerigo Caruso paints Hahn as thoroughly anti-feminist and rather reactionary. He believes that Hahn preferred a conservative model for the role of women in society instead of following radical feminism.[17] Academia's diverging perceptions of the writer of *Eudoxia* stem from the fact that Hahn's understanding of race and gender was specific and individual. As such, she resists being categorized and seldom fits the current political compartmentalization. Todd Kontje points out that modern scholars try to fit Hahn into their own narratives rather than understand her original incentives.[18]

The drastic changes in her eventful life are another reason for the ambivalence surrounding Hahn in current academic research. Born into northern German aristocracy, she grew up as a well-educated, Protestant woman. Her father spent most of the family's fortune on extravagant theater plays, which forced her to marry her wealthy cousin, in 1826. Motivated by financial reasons rather than love, the marriage did not last long. After her divorce in 1829, Hahn traveled through Germany and other countries, like Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire. During her time as a voluntary nomad, she partly toured alone, partly with her lover Adolf von Bystram. After Adolf's death in 1849, Hahn decided to make some radical changes in her life. She converted to Catholicism and after a short sojourn at a French monastery, she moved to Mainz where she founded a similar institution for women. There, Hahn remained until the end of her life.[19]

Before her conversion, the cosmopolitan, constantly-traveling Hahn was considered a rebel. Her books were filled with sarcastic remarks against the patriarchal world order, while still adhering to a somewhat conservative

15 Gisela Argyle, "The Horror and the Pleasure of Un-English Fiction: Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Fanny Lewald in England," *Comparative Literature Studies* 44, no. 1 (2007): 161, https://doi.org/10.1353/cls.2007.0026.

16 Traci S. O'Brian, "A 'Daughter of the Occident' Travels to the 'Orient': Ida von Hahn-Hahn's The Countess Faustina and Letters From the Orient," *Women in German Yearbook*, no. 24 (2008): 42.

17 Amerigo Caruso, "Antifemminismo femminile?," 517.

18 Todd Curtis Kontje, *Women, the Novel, and the German Nation 1771-1871: Domestic Fiction in the Fatherland*, Cambridge Studies in German (Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 140.

19 Helen Chambers, *Humor and Irony in Nineteenth-Century German Women's Writing: Studies in Prose Fiction, 1840-1900*, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics and Culture (Rochester, N.Y: Camden House, 2007), 32.

image of marriage. She herself, divorced and in an open sexual liaison, appeared radically feminist to her contemporaries during the first half of the century. Her desire for independence also tinged her female protagonists in the novels. This underpinning of female agency did not cease with her 1849 conversion. However, her writing became saturated with Catholic undertones and values. Hahn also supported a thoroughly religious understanding of womanhood, underlining the importance of women showing virtue and being sexually reticent.[20] Because of these rather conservative nuances, recent critics, such as Amerigo Caruso, have suggested that Hahn could even be described as anti-feminist.[21] However, the female characters of her novels kept their independent thinking and the capability to overcome male dominance. In *Eudoxia*, this independence is not marked by sexual liberty but rather by women defending their faith, deciding autonomously over their adherence to one denomination or the other. In Hahn's biography, the year 1849 can, thus, be identified as a religious watershed moment on the one hand, and a feminist continuity on the other.[22]

Eudoxia's Caesaropapism – The Master Thesis

Seventeen years after her conversion, the novelist became fascinated by Byzantine history, a fascination which culminated in her book *Eudoxia*. The novel, set at the beginning of the fifth century, tells the story of Empress Eudoxia, wife to Emperor Arcadius. In the first volume, the reader witnesses her ascension to the throne by overcoming other politicians at the Byzantine court such as the treacherous minister Eutrop. In the second volume, the narrative focuses on the quarrels between the Byzantine state under Eudoxia and the Constantinopolitan Church under Patriarch John Chrysostom. The ambitious empress tries to control both state and church, but Hahn disapproved of her protagonist's policy. As a Catholic author, Hahn scolded her heroine Eudoxia for interfering with ecclesiastical matters. The author took the side of the Patriarch, arguing in favor of the Constantinopolitan Church and its independence.

The author felt especially connected to the preacher Chrysostom, a historical figure, who had acquired legendary fame thanks to his eloquence – because of ostensible parallels between his past and her present Chris-

20 Chambers, *Humor and Irony in Nineteenth-Century German Women's Writing,* 41.
21 Amerigo Caruso, "Antifemminismo femminile?," 517.
22 Chambers, *Humor and Irony in Nineteenth-Century German Women's Writing*, 44–46.

tendom. For Hahn, nineteenth-century Catholicism and the fifth-century Constantinopolitan Church were the same religious institution. Although this presentation might appear bewildering to some, the author repeatedly called the Christian denomination of the fifth century "*katholisch*".[23] Early Christians used this term also during antiquity to designate the main church and separate it from minor denominations. In Hahn's nineteenth-century usage, however, the word developed a new meaning in connection to the Roman Church. By repeatedly calling the Constantinopolitan congregation Catholic, the author established a direct link between the main church of the fifth century and the Roman belief in the present. Hahn equated her own denomination with that of the fifth-century Byzantines. According to her depiction, the Constantinopolitan congregation represented the "true" church in opposition to other early forms of Christianity like Arianism.[24] Fifth-century Arianism was a religious movement that differed from the official religion laid down by the Nicaean Council. This alternative form of Christianity, which questioned the divinity of Christ, found many adherents among the Goths, a people that at the time partly served the Byzantine emperor. In Hahn's view, the Arian denomination was a heretic belief, like other misguided Christian creeds throughout history. It becomes clear that Hahn instrumentalized the medieval Constantinopolitan Church as an analogy for nineteenth-century Catholicism while Arianism was equated to nineteenth-century Protestantism. In other words, to explain the conflict between righteous Catholicism and false Protestantism, the author used an example from Byzantine and Mediterranean history.[25]

Protestant Arianism and Catholic Christianity, however, did not represent the sole dichotomy of the book. An opposition between the holy church and the earthly, impure Byzantine society likewise causes a conflict that pushes the story of the book forward. In Hahn's narrative, the Mediterranean empire appears as a licentious state, in which an avaricious upper class governs the equally sinful lower classes. Her fictional Byzantine noblewomen of fifth-century Constantinople "competed in luxury, splendor, and wastefulness, and caused infinite damage."[26] "Greed for money, luxury, and hedonism were idols that received rich offerings, as if the old idolatrous temples had not been closed."[27] For Hahn, luxury ostentatiously functioned as the main culprit for Byzantium's recession. In her view, it

23 For example: Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, Die Kaiserin*, 1:9, 176, 206, 209, 216.
24 For example: Hahn-Hahn, 1:208, 209, 240.
25 For example: Hahn-Hahn, 1:173, 250.
26 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, Die Kaiserin,* 1:43. My translation.
27 Hahn-Hahn, 1:16. My translation.

had been luxury out of all sins that led to the Empire's eventual downfall in 1453.[28] Despite the book's plot unfolding in medieval Byzantium, Hahn's religiously motivated criticism of materialism was targeted at her contemporaries. As a Christian novel, *Eudoxia* served to recall nineteenth-century readers traditionally Catholic values such as piety, poverty, and humbleness. Instead of pursuing their obsession with material objects, Hahn's audience ought to refocus on a moral and spiritual way of life. The author asserted that one should renounce worldly luxury to help the poor and sick and one would be rewarded in the afterlife.

In her attack on materialism, Hahn availed herself of multiple topoi which were an essential part of what has been called 'Byzantinism'. A word with many meanings, Byzantinism can, according to Helen Bodin, signify a form of Othering.[29] Like Edward Said's Orientalism or Maria Todorova's Balkanism, the term circumscribes a nineteenth-century literary (and academic) tendency that exoticized a certain geographical area with its respective culture. In each case, authors (mostly European) described a place and society supposedly foreign to them. This illocutionary act served to assert one's own (Western) identity by degrading the encountered Other.[30] Instead of targeting the Orient or the Balkans, Byzantinism focused on the namesake empire. Nevertheless, all three entities were ascribed similar pejorative adjectives, like effeminacy, luxury, or superstition. Historical novelists used narrations of the Byzantine Empire – or the Orient or the Balkans – to conjure the image of an Eastern and uncivilized realm. Decadent emperors and licentious noblewomen, corrupt priests, and treacherous merchants began to populate the pages of historical fiction. Stories of the Byzantine Empire could be instrumentalized to criticize societies of the present by analogy. By doing so, the historical novelists could feign that they were writing about a long-gone empire, where in reality, they were denouncing a present political entity.

28 Hahn-Hahn, 1:21.

29 Helen Bodin, "Whose Byzantinism – Ours or theirs? On the Issue of Byzantinism from a Cultural Semiotic Perspective," in *The Reception of Byzantium in European Culture since 1500,* ed. Przemysław Marciniak and Dion Smyth (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 11–42, here 40–42.

30 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Maria Nikolaeva Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Continually, historical novelists referred to the Byzantine Empire to demean societies or cultures of their own day.[31]

Hahn, true to her time, reified traditional negative descriptions of the Byzantine Empire to admonish her readership. Lust for luxury, the main sin under her scrutiny, appeared in the novel as the cause of further cultural sins like nepotism. At the beginning of Hahn's book, one of the more honorable protagonists, Amantius, complains about the wrongs committed by Eutrop, the emperor's favorite. Eutrop had accepted bribes in exchange for placing his friends in the most profitable positions at court. Amantius laments that "Leo the wool merchant and Alexander the butcher" were promoted to "captain of the cavalry and [the] accountant of the treasury."[32] This tale was meant to indicate the dilapidated state of the Byzantine bureaucracy and state apparatus; neither merchants nor butchers were supposed to occupy official political positions, traditionally reserved for the aristocratic elite. Eutrop's venality demonstrated the corrupt and hence weak Constantinopolitan government.

In Hahn's opinion, nepotism was even worse when it involved the church. In another chapter of *Eudoxia*, Eugraphia, an ambitious noblewoman, tries to help her son into a wealthy position by making use of her contacts in the clergy and at the court. With the support of the book's arch-villain Eutrop, she is able to make her son, Eugenios, a priest. He, however, does not fit the role, having been educated in too liberal a way, and left to his vices. Instead of working as a man of God, he preys on women and spends his time in the streets. Eutrop's influence on the church, inducing weak and depraved men into its service, symbolized the harmful effects of Byzantine society on the Christian religion. In other words, it was not the ecclesiastical institution in itself that was in error, but impious men.[33]

Eventually, multiple noble men and women, among whom Eudoxia plays a major role, manage to convince Emperor Arcadius of Eutrop's wrongdoings. Promptly, the emperor evicts his former favorite from Constantinople. With Eutrop out of the picture, Eudoxia takes a position of superiority in Byzantine politics. Like her predecessor, she attempts to include the Constantinopolitan Church in her sphere of influence but clashes with the patriarch. Chrysostom is unwilling to obey and fully submit the

31 Przemysław Marciniak and Dion Smythe, "Introduction," in *The Reception of Byzantium in European Culture since 1500* (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 1–8, here 2.

32 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin*, 1:6. My translation.

33 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin*, 1:15.

church to imperial rule. Even worse, he criticizes the empress for her temperament, her lust for luxury, and her self-idolization.

By shaping her novel's narrative accordingly, Hahn sided with the Constantinopolitan Church against the pretentions of the Byzantine empress. Against her declared protagonist, Eudoxia, the author supported the position of Chrysostom who represented the Catholic Church and its ideals. Known for his golden tongue, Chrysostom became a symbol of eloquence while still alive. His capacity to influence the masses (for better or worse) remained a popular story right up to the nineteenth century.[34] Because of his talent to convince his listeners of the teachings of Christ, Hahn venerated him, to a certain extent even identifying with the patriarch. Given her proximity to the Christian religion, it is not surprising that the Catholic author agreed with Chrysostom on political matters, especially with his defense of the independence of the church.[35]

Empress Eudoxia, on the other hand, appears to be more ambivalent. For Hahn, the empress has justifiably conquered her position at court. As a female ruler, Eudoxia mostly acts in an honorable manner with good intentions, lending a hand to most of the book's good characters. Her sole mistake lies in her ambition, trying to overcome the independence of the church. Hahn called this policy of the state attempting to administer ecclesiastical institutions "*Cäsaropapismus*" or Caesaropapism.[36] Nowadays, the term is probably familiar because of its use by Max Weber, who saw Ottoman Islam as a Caesaropapist system. His definition circumscribed a political system in which a secular power, for example an emperor, oversaw the ecclesiastical branch of the same society.[37] Ever since, historians have defined the most diverging political societies as "Caesaropapist", including Anglican England or Orthodox Russia. However, academics mostly utilized the term to describe Byzantine religious policies, ascribing the Byzantine Emperor a prominent role in the Constantinopolitan Church. Historians assumed that a Basileus like Arcadius would have controlled not only the Byzantine earthly empire but also its ecclesiastical sector. Although Caesaropapism as an analytical tool was popular during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, recent academic articles evince a more critical take on the concept. An essential part of current mistrust towards

34 James Daniel Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity: Reading the Sermons of John Chrysostom*, First edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

35 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin,* 1:190, 220, 231–32.

36 Hahn-Hahn, 1: IV.

37 Y. Djedi, "Max Weber, Islam and Modernity," *Max Weber Studies* 11, no. 1 (2011): 35, https://doi.org/10.15543/MWS/2011/1/4.

Caesaropapism lies in its negative connotations. As in Hahn's novel, certain scholars criticized a unification of state and church under one crown. Many historians thought the system to be unmodern and hence, inferior to other concepts of state-religion relationships. Often Caesaropapism was held accountable for the supposed backwardness of certain societies, such as, for example, the Ottoman or Russian Empire, both states with a claim to a Byzantine heritage.[38]

In Hahn's narrative, Caesaropapism also has a negative meaning. According to the author, Caesaropapism even became the main evil in Byzantine society. Other sins, such as luxury, ambition, or nepotism, could be linked to the church being controlled by the empress. While Chrysostom, the representative of an independent clergy, incarnated pure Christianity, the influence of Empress Eudoxia signified an earthly encroachment into spiritual matters. Moral institutions were, consequently, poisoned by egocentrism and trivial interests. Although Hahn depicted Eudoxia as a strong and benevolent female ruler, she also criticized her for trying to control the church.

Hahn reappropriated nineteenth-century literary topoi that originally targeted the Mediterranean or Catholicism and instead ascribed them to Caesaropapism. In her foreword, she argued: "Rome, the center of the spiritual world, should remain untouched by the influence of a vain throne […] And because the church has a human element […] it needs to live in a free state, which is not under the control of emperors and kings."[39] According to Hahn, it had been those emperors and kings who caused the decay of the Eastern church. Decadence, corruption, and immorality were not caused by the Catholic Church but by the Byzantine rulers who wanted to control it. It was not an overly fanatic piety that had caused the downfall of Constantinople but a mingling of the state in ecclesiastical affairs. "Constantinople has fallen to it [the human element] from the beginning. […] From this came heresy and schism, the separation of the Greek church from Rome, the deadliest of all spiritual and moral weaknesses, and finally, the downfall of a Christian Empire – before the Turkish crescent."[40] Ingeniously, Hahn performed a narrational sleight of hand. Previously, many historical novelists had used Byzantinism to attack nineteenth-century Catholicism, fearing its leverage in state politics and hence, proposing an increased

38 Deno J. Geanakoplos, "Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: A Reconsideration of The Problem of Caesaropapism," *Church History* 34, no. 4 (December 1965): 381, 399, https://doi.org/10.2307/3163118.

39 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin,* 1: V. My translation.

40 Hahn-Hahn*, Eudoxia, die Kaiserin,* 1: V. My translation.

secularization. In *Eudoxia*, however, neither Catholicism, femininity, nor Mediterranean culture were to blame, but Caesaropapist politics.

In Hahn's novel, it was the state that tried to merge the two spheres. The fault did not lie with the clergy but with the secular rulers. Implicitly, this reverse criticism aimed at the Protestant and secular states. Here, religion was often subordinate to civic power. Hahn argued that the Christian religion ought to be independent and able to blossom freely. The place for such independence was in neither Germany nor Constantinople but in Rome: "Since the Christian church had existed, Rome was its free state. Those who tried to steal its scepter have fallen one after the other, and Rome has risen again and again, like the sun."[41] Considering that the novelist was writing in 1866, she was not merely defending Catholic rights around Europe but its territorial existence. At this time, the territorial Papal State feared for its life and power because of an advancing national-liberal Italian unification movement. The same year, Italy's ally, Protestant Prussia had decisively defeated the Austrian (Catholic) army at Sadowa/Königgrätz. The fate of the Catholic faith was insecure. Hahn used the story of Eudoxia and Chrysostom to give her version of the conflict. In her eyes, both in nineteenth-century Europe and medieval Byzantium, the cause of society's problems lay in the state taking control of the church. The novel *Eudoxia* ought to show the problems that would arise if liberal, nationalist movements in Italy and Germany took territorial control over formerly ecclesiastic domains.

Gunild's Gothic Arianism – A Slave Antithesis

Although the title of Hahn's novel alludes to the pivotal role of Empress Eudoxia, another character shares the prominent position. Gunild, the daughter of the leader of the Germanic Goths, arrives at the Byzantine court after the first introductory chapters. During the transition from the fourth to the fifth century, a part of the Goths had joined the empire and now fought against their compatriots in the name of the emperor. Hahn used this historical disposition to insert some Germanic elements into her story of the Mediterranean.

In the book, Gunild is described as a "young, beautiful girl with a proud posture" who spoke Greek with "a foreign accent."[42] Hahn thus indicated

41 Hahn-Hahn, 1: VI. My translation.
42 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin,* 1:96. My translation.

the superior character, the freedom-loving spirit, and the foreignness to anything Mediterranean personified by the Gothic woman. Welcomed by Eudoxia, Gunild is accepted at the Byzantine court although she does not feel at home in the southern, decadent halls. When the empress asks what Gunild desires, "she exclaims: 'My people and my freedom!' 'Little barbarian!' smiled Eudoxia. 'O let me go!' begged Gunild; […] let me go to my home to see the woody shores of the Danube!"[43] Hahn's Gothic princess acts as a foreign element at the Byzantine court. She neither dabbles in aristocratic intrigues nor does she enjoy the luxurious comfort of the Constantinopolitan metropole. Rather, she prefers the nature of her home country and the company of straightforward Goths. For readers familiar with the myth of the freedom-loving, honest German, Hahn's deployment of this nineteenth-century stereotype becomes immediately apparent.[44] The author availed herself of the history of the Goths to insert a figure into a Mediterranean scenario with whom a German readership ought to identify. By doing so, she sought to render Byzantine lore more relatable to her mainly German audience.

In the novel, court culture and decadence are not the only estrangements Gunild encounters. She is also of a different creed. When the Gothic princess explores the Byzantine capital, she meets Olympia. Olympia is a noblewoman who had left aristocratic circles to open a hospital where she works piously to help the sick and wounded. The two virtuous women understand each other from the start but suddenly Olympia is stunned. She says: "You are a Goth….hence an Arian?' Gunild answers proudly: 'Goth and Arian."[45] At the beginning of the fifth century, the Goths indeed followed a denomination different from the Constantinopolitan Church.[46] In the case of Hahn's novel, Arianism becomes an analogy for Protestantism, while a Gothic ethnicity is used as a symbol of German nationality. The dogma of the Constantinopolitan Church, instead, is repeatedly described as "Catholic". Hence, Hahn played with religious-geographical images familiar to the reader. An Arian Goth from the north could be compared to the Protestant north, whereas Mediterranean Byzantium equaled nineteenth-century southern Catholicism with its center in Rome. As such,

43 Hahn-Hahn, 1:96. My translation.

44 Rainer Kipper, *Der Germanenmythos im deutschen Kaiserreich: Formen und Funktionen historischer Selbstthematisierung*, Formen der Erinnerung, Bd. 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 50.

45 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin*, 1:106. My translation.

46 Mirón Jurík, "Gothic Christians in Constantinople: The Arians," *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 26, no. 1 (2021): 81–93.

Hahn appropriated Mediterranean history for her audience, writing German participation into a southern past.

In the book, the two ethnoreligious identities, Ariano-Gothic and Constantinopolitan-Byzantine are shown as stark contrasts. Gothic Arianism is supposedly freedom-loving and barbarian, while the Catholic Mediterranean society functions in a more ordered and civilized way. For the book's second protagonist, Gunild, this opposition entails multiple disadvantages. Already Olympia, the laudable noblewoman who serves the poor, recoils because of Gunild's different religious believes. Again and again, the Gothic princess faces animosity because of her foreign beliefs. Finally, Empress Eudoxia decides to convert the Arian girl. Gunild, however, is initially hostile towards these attempts, being a proud and resolute Arian Goth. Gunild's Arianism and Eudoxia's Catholicism appear as opposites. While the Constantinopolitan Church adopts the position of the dominant, centrist, and true religion, Germanic Arianism performs as its renegade opposition. The ensuing conflict proposes, next to the rift between Caesaropapist empress and patriarch, a second narrative arc. Not only does there exist a problematic contrast between a controlling empire and a freedom-seeking religion but also between a Constantinopolitan Church and Arianism, hence Catholicism and Protestantism.

Hahn aimed to overcome these oppositions by ending her novel with a fitting synthesis. In her conclusion, in fact, the writer dissolved both the tension between the Catholic thesis and the Arian antithesis and the antagonism between Caesaropapist state and the independent church in two different ways. This rhetorical act mattered to the author since it was also a message for her nineteenth-century audience.

Conversion and an Independent Church – A pro-Catholic Synthesis

Close to the end of the first volume of *Eudoxia*, Gunild is in despair. Her father, the Gothic leader Gainas, has rebelled against the emperor, paying with his head. Not only has Gunild lost her father, but she has also realized that what he told her might not be true, "that the Goth had succumbed to the same sins and taken the same fall as the Greek [Eutrop], that neither his Arianism nor his Gothic blood asserted perfection – and with quiet despair, she asked: What can I love? – what should I honor?"[47] Because her father, her moral guide, has given into ambition and treachery himself, Gunild

47 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin,* 1:208–9. My translation.

starts to question her former religious compass and ethnic identity. Gainas' death disproves the superiority of Gothic ethnicity and Arianism (or German race and Protestantism), in which Gunild has believed.

Implicitly, Hahn demanded of her readers that they question their religious identity as Gunild had done. Her readers should, she believed, reflect on their denominational and racial self-understanding. Needless to say, Hahn directed this message mainly toward German Protestants. Defending the Catholic Church, Hahn eschewed any worldview in which the latter was subordinate to the former. Not only did she criticize the idea of northern Protestantism being superior, but she also attacked the concept of ethnoreligions as mixed forms of identity as a whole. Gainas, the novel's main propagator of such a bifurcated identity, dies because of his mistakes, delegitimizing his worldview. By describing Gunild's ensuing thoughts, Hahn countered nineteenth-century Protestant polemics which claimed a supposed intricate connection between Lutheran values and German ethnicity. In her view, being of Gothic or German blood had nothing to do with being of Arian or Protestant faith. A separation of denomination and ethnic thinking allowed for an identity that was simultaneously German and Catholic, hence Hahn's own self-understanding.

After a prolonged period of thinking, Gunild finally gives in and converts to Catholicism. She is filled with happiness because she has found "true" religion. Even the somewhat immoral agents and bureaucrats at the Byzantine court congratulate her on her conversion. All antagonisms of the book stop briefly and Gunild's conversion catalyzes a general synthesis, a premature happy ending. The reader ought to comprehend the ontological, ubiquitous bliss that stems from the general reconciliation between a Christian and the Catholic Church. Hahn proposed, thus, conversion to Catholicism as the ultimate bridge between former opposites. Her solution to the quarrels of the *Kulturkampf* rested in accepting the Roman Church as the right shepherd. Easy to discern, this chapter of *Eudoxia* functioned as an appeal to her compatriots to quit Protestantism for its Catholic Other. In this way, according to the author, both the shortcomings of Gothic Arianism and Constantinopolitan Byzantine society are resolved in the figure of Gunild. As the main character and Hahn's alter ego, she is forgiven by converting to Catholicism and vanquishes Byzantine effeminacy through her Gothic character. The author claimed a similar identity for herself, converting as a German to Catholicism. Logically, her conclusion insinuated that nineteenth-century Germans converting to the Roman belief would remedy both the former's as well as the latter's mistakes and concomitantly resolve the *Kulturkampf*.

However, the narrative of the book does not end on this joyful note. On the contrary, the plot evolves into a tragedy. Gunild has not converted to Catholicism because of the promises of Eudoxia, trying to lure her with luxury and civilization. Instead, she adheres to the teachings of Chrysostom who prefers reticence and poverty. This development, among many others, enrages the empress, who sees her favorite slip through her fingers, changing side in the struggle between church and state. The fact that Gunild starts to criticize the empress's own piety incenses Eudoxia even further. For example, the Gothic princess questions her benefactor's obsession with relics. Previously, to bolster her popularity among the people, Eudoxia has built new sanctuaries where she exhibits the bones of famous saints. For Gunild, this action is nothing but a farce to trick the gullible people. When she reproaches Eudoxia, the latter argues that an empress and a girl have very different needs in religion. The empress maintains that although relics might not be the purest form of honoring God, they are essential to appease the population.[48]

Disenchanted by Eudoxia's power-orientated, feigned piety, Gunild leaves the empress's court for good. The final chapters of the novel describe the escalation between state and church, ruler and patriarch. At the end of the book, the empress's troops storm the Hagia Sophia to imprison the patriarch and his followers for high treason. In the novel, it is clear that Chrysostom did not commit such a crime. Nevertheless, his adherents and disciples, including Gunild, are tortured to force them to defame their teacher. Gunild must endure immense pain but does not give in. Finally, she dies. When Eudoxia hears what has happened, she cries out, recognizing her mistake.[49]

According to Hahn, the real reason behind the so-called *Kulturkampf* did not stem from an opposition between Catholicism and Protestantism but Caesaropapism and the free church. Gunild's conversion had overcome the rift between Arianism/Protestantism and the Constantinopolitan/Catholic Church and brought about a utilitarian harmony. However, because of the empress's – hence the state's – insistence on controlling the church by getting rid of its rebellious patriarch, Eudoxia causes the death of the Gothic princess. As a message to her audience, Hahn showed how an aggressive secular state trying to control the church caused more damage than a conflict between Germanic Protestantism and Mediterranean Catholicism

48 Ida Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin. Ein Zeitgemälde aus dem fünften Jahrhundert*, vol. 2 (Mainz: Verlag von Franz Kirchelm, 1866), 135.

49 Hahn-Hahn, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin,* 2:262.

ever could. Implicitly, the author accused the German state agents of not acting because of true adherence to Protestant ideals but rather because of a Caesaropapist will to impure power.

Conclusion

With her novel, Ida Hahn-Hahn told two stories. The first is a story with a happy ending. Arian Goths, represented by Gunild, and Byzantine Catholicism laid their differences aside after the former had realized its errors. Mediterranean civilization and northern freedom could enter a fecund unity and achieve a happy ending. The second story, however, is a tragedy. Gunild became the victim of a struggle between state and church. Because of her desire to rule the church as well as her empire, the ambitious Eudoxia, the incarnation of Caesaropapism, appeared as the clear aggressor. In Hahn's perspective, the Byzantine church under Chrysostom was right to defend itself against the encroaching secular power of the empress. Finally, Eudoxia, who had been misled by her egocentric, greedy Byzantine courtiers, understands her errors. Hahn's Byzantine *Kulturkampf* is thus the consequence of human sin and a misunderstanding between church and state.

Through a narrational trick, the writer transmitted her version of nineteenth-century religious strife between Christian denominations. Hahn did not just publish a novel on Byzantine history, merely meant to entertain her readership, but rather gave a polemical as well as sophisticated opinion on current religious and political issues. With an evident proselytizing intention, the author underlined the importance of conversion to Catholicism. By narrating Gunild's story, she endeavored to prove that Germanic ethnicity and Mediterranean Christianity were indeed compatible. Allegedly, the true origin of religious conflict and social problems lay not in the foundations of Christianity but in the machinations of Caesaropapism. All the shortcomings of the church, according to the narrative, stem from this earthly, civic invasion into ecclesiastical matters. According to Hahn, it was not the Catholic Church infiltrating the nation-state but the state controlling the church which caused problems in both spheres. A liberal narrative of secularization against religion was refuted and reversed, with Hahn pleading for separation of state and church in the name of the latter. It was not the demand for secularization that had changed, only the perpetrator.

In the end, *Eudoxia, die Kaiserin* had an autobiographical undertone. Gunild's development in the book stemmed partly from Hahn's own expe-

riences in real life. She herself had converted to Catholicism after the death of an important male figure in her life. Just as Hahn had changed denomination after the death of her partner Bystram, so did Gunild after the death of her father. It seems plausible that many thoughts and words ascribed to Gunild were, in fact, Hahn's personal feelings and ideas. By availing herself of Byzantine lore, the German novelist attempted to express the feeling of a personality caught between Protestantism and Catholicism, state and church, and various concepts of femininity. She drew the picture of two historical women who possessed the power to choose between religions, and between state and church. Hahn instrumentalized Mediterranean historical fiction to depict her own time, her political opinions, her emotions, her religious worldview, and her ideal of womanhood. By drawing on an example of Byzantine and Gothic princesses of the fifth century, she described her political opinions as well as personal social position in the nineteenth century. Through the voices of Eudoxia and Gunild, Hahn was able to provide an idea of what it meant to live as a female Catholic convert in the prelude to the menacingly looming *Kulturkampf*.

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