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Images of Byzantine Adolescents

Byzantine teen-agers are virtually invisible. Their bones are noted – though rarely discussed – in archaeological excavations of burial grounds, but they are hard to track in the written sources,¹ and they have been ignored in discussions of Byzantine imagery: unlike women and children, no one has ever even looked for the portrayal of Byzantine adolescents in the visual evidence.² Portraits of Byzantine teen-agers are, however, important to find and to evaluate, not just because no one has ever done this, but because they illuminate an area of Byzantine social history that has been neglected and is in itself significant. How Byzantine authors represented the transition and transformation of the Byzantine male or female across his or her lifetime is beginning to be studied, but how that transition and transformation was represented visually is even more important to understand, because images provide a data set produced by a different community than the mostly urban and mostly elite males who provide the bulk of textual evidence preserved from the Byzantine empire, and for a much broader constituency. We mostly hear the voices of a small and select group of Byzantines; images, in contrast, allow us to see with everyone in Byzantium who had not lost their sight. While we have not learned (and can never learn) to see in the same way as a Byzantine did, looking at portrayals of adolescents nonetheless adds valuable new layers of information, from different social and cultural perspectives, to the evidence about the Byzantine life course – how people, from ordinary peasants to the imperial family, experienced growing up – provided by words.

The Byzantine life course itself has only recently received scholarly attention. In a PhD thesis awarded in 2012, Eve Davies looked at how the Byzantines described and valued infancy, youth, maturity and old age; and she compared and contrasted

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the ways that male and female experiences of childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age were discussed. Her focus was on the archaeological and textual evidence for family roles across the life courses of both men and women from late antiquity until the thirteenth century.

Davies’ key findings about Byzantine adolescents may be summarised as follows. Byzantine authors saw adolescence somewhat differently than we do, though then as now the potential emotional and physical eruptions of male adolescents were frequently noted, decried, and (often) later forgiven as youthful indiscretions. The idea of the ‘teenager’, however, is not found; the Byzantines seem to have viewed ‘youth’ as beginning roughly around the age of 12 or 13 (for girls) or 14 or 15 (for boys) and ending, at least for males, around the age of 25. As this indicates, the ways that Byzantine authors discussed ‘youth’ were gendered. Normally, they described female youth in terms of beauty, with marriage the signal marker of transition from youth to maturity. Male youth, in contrast, was described in terms of activity, physical strength, and socialisation. When the age of adolescents is specifically recorded (which is not common), there are no years that are especially prominent for males; for females, however, virtually the only age mentioned is 12, which was apparently the symbolic turning point for female sexual awakening: Mary of Egypt, for example, was 12 when she rejected her family to run riot in Alexandria. In short, a series of distinctive textual conventions cluster around descriptions of both male and female adolescence.

Davies was not able to look at how the visual evidence from Byzantium intersects with the written and archaeological record, and, as it happens, the distinctive nature of adolescence noted in Byzantine written sources is only partially seen in Byzantine visual sources. How and why this is the case, and what this tells us about the significance of the Byzantine experience of, and social response to, adolescence, are the subjects of this chapter.

The first thing to be said is that the Byzantine painters could and did clearly distinguish between various stages of the life course trajectory, sometimes quite intentionally. The scene of Gregory’s burial in the copy of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzos in Paris (ca 880), for example, surrounds the dead Gregory with figures representing the three ages of, in this case, man: a beardless youth lowers the saint’s feet into the sarcophagus; a bearded middle-age man lowers his head; and an elderly priest, with grey hair and beard, presides (fig. 1).

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4 Davies, ‘Womb to the tomb’ 91–131.
6 Paris, BNF, gr. 452r. For discussion of this image, see L. Brubaker, Vision and meaning in ninth-century Byzantium: Image as exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus in Paris. Cambridge
displayed, almost all other facets of the Byzantine life course also find visual expression. Infants appear in representations of the Nativity, as well as in other examples such as the votive images at Hagios Demetrios; small children are shown in many representations of the Crossing of the Red Sea, the toddler Benjamin is depicted in some pictorial sequences of Joseph’s life, and a young boy (perhaps intended to represent the brother of Jesus) also occurs in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts. Young men – for example Joseph before his sale to Potiphar – and young women such as Jairos’s daughter appear regularly, though less frequently than mature adults of both sexes, who are visualised with specific attributes: the males bearded to signify maturity and the females veiled to signal matronly modesty. Old men are distinguished by their grey hair and beards; only old women do not appear in the Byzantine visual record.

But although painters could clearly distinguish between the different stages of the life course, they did not always do so: in a ninth-century miniature illustrating the life of St Basil (fig. 2), for example, the child St Basil hiding in a cave with his parents is shown as an adult, though elsewhere in this manuscript the painter portrays children, and elsewhere on the same page the miniaturist has been happy to portray Basil as a youth, an adult, and as an old man. There are two key points to take from this example. First, what we might see as an issue of verisimilitude – this is the image selected to represent Basil’s childhood and family, so he should


9 Both found, for example, in the Paris Gregory (Paris.gr.510, ff.69v, 143r): Brubaker, Vision and meaning, figs 12, 19.

10 For beards, see I. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, The Portraits of Basil I in Paris gr. 510. JÖB 27 (1978) 19-24; for veiling, see Meyer, An obscure portrait, 120: ‘According to Byzantine protocol, older or married women are depicted with head coverings and maidens are not’.

11 See, e.g., representations of the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel: for ninth-century examples, Brubaker, Vision and meaning, figs 11, 44. With the occasional exception of Mary of Egypt, old women were not represented until the late Byzantine period, but older women were sometimes distinguished from younger ones, as in examples of the Nativity where the older midwife is helped by a younger assistant: see Meyer, An obscure portrait, 119–20, 218. I thank Tony Eastmond for discussion on this point.

12 Paris, BNF, gr.510, f.104r: Brubaker, Vision and meaning 137–41, fig. 17 (as in n. 6).
be represented as a child – was not necessarily relevant to the Byzantines. The painter or patron chose whether or not to depict someone as a child, an adult, or aged; so (and this is the second key point) when this decision resulted in a portrait that seems to us to contradict the actual age that we know the person portrayed was, we should not assume, as scholars sometimes do, that the painter was inept, or that the Byzantines saw children as miniature adults. We need instead to ask why the painter made this choice. In this case, the child-adult Basil is probably a visual reference to his mature behaviour even as a child (the puer senex trope), which is carefully elucidated in the accompanying text, Gregory of Nazianzos’ funeral oration to Basil.¹³ The important issue for us here, however, is that depictions of individuals at any given stage of their life cycle represents a choice based on criteria other than ‘naturalism’: that there are images of old men but not of old women does not mean that no Byzantine women grew old,¹⁴ but that old men were important to depict while old women were not. That social conventions, conscious or subconscious, underpinned this decision needs to be recognised, and we will return to this issue at a later stage in this chapter.

A second qualification that we need to consider is the impact of status on representations of Byzantine men and women. The presence or absence of a beard is a key distinguishing mark between adolescent and adult males in Byzantine imagery, but it is also a sign of status.¹⁵ In imperial portraits after the mid-seventh century, for example, the junior emperor is portrayed as beardless no matter what his age, in contrast to the bearded senior emperor.¹⁶ Similarly, the presence or absence of head covering can distinguish adolescent and adult females in Byzantine representations, but head covering too is a sign of status. Prostitutes and, often, female servants, whatever their actual age, are often depicted without veils.¹⁷ Because most generic depic-

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¹³ PG 36, 509, 512 (Eng.trans. in NPNF 7, 399). On the puer senex trope in Byzantium, see DAVIES, From womb to the tomb, 81–82.

¹⁴ See note 11 above.

¹⁵ Lack of facial hair may also, of course, signal that the male portrayed is a eunuch, but context usually allows us to age the man appropriately: see, e.g., the eunuch patriarch Ignatios portrayed in a ninth-century mosaic at Hagia Sophia, and the eunuch Leo shown gifting his bible to the Virgin Mary in the Leo Bible: for the mosaic, see C. MANGO – E. J. W. HAWKINS, The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul. The Church Fathers in the North Tymanum. DOP 26 (1972) 3-41, at 9–11, fig. 12; for the manuscript (Vat.reg.gr.1, f. 2v) see S. DUFRENNE – P. CANART, Die Bibel des Patricius Leo. Codex Reginensis Graecus IB. (Codices Vaticanis Selecti 75). Vatican City 1988.

¹⁶ See KALAVREZOU, Portraits of Basil I; and note that on the coins minted during the period when the empress Eirene was in control of the empire her son Constantine VI, though an adult, was portrayed without a beard (see note 48 below), as had been Heraklonas Constantine when Martina was evidently the power behind the throne (see note 37 below). Similarly, very young co-emperors were often depicted as youths rather than the small children they actually were, as with Constantine, toddler son of Michael VII Doukas, on the Royal Crown of Hungary: E. KOVÁCS – Z. LOVAG, The Hungarian crown and other regalia. Budapest 1980, 34.

¹⁷ See MEYER, An obscure portrait, 134–53 (female servants), 182–200 (prostitutes), and 275–78 (hair).
tions of figures who appear to be Byzantine youths – men without beards; women with uncovered heads – also represent workers in the field or servants, male or female, it is hard to determine whether the beardless males shown (say) pruning vines, holding washing implements or running errands, and the female servants portrayed without veils, are actually meant to represent young men and women or are beardless and veil-less simply to indicate their lesser status. I will therefore focus on portraits of identifiable adolescents for the remainder of this chapter, which, sadly, effectively obliges us to look at saints (like St Basil), aristocrats, and the imperial family. This means that the run of portraits we are about to survey overlaps to a considerable extent with the evidence of the written sources in that the images are urban productions associated, in many cases, with the court or with a courtly milieu. I will, however, open out the data set at the end of the chapter, and draw some conclusions applicable to a larger and less restricted viewing audience.

The following several paragraphs present a gallery of portraits, arranged chronologically by the age of the youth portrayed. Even this brief survey illuminates the issues that portraits of Byzantine youth require us to confront.

The frontispiece of the Paris Gregory (Paris, BNF gr.510, f.Br), dated to ca 880, portrays the (eventual) emperor Alexander at around age 10 (fig. 3), in a portrait quite distinct from his mosaic portrait in the north gallery at Hagia Sophia where, at age 23 or 24, he wears the beard of maturity as well as imperial vestments. A slightly older male youth appears in a miniature in the copy of Dionysios the Areopagite in the Louvre, which depicts Manuel II Palaiologos and his wife Helena with their three children, the eldest of whom, John, was born in 1392, and was therefore 11, 12 or 13 when the family portrait miniature was painted between 1403 and 1405 (fig.

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18 I know of no study dedicated to depictions of Byzantine male servants, but a representative sampling of images may be found in: Everyday life in Byzantium, ed. D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi. Athens 2002. Servants also often attend rulers in later Byzantine images (e.g. a servant may hold a basin jug in images of Pilate washing his hands after the condemnation of Christ), and these men are virtually always shown without beards.

19 I have made no attempt to cluster images in one century, or even one period: there is not enough preserved material to do this effectively, and I am not sure that portrayals of adolescents changed significantly between the 4th and the 14th century. We will return to this issue at the close of the chapter. Note too that many of my examples come from manuscripts. This is due simply to the fact that in Byzantium manuscripts had a greater range of images than other media. Because of arguments about its date, I have omitted the Vatican epithalamion (Vat.gr.1851) from this overview, though we will return to its miniatures at the end of this chapter: on the manuscript, see most recently C. Hennessy, A child bride and her representation in the Vatican Epithalamion, cod. gr. 1851. BMGS 30 (2006) 115–150.

20 Brubaker, Vision and meaning, fig. 2.

4). For another 12-year-old, we need only look at images of Christ in the temple, as for example in the Paris Gregory again (f.165r), which presents an extended version of this episode that portrays Christ three times (fig. 5): once hurrying to Jerusalem, once preaching in the synagogue, and finally reunited with his anxious parents. For a 12-year-old female, we may look to images of the Virgin Mary when she is betrothed to Joseph in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts (fig. 6). A 13- (or possibly 16-) year-old Alexios is portrayed in a mosaic in the south-west gallery of Hagia Sophia to the side of his parents John II Komnenos and Eirene (fig. 5 in Hennessy article); Alexios was born in 1106, and was named co-emperor in 1119, aged 13; my belief is that the mosaic commemorates his elevation, but the mosaic is usually dated to 1122, in which case he is 16 in this image. The Paris Gregory – on the same page as we have just seen Alexander at 10 – also portrays his elder brother Leo VI, born in 866, at around age 14 (fig. 3). All of these youths in their early teens are distinguished from both younger children and adults by their height (with children shorter and adults taller than the youths portrayed) and their slight builds, which usually contrast with the slightly chubbier children and the somewhat stockier adults.

Aside from the Virgin, the examples we have seen thus far have all been male, but the Lincoln College typikon (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lincoln College, f. 11r), in a miniature dated around the year 1300, introduces another female, with Theodoule, the foundress of the monastery for which this is the typikon, leading her daughter Euphrosyne (born 1285/6), who took over the monastery at her mother’s death. Euphrosyne is aged about 16 in this portrait (fig. 7). For the end of the teen-age decade, the Paris Gregory, source of many of our examples, depicts St Basil as a youth aged 18 to 20 with his good friend Gregory studying in Athens (fig. 2). The faces are abraded, but the figure on the left has clearly grown a beard to indicate his increased maturity; it contrasts with the grey beard of the wise old philosopher who teaches the pair. The significance of the beard as a sign of mature authority may be underlined by the Trier ivory, which has recently been interpreted as a depiction of the translation of relics to, and dedication of, Hagia Euphemia in 796 by Constantine VI and his

23 BRUBAKER, Vision and meaning, fig. 21.
24 BAV gr.1162, f.100r and Paris, BNF gr.1208, f.135r. The best discussion of this sequence of images appears in K. LINARDOU, Reading two Byzantine illustrated books: the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts (Vaticanus graecus 1162 and Parisinus graecus 1208) and their illustration, unpub. PhD dissertation. University of Birmingham 2004, 92 – 118, for this image figs 81–82; see also her The couch of Solomon, a monk, a Byzantine lady and the Song of Songs, in: The church and Mary (Studies in church history 39), ed. R. Swanson. Suffolk 2004, 73 – 85, which deals with one miniature in this sequence. Further discussion of these manuscripts, with additional bibliography, appears below.
25 His details are tracked in DOC 4, 244.
26 So HENNESSY, Images of children 160.
mother Eirene:²⁸ if this is correct, it portrays Constantine VI (born 771) beardless at 25. This would be unusual, but given the relationship between Constantine and his mother, and her apparent attempts to share the throne – which she would succeed in taking a year later after Constantine was blinded – it is perhaps not surprising. Certainly we see the same suppression of Constantine’s authority on the coin issues of the same year, which suggests that Eirene and her supporters had control of the mints.²⁹

Coins are, in fact, interesting for our purposes, for three reasons. First, coins – and particularly low denomination coins – often circulated widely. They were thus viewed, or had the potential to be viewed, by a wide swath of the Byzantine populace, and had legal standing, so any representations on them had specific requirements: images of the emperor(s) validated the worth of the coinage. Though the Byzantines never tell us this, the function of coinage requires their ornamentation to be sufficiently conservative that when (and if) people actually looked closely at their money they would not distrust the coins. We are probably safe to assume, therefore, that the images we find on coins would be broadly acceptable to the Byzantine populace, and represent conventional images. In our case, that means that when we see adolescents represented on coins, they are likely to show us portraits of youths that the Byzantines accepted as suitable and appropriate.

Coins are also interesting to us here because they could be used to convey particular messages from the emperor or empress to his or her people. Whether or not those people paid any attention is a moot point; all the same, we may regard images of adolescents on Byzantine coins as representing what was thought to be a good public face of imperial youth.

The third reason coins provide interesting evidence for understanding Byzantine teenagers is perhaps the most important one: during the seventh century, and (although less vividly) into the eighth, some coin sequences visualise the aging process across adolescence. The Herakleian house provides particularly good examples, well exemplified in the coins of Herakleios’ grandson Constans II, who was born in November 630, named co-emperor in 641, and ruled as sole or senior emperor from 641/2 until 668. We can track his maturation in a series of coins portraying him at age 11 to 15, when he is shown without a beard (fig. 8);³⁰ at age 17, when he wears

²⁹ See note 16 above.
³⁰ DOC 3, 420–421, pl. XXIV, 1a-4b (minted 641–646). I illustrate this progression with coins from the Whitting Collection held at the Barber Institute of Fine Art, Birmingham, and am extremely grateful to Dr Rebecca Darley and Dr Jonathan Jarrett for their assistance in location the coins and obtaining photographs of them; because the Barber coins are not yet catalogued, I cite the relevant sections of the Dumbarton Oaks catalogue.
a short beard, often, as here, simply indicated by a row of dots (fig. 9); at age 18 to 19, with a short but more fully developed beard (fig. 10); at age 20 to 21, with – on many but not all coins – a slightly longer beard (fig. 11); and from age 21 onward, with a full beard and moustache (and often with, from 654, his son Constantine IV, proclaimed co-emperor in that year, aged 4: fig. 12). The most notable development is, clearly, Constans’ beard, which becomes progressively more prominent until, at the age of 21 – four years before the ‘legal’ year of male adulthood in Roman law – it becomes the dominant feature of his portrait, thus earning him the nickname *pogonatos* (the bearded one).

Other examples can be adduced from the numismatic evidence, though they rarely visualise the stages of the life course as graphically as the coins of Constans II. But the coins of Constans II’s grandfather, Heraclius (610–641), anticipate the sequence, with Heraclius Constantine (son of Heraclius and father of Constans II, born in 612 and crowned in 613) shown small on the early coins, then gradually becoming larger and, finally, bearded; his younger brother, Heraclonas (born of Heraclius’ second wife, Martina, in 626 and named augustus at age 12), remained small and beardless, both because he was the junior co-emperor and because he was only 15 when Heraclius died and he and his mother were, shortly thereafter, exiled. And coins minted toward the end of Constans II’s reign show Constantine IV growing older, accompanied, between 659–668, by his younger brothers Heraclius and Tiberios, with the ages of the three sons clearly differentiated by their size. During

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31 *DOC* 3, 422, pl. XXIV, 5c (minted 647).
32 *DOC* 3, 423, pl. XXIV, 13c (minted 648/9).
33 *DOC* 3, 424, pl. XXIV, 16a, 17b (minted 650/1).
34 *DOC* 3, 425–27, pl. XXIV, 19a–30a (minted 651–659).
35 In fact, his grandfather, Heraclius, was often depicted on coins with an equally impressive beard and moustache: see, e.g., *DOC* 2, pl. VIII, 26e and 27 (both minted 629–631 in Constantinople, when Heraclius was about 55).
36 In addition to the coins cited in the following paragraph, Maurice’s son Theodosius – born in 583 or 585, named augustus in 590 and killed in 602 (*PLRE* 3, 1293–94) – appears on coins in 591/2, when he was not yet an adolescent (*ibid.*, 1294), and on a series of coins that are, sadly, of indeterminate date (*DOC* 1, 373–76), but the coins are too badly abraded to allow us to speculate about his appearance.
37 On this extremely complicated sequence of coins, see *DOC* 2, 216–383, 389–401. During the few months that Heraclonas remained on the throne after his father’s death, he remained beardless on the coins, perhaps because of his age, or perhaps because of his mother’s (apparently unofficial) regency. In this respect, these coins anticipate some of those minted during the reign of Constantine VI and Eirene (on which see notes 16 above and 48 below).
38 See, e.g., *DOC* 2, 434–35, pl. XXV, 40c, 41d, 42e, 43b (minted 663–668). The three brothers remained on the coinage after the death of Constans II in 668, until Constantine IV deposed his brothers in 681 to clear the way for his own son, Justinian II; because it is uncertain when Heraclius and Tiberios were born, however, their ages on the coinage are equally unclear and I have therefore not considered them here: see *PmbZ* I/2, Nr. 2556 and I/5, Nr. 8484; for the coins, see e.g. *DOC* 2, 525–29, pls XXXII-XXXIII, 1c-10 g, 239–271.
his first reign, the coinage of Constantine IV’s son, Justinian II (685–695), followed
the pattern established by his grandfather (Constans II): at 16, he appears beardless;
at 17 or 18, his beard is formed of small dots; at 18 or 19 his beard, though still short,
is more fully developed; and by the last years of his first reign – famously also sig-
alled by the introduction of Christ on the gold coinage – he wears a full beard.³⁹

After the demise of the Herakleian dynasty, the importance of the beard stops
being primarily a signifier of maturity and becomes instead an indication of rank:
under the Isaurians, beginning with Leo III (717–741), junior emperors on coins
are shown without beards, no matter what their age, and the senior emperor is beard-
ed, as are the Isaurian ancestors who appear on the reverse of coins from the reign of
Leo III’s son Constantine V (741–775) onward.⁴⁰ On Leo III’s gold coins, Constantine
V appears, aged 2, as soon as he was named augustus in 720, and Philip Grierson
tracks his increasing maturity on coins minted from 720 (‘head very small, his hair
not covering his ears’: fig. 13);⁴¹ to the years 720–725, when Constantine V was be-
tween 2 and 7 (‘head slightly larger and older, with longer hair’: fig. 14);⁴² to 725–
732, when he was 7 to 14 (‘head still larger’),⁴³ through the rest of Leo III’s reign,
732–741, by which time Constantine V was between 14 and 22 (‘bust more mature’:
fig. 15).⁴⁴ The key developments here are, as Grierson noted, the size of the head,
which becomes more or less the same size as Leo III’s only in the coins minted
when Constantine was between 14 and 22; hair length; and, though Grierson does
not mention this, facial shape: Constantine V acquires the almost pointed chin of
his father only in the latest coins of this sequence. At this point, perhaps to indicate
dynastic unity, the portraits of Leo III and Constantine V are virtually indistin-
guishable except for the small beard worn by Leo.

Coin portraits of Constantine V’s son, Leo IV (born 749 and named co-ruler in
751), follow a similar pattern: his round face with short hair gradually elongates
and the hair lengthens until he closely resembles his father, and, on the reverse,
his grandfather.⁴⁵ This changed, however, when Leo IV became senior emperor in
775, and named his own son, Constantine VI, augustus in 776. Constantine VI was
then 5, and – following the precedent of the coins of Leo III and Constantine V –
one would expect to see the child’s face and hair lengthen as he grew. This does
not happen. Constantine VI appears on his father’s gold coinage immediately after
his elevation, but is distinguished from him only by his lack of facial hair (fig. 16):

³⁹ DOC 2, 568–609, pls XXXVII–XXXIX. During his second reign (705–711) Justinian II sometimes ap-
ppears with his son Tiberios, but he had not yet reached his teens when he was killed following the
downfall of his father: see DOC 2, 644–63.
⁴⁰ Coins and discussion in DOC 3, 225–324, pls I-IX.
⁴¹ DOC 3, 242, pl. I, 3a, 3e.1, 3e.3.
⁴² DOC 3, 243, pl. I, 4a, 4c-f.
⁴³ DOC 3, 244, pl. I, 5.2–5.10.
⁴⁵ DOC 3, 299–301, pl. VIII.
we never see Constantine VI as a child on the coins.\textsuperscript{46} It is possible that this was due to Leo IV’s ill health, or to his apparent wish to ensure the succession of his son rather than of his brothers,\textsuperscript{47} either of which may have urged that dynastic succession was stressed above any indication of his heir-designate’s youth. In fact, Constantine VI’s portrait changed remarkably little across the 20 years he appeared on coins: after his father’s death in 780, when Constantine VI was 9, he appeared, beardless, with his mother, the regent empress Eirene, and he remained beardless on the gold coinage until his deposition in 797 (fig. 17), when he was 26.\textsuperscript{48}

Political circumstances may have prompted Constantine VI’s extended numismatic youth, but the absence of a portrait sequence visualising his adolescent growth and increasing maturity continued under Nikephoros I, whose son Staurakios joined him on coins after he was named augustus in 803, aged 10 or 12, and remained there until Nikephoros’ death in battle in 811, but whose features never varied from the beardless but mature facial type that had previously typified rulers in their late teens.\textsuperscript{49} The same is true of Theophylact, son of the emperor Michael I, who ruled with his father from 811 to 813, aged 8 to 10;\textsuperscript{50} and it is also true of Smbat/Constantine, born sometime between 800 and 810, who ruled with his father Leo V from 813–820.\textsuperscript{51} What seems to be happening here is that the age-specificity we found under the Herakleians is fading: the beard becomes the dominant signifier of status, and it was apparently more important to signal that there was an heir-designate who looked the part than to track that heir’s growth spurts. The insecurity of the period seems to have suggested that dynastic stability was more important to display than the growing maturity of the co-ruler.

Coins minted under Michael II the Amorian which show Theophilos, born in 812/3 and elevated to the throne by his father in 821, appear to continue this pattern, but are problematic. They have not been dated more precisely than ‘821–829’ so that while some examples show the junior emperor with a slightly more rounded face than others, it is impossible to establish whether or not these were minted earlier than coins that show him with a slightly more elongated face – whether, in short, the variation (which is in any case slight) represents an attempt to indicate aging or whether it is simply due to the use of different dies.\textsuperscript{52} Theophilos’ first son, Constantine (who was born in the 820s but who died young), appears on the coinage as a
child, but (like Staurakios, Theophylact and Smbat/Constantine before him) is never shown aging; his daughters appear on the rare class IV nomismata of the late 830s with their relative ages indicated by scale but not physiognomic details (which would, in any case, be difficult given the size of the coins); and Michael III appears virtually immediately after his birth, portrayed – despite his infancy – with the beardless but mature facial type that characterised images of the young Constantine VI, Staurakios and Smbat/Constantine earlier in the century. Once again, the appearance of a male heir, presented in the appropriate and approved fashion sanctified by the last five generations of rulers, was more important to signal than Michael III’s increasing maturity.

After his father’s death in 842, however, Michael III appears as a child (with his older sister Thekla) on the reverse of the coin; as regent, his mother, the empress Theodora, is shown on the obverse. Soon thereafter, Michael III – now once more with the beardless but mature facial type he displayed during his father’s lifetime – is joined by his mother, and an image of Christ occupies the obverse. In 856, when Michael III was 16, his mother disappears, and the emperor is shown as a bearded adult. This tells us two things, neither of which is surprising. First, as is clear from the coins of co-rulers from Constantine VI onwards, coin imagery shows what is believed to be appropriate; it is not visual reportage. Theodora’s mint-master followed the precedent that had been established most recently when Eirene became regent in association with the young Constantine VI, and visualised this relationship on the coinage by presenting the pair as an easily recognisable mother and young son. Second, the beardless but mature facial type has become the normative way to represent imperial youth, and this continues until the end of the Empire. Henceforth, adolescents on coins follow the pattern established by Constantine VI, Staurakios, Smbat/Constantine and, except on the coins minted immediately after his father’s death, Michael III: they may or may not be smaller in scale than the senior emperor, and they are beardless, but they do not display any other signs of aging. Never again will their progressive maturation be portrayed as vividly as under the Herakleians and, though to a lesser extent, the Isaurians.

53 For Constantine, see PmbZ I/2, Nr. 3931; for the coins, DOC 3, 425–28, pl. XXII, 2a-3e.
54 DOC 3, 428, pl. XXII, 4; discussion in ibid., 407, 415–16.
55 DOC 3, 428–29, pl. XXII, 5.
56 DOC 3, 461–62, pl. XXVII, 1a-d.
57 DOC 3, 463, pl. XXVII, 2.
58 DOC 3, 463–64, pl. XXVII, 3.
59 Adolescents and sons on coins after 867: Basil’s sons Constantine, Leo VI and Alexander (DOC 3, 487–505); Leo VI’s son Constantine VII (DOC 3, 513–14); Constantine VII during his mother’s regency (DOC 3, 541–42); Romanos I’s sons Christoher, Stephen and Constantine Lekapenos, sometimes with Constantine VII, who from 921 is sometimes presented as a bearded adult and sometimes not, apparently depending on the political tide (DOC 3, 544–57); Constantine VII’s son Romanos II (DOC 3, 551–69); Nikephoros II’s stepson Basil II (DOC 3, 582–83); Eudokia’s sons Michael VII and Constantios (DOC 3, 783–84); Romanos IV’s stepsons (DOC 3, 789–91); Alexios I’s son John II (DOC 4,
The run of portraits we have just examined allows us to draw a number of conclusions, one of which is that the visualisation of adolescence is heavily gendered. For males, from the mid-seventh century on, the key indicator is the presence or absence of a beard, which is, as we have seen, a signal of both maturity and of a shift in status. For females, the key indicator is less blatant. Although we do not have a full run of female portraits, the distinction between the just-turned-12-year-old Mary and the 16-year-old Euphrosyne is, however, striking. We may add to it the image of a princess in the Vatican epithalamion (Vat.gr.1851), for, whomever the girl represents, she is presented as a pre-pubescent female (fig. 18).⁶⁰ The epithalamion child is slight, raises her hands in supplication, and is bareheaded, allowing us to admire the pearls in her blond hair. The 16-year-old Euphrosyne is far more solid, stands nearly frontal, and is portrayed with covered head. The child-princess, even when she is shown dressed in Byzantine imperial regalia and enthroned amidst her court, displays the top of her head, and her hair remains visible, unlike the presumably older girls and women who attend to her. Euphrosyne is solemn and displays due decorum; the princess appears to smile. In part, the differences between the child and Euphrosyne have to do with status: the younger girl is a princess, the elder is a nun. But if we look at other young but married females in the Lincoln College typikon some of the distinctions continue. A sequence of family portraits was added to the typikon around 1335, displaying eight married couples in the family, some of whom are mentioned in the typikon.⁶¹ The older married couples – fig. 19 portrays Euphrosyne’s elder brother Theodore Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos Synadenos and his wife Eudokia Doukaina Komnene Synadene Palaiologina – are blessed by the Virgin of Sure Hope, to whom the monastery was dedicated. The younger married couples – fig. 20 depicts the protosebastos Constantine Komnenos Raul Palaiologos with his wife, and Euphrosyne-the-nun’s niece, Euphrosyne Doukaina Palaiologina – are blessed by the youthful Christ. We do not have accurate dates for the second Euphrosyne, but she is probably slightly younger than Euphrosyne-the-nun, so in terms of chronological age she is well within our category of Byzantine female adolescents, though she is clearly married. Like the epithalamion princess, the typikon young women are dressed in courtly finery, but they all differ distinctly from the princess in their head covering and solemn demeanor. The princess, though arriving in Constantinople for her wedding, is not yet married age; the typikon women are, either to elite men or to Christ. The defining difference between how adolescent females were depicted had little to do with actual age-in-years, but was in-

⁶⁰ The problematic dating of this manuscript and its illustrations are discussed in Hennessy, A child bride.

⁶¹ See the references in note 27 above.
stead dependent on whether or not they were married (to a terrestrial man or, as in Eudokia’s case, to Christ).

Two additional examples drive this point home. Eudokia Doukaina Komnene Synadene Palaiologina (wife of Euphrosyne-the-nun’s elder brother Theodore), whom as we have already noted was pictured in the Lincoln College typikon around 1335 (fig. 19), was, apparently before her marriage, also portrayed in an unpublished prayer scroll made for her personal and private use, where she is identified by inscription (fig. 21). The young Eudokia is strikingly similar to the Vatican princess, down to the pearls interwoven into her long and loosely flowing hair. She is, equally, strikingly different from her later portrait. Although we cannot see the top of her head, her hair is unbound and her facial features appear much more relaxed than they do in the later image. We do not know how old Eudokia was when the prayer scroll was made (which is why I did not include her in our rogues’ gallery earlier), but her size relative to John Chrysostom, before whom she anachronistically stands in prayer, and her bulk indicates that she is not a small child. She is evidently not, however, yet married, and so appears as a female youth. Marriage, not age-in-years, and – as the next example will demonstrate – not even puberty itself, determines whether a young woman of status is presented as an adolescent or a matron.

This convention of female adolescent portraiture is brought out sharply in the two twelfth-century manuscripts illustrating the life of the Virgin Mary attributed to the monk James of the Kokkinobaphos monastery. Mary appears in about three-quarters of the miniatures, which depict her life from her birth until her virginial purity, despite being pregnant, is vindicated by trial by water. She is shown as an infant in the bath at her Nativity, but as soon as she is accorded any agency she is presented as a child, and her appearance changes little as she grows up in the temple. According to the Protevangelion of James, after her precocious seven first steps at six months, her mother Anna vowed that Mary’s feet would never touch the ground until she reached the age of 3, when she would be dedicated to the temple. The first seven steps are not illustrated in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts, but she appears in several miniatures that picture episodes that took place before she was 3, and the miniaturist adheres to the prescription of the Protevangelion: Mary is always

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63 Vat.gr.1162, f.29r; Paris.gr.1208, f. 38v: reproductions in the facsimiles cited above, and in LINARDOU, Reading two Byzantine illustrated books 42 – 43, pls 18 – 19.
shown either in bed or in the arms of her mother.\textsuperscript{65} Between the ages of 3 and 12 she is shown several times, always as a slight young woman considerably shorter in height than the adult figures in the images (fig. 22), but with no attempt to portray the various stages of her physical development as she grew older.\textsuperscript{66} When Mary turned 12, the high priest Zacharias began to worry about what to do with her, as she could not stay in the temple once she reached puberty. He prayed; God told him to summon widowers; and from among the widowers Joseph was selected to be Mary’s husband and guardian.\textsuperscript{67} Seven miniatures accompany this narrative, and Mary appears in all but the two scenes that depict Zacharias in prayer and the summoning of the widowers.\textsuperscript{68} In all of them, including the miniature that pictures her presentation to Joseph (fig. 6), she is presented in the child-like format familiar from earlier episodes in the manuscript. Minutes later, Mary bids farewell to the priests, and leaves the temple with Joseph to travel to his house: she is here, and henceforth, portrayed as an adult woman (fig. 23).\textsuperscript{69} This is a graphic demonstration of the role of marriage in determining how young women were portrayed in Byzantium: what defines Mary as a young woman rather than an adolescent girl is neither puberty nor her betrothal to Joseph, but her actual partnership with him. As visualised in Middle and Late Byzantium, growing up, for women, was not a gradual process, but an instant transformation effected by marriage.

Whether or not this was true before the social shifts highlighted by Iconoclasm is impossible to say, for we simply do not have sufficient evidence of youthful female

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\textsuperscript{65} Vat.gr.1162, ff.38v, 41r, 43r, 44v, 46v; Paris.gr.1208, ff.52r, 56r, 59r, 61r, 63r: reproductions in the facsimiles cited above, and in LINARDOU, Reading two Byzantine illustrated booksn 53 – 62, pls 28 – 37. The scenes present her parents giving thanks for her birth, with Mary in a cradle; Anna’s invocation of David, with Mary in her mother’s lap; Mary in her bed; the banquet of the priests, with Mary held by Anna and in her cradle (only the second scene appears in the Paris manuscript); and the end of the banquet, with Mary in Joachim’s arms reaching out for her mother (scene omitted in Paris), and Mary tucked into bed with a second image of her held by her mother.

\textsuperscript{66} Vat.gr.1162, ff.57v, 59v, 62v, 65r, 67v, 68v, 76v; Paris.gr.1208, ff. 77v, 80r, 87v, 91r, 92v, 103v: reproductions in the facsimiles cited above, and in LINARDOU, Reading two Byzantine illustrated books, pls 46 – 50, 53 – 58, 61 – 62. The only exception is the image showing Mary’s parents, Joachim and Anna, visiting her in the temple when they had not seen her for some time, when she is taller and stockier, and almost resembles her portrait as an adult and it may be – as Linardou suggested – that the shift in scale is intended to indicate Mary’s growth since her parents last saw her: Vat.gr.1162, f.74v; Paris.gr.1208, f.100v; LINARDOU, Reading two Byzantine illustrated books, 89 – 91, pls 59 – 60. This image is, however, preceded and followed by miniatures with the short, slight Virgin-as-child, so if the painter intended to picture a growth-spurt, it did not last.

\textsuperscript{67} HENNECKE – SCHNEEMELCHER, New Testament Apocrypha 1, 378 – 79.

\textsuperscript{68} Vat.gr.1162, ff. 85r, 87v, 90r, 97v, 100r; Paris.gr.1208, ff. 113v, 117r, 120r, 131v, 135r: reproductions in the facsimiles cited above, and in LINARDOU, Reading two Byzantine illustrated books, pls 67 – 72, 79 – 82. An eight, extra-narrative scene in the middle of this sequence shows an adult Mary triumphing over Satan (\textit{ibid.}, pls 73 – 74).

\textsuperscript{69} Vat.gr.1162, f.105r; Paris.gr.1208, f.142r: reproductions in the facsimiles cited above, and in LINARDOU, Reading two Byzantine illustrated books 115 – 16, pls 83 – 84.
portraiture. But for portraits of adolescent males we have the coins, and these, as we have seen, demonstrate a sharp break after the Herakleians and Isaurians, which at least suggests that different attitudes toward visualising changes in the Byzantine life course prevailed before and after the eighth century.

Indeed, after Iconoclasm, young (pre-married) females look remarkably the same. The *epithalamion* princess (fig. 18) and the young Eudokia (fig. 21) are almost interchangeable; and Mary looks the same at 3 (fig. 22) as she does at 12 (fig. 6). As the coin evidence demonstrated, during and after Iconoclasm, the same is true of adolescent (pre-beard) males. This is not because Byzantine painters (or coin die strikers, for that matter) were incapable of depicting different facial types: adult males are often sharply distinguished one from another, and even when they were clearly reproducing types rather than painting portraits, painters were usually careful to make adult men in the same scene look different. In contrast, after Iconoclasm, even portraits of actual adolescents look exactly like all other male youth: the 10-year-old Alexander and 14-year-old Leo VI from the Paris Gregory (fig. 3) are distinguished from one another only by their height and attributes, and look remarkably similar to the 12-year-old Christ (fig. 5) as well.

Though Byzantine texts present adolescents with a series of distinctively defined characteristics, these characteristics are themselves *topoi* (e.g. impetuous youth, saintly youth). In stories – hagiography and the twelfth-century (and later) Byzantine novels – adolescents play well-defined roles, but they are otherwise rarely described as differentiated actors: once Byzantine males become active participants in the political or social narrative, they are treated as adults. Clearly, the Byzantines were well aware of the way that ‘real’ males age across adolescence; we could assume it, but the coins of the seventh century confirm it for emperors. Nevertheless, in terms of representations, in all other contexts, the overwhelmingly dominant way youths are portrayed is the generic. The visual evidence corroborates the suspicion that adolescent males were simply not important enough as characters for Byzantine painters to want to distinguish them. This gives some context to textual representations of unruly or saintly youth; there were of course clichés, but also clichés which, thanks to the visual evidence, we can see were the work of writers who did not care how accurate they were, for in a sense all adolescents were much the same. (In this sense, on suspects that adolescents, like women, were good to think with). This was,

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70 See, e.g., the two older men in figure 1, or the miniature of martyrdom of the twelve apostles in the same manuscript: Paris.gr.510, f.340r (Brubaker, Vision and meaning, fig. 34).
72 In this sense, on suspects that adolescents, like women, were good to think with.
definitely, not a culture which at any point across its millennium of history paid much attention to the experience of living through adolescence.

My final point is related to this. Women, like youthful males, all look the same. There are young, unmarried women, and there are older, married women (brides of men, brides of Christ, and occasionally widows), but none of them have any distinguishing physiognomic characteristics except for the colour of their hair. After Iconoclasm, only men were significant enough players to be individualised, and this fits with my earlier observation that only men grow old in Byzantine imagery. So: Females appear as children (rarely), unmarried adolescents (rarely), servants (age uncertain) and generic adults, but undifferentiated inside each group. Males appear as generic children, generic adolescents, generic servants (age uncertain), but then differentiated adults, including eunuchs, and often (even if not always) differentiated old men. The conventions of gendered social status and interpersonal relations in Byzantium could hardly be clearer.
Fig. 1. Burial of Gregory of Nazianzos (Paris.gr.510, f.452r); © Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 2 Life of St Basil (Paris.gr.510, f.104r); © Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 3 Leo VI, Eudokia and Alexander (Paris.gr.510, f.Br); © Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 4 Manuel II Palaiologos, his wife Helena and their three children (Paris MR 416, f.2r) photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Daniel Arnaudet
Fig. 5 Christ preaching in the temple (Paris.gr.510, f.165r); © Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 6 Mary’s betrothal to Joseph (Paris.gr.1208, f.135r); © Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 7 Theodoule and Euphrosyne offer the monastery and typikon to the Virgin (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lincoln College gr.35, f.11r); © Lincoln College, Oxford
Fig. 8 Constans II, age 11–15 (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B3746); © The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

Fig. 9 Constans II, age 17 (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B3773); © The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham
Fig. 10 Constans II, age 18–19 (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B3791); © The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

Fig. 11 Constans II, age 20–21 (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B3812); © The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham
Fig. 12 Constans II with son Constantine IV (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B3832); ©The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

Fig. 13 Leo III and Constantine V, age 2 (Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks, inv. no. BZC.1948.17.2445); ©Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.
Fig. 14 Leo III and Constantine V, age 2–7 (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B4511); © The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

Fig. 15 Leo III and Constantine V, age 14–22 (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B4510); © The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham
Fig. 16  Leo IV and Constantine VI, age 5 (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B4583); ©The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

Fig. 17  Constantine VI, age 26 (Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, inv. no. B4597); ©The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham
Fig. 18 A foreign princess arrives in Constantinople (Vat.gr.1851, f.3v); © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Fig. 19 Theodore Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos Synadenos and Eudokia Doukaina Komnene Synadenene Palaiologina (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lincoln College gr. 35, f.8r); ©Lincoln College, Oxford
Fig. 20 Constantine Komnenos Raul Palaiologos and Euphrosyne Dukaina Palaiologina (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lincoln College gr. 35, f.6r); ©Lincoln College, Oxford
Fig. 21 Eudokia Doukaina Komnene Synadene Palaiologina with John Chrysostom (Private Collection) By permission of the owner
Fig. 22 Mary being fed by an angel in the temple (Paris.gr.1208, f.103v); © Bibliothèque Nationale de France
Fig. 23 Mary leaving the temple with Joseph (Paris.gr.1208, f.142r); © Bibliothèque Nationale de France