

Zeitschrift: Theologische Zeitschrift
Herausgeber: Theologische Fakultät der Universität Basel
Band: 62 (2006)
Heft: 2

Artikel: John Chrysostom : deconstructing the construction of an exile
Autor: Mayer, Wendy
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-877893>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 13.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

John Chrysostom: Deconstructing the construction of an exile*

In his brief biography of John Chrysostom,¹ Professor Brändle achieves what few other scholars have successfully attempted – a short, lucid account in simple language, that nonetheless is critical of the sources, takes into account recent scholarship, and locates the subject soundly within his cultural and social context. In particular, unlike the earlier biography of Baur,² the subject is treated with objectivity, emerging from the pages as more of a human being than an unapproachable saint. In these respects only the lengthier and more detailed biography of Kelly can be said to exceed it.³ In the way of all scholarship, however, certain areas in the field of Chrysostom studies have rapidly progressed since its appearance.⁴ One such area is our understanding of John's episcopate.⁵ The findings of this research subtly alter the view of John's episcopate on which Prof. Brändle based his exemplary biography. What I would like to do as a tribute to his work is to extend this further by taking a fresh look at the exile of John Chrysostom. A re-examination of his exile offers a further opportunity to test the received view of John's episcopate by examining it from a less accustomed angle.

* The research on which this article is based was generously funded by the Australian Research Council.

¹ R. Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus. Bischof – Reformator – Märtyrer*, Stuttgart 1999.

² C. Baur, *Johannes Chrysostomus und seine Zeit*, 2 vols., München 1929-1930.

³ J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth. The Story of John Chrysostom – Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop*, London 1995.

⁴ See W. Mayer, *Progress in the field of Chrysostom studies (1984-2004)*, in: Giovanni Crisostomo: Oriente e Occidente tra IV e V secolo (StEphAug 93), Rome 2005, 9-35.

⁵ See W. Mayer, *At Constantinople, how often did John Chrysostom preach? Addressing assumptions about the workload of a bishop*, SEJG 40 (2001) 83-105 (episcopal workload); J. Stephens, *Ecclesiastical and imperial authority in the writings of John Chrysostom: A reinterpretation of his political philosophy* (doct. diss., University of California), Santa Barbara 2001 (John's 'political naivety'); M. Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das antiochenisch-syrische Mönchtum. Studien zu Theologie, Rhetorik und Kirchenpolitik im antiochenischen Schrifttum des Johannes Chrysostomus*, Zürich/Freiburg i.Br. 2000; and W. Mayer, *What does it mean to say that John Chrysostom was a monk?* StPatr (forthcoming) (John as 'monk'); ead., *Doing violence to the image of an empress: The destruction of Eudoxia's reputation*, in: *Violence in Late Antiquity. Perceptions and Practices*, Aldershot 2006, 205-213 (relations with Eudoxia); ead., *John Chrysostom as bishop: the view from Antioch*, JEH 55 (2004) 455-466; and ead., *Patronage, pastoral care and the role of the bishop at Antioch*, VigChr 55 (2001) 58-70 (perceived discontinuity between his ministries at Antioch and Constantinople).

When we attempt to address the circumstances and details of John's exile critically, however, a significant question immediately arises. Given that we are almost entirely dependent upon John's own account of his experiences in exile as conveyed in his letters, while we possess none of the letters sent to him independently or in response to his own, we must ask: what reliance can be placed on John's own portrayal of his exile? Building on the literary output of exiles such as Cicero, Ovid and Dio Chrysostom, by John Chrysostom's day exilic literature had become a well developed genre with its own stylised topoi and conventions, among which laments about the silence of correspondents, appeals to *amicitia* and to the horrors of isolation all served to evoke the pathos of the exile's situation.⁶ In addition, in the classical and late antique worlds letter-writing itself constituted a separate literary genre with its own constraints and conventions,⁷ with the additional problematic that the surviving letter constitutes but a fraction of the actual 'event', which involved among other things the exchange of material gifts, messengers (who acted as a substitute for the absent body of the letterwriter), verbal reports, and usually the reading of the letter aloud to an audience (varied in number).⁸ In light of these considerations, considerable caution is required when reading this body of correspondence. Rather than read the letters at face value, we must accept that it is more likely that in them John constructs the persona of an exile, that the picture they supply is only partial, and that certain aspects of the letters will have been dictated by the exile's primary agenda, namely rehabilitation and return. That is, the last thing that we should expect the letters to portray is an objective reality. What they are likely to provide, rather, is a

⁶ See J.-M. Claassen, *Displaced Persons. The Literature of Exile from Cicero to Boethius*, London 1999, esp. 114-130.

⁷ Analysis of the late antique letter as genre and medium is as yet underdeveloped. See M. Zelzer, *Der Brief in der Spätantike: Überlegungen zu einem literarischen Genos am Beispiel der Briefsammlung des Sidonius Apollinaris*, *Wiener Studien* 107-108 (1994-1995) 541-551; ead., *Die Briefliteratur. Kommunikation durch Briefe: Ein Gespräch mit Abwesenden*, *NHL* 4, Spätantike, Wiesbaden 1997, 321-353; S.L. Abram, *Brevity in early medieval letters*, *Florilegium* 15 (1998) 23-35; and P. Allen, *It's in the Post: Techniques and Difficulties of Letter-Writing in Antiquity with regard to Augustine of Hippo*, Trendall Memorial Lecture, Australian Academy of the Humanities, 2005 (to be published by the AAH). Study of late antique correspondence tends more generally to focus on the networks created and the prosopography of the correspondents: see, e.g., O. Seeck, *Die Briefe des Libanius*, Leipzig 1906; S. Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis. Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Stuttgart 1992; R. Pouchet, *Basile le grand et son univers d'amis d'après sa correspondance. Une stratégie de communion*, Rome 1992; and S. Mratschek, *Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola. Kommunikation und soziale Kontakte zwischen christlichen Intellektuellen*, Göttingen 2002.

⁸ See C. Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster. Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola*, Oxford 2000, Chap. 1.

window onto John's own perception of his exile and his manipulation of content for the benefit of his correspondents in order to achieve his own particular exilic agenda. If that meant writing a large number of short, formulaic letters in his pursuit of rehabilitation, endlessly recycling complaints about his isolation, the difficulties of communication, and the failure of the intended addressee to write, then such letters are an important part of his carefully orchestrated campaign. Thus expressions of surprise and disappointment with his correspondence,⁹ while perhaps understandable from a modern perspective, stem from the placing of false expectations on the combination of exilic literature and late antique epistolography.¹⁰

On the other hand, as Kelly himself recognises, there is a telling dissonance between the impression of isolation which the letters purvey and the activities in exile of John himself.¹¹ Brändle, too, after explaining that the more 'boring' of the letters are 'precisely because of that, an expression of his isolation and enforced inactivity',¹² points to the number of visitors whom John received at both Cucusus and Arabissos, positing an increasing flow from the directions of Sebaste and Antioch after John's return from Arabissos to Cucusus in summer 406.¹³ Both of these assessments rely in large part, however, on a chronology of the letters that has since been reviewed, leading to a radical rearrangement of the letters' sequence.¹⁴ On the basis of this quite different ordering, the author of the new chronology, Roland Delmaire, puts forward a more pessimistic view. He charts a rapidly declining network of correspondents, with the result that by the end of 404 John was largely cut off from clergy and friends at Constantinople, and, while his contacts with clergy and laity from Syria persisted in declining numbers into the spring and

⁹ See Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 261: «... a surprisingly unequal, not to say disappointing, collection».

¹⁰ So, e.g., Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 261, continues: «... the majority, are conventional and flat, repeating well-worn topics in stereotyped language and lacking the liveliness and personal touch one looks for in correspondence». R. Delmaire, *Jean Chrysostome et ses «amis» d'après le nouveau classement de sa Correspondance*, *StPatr* 33 (1997) 302-313 (309), refers to «ces lettres répétitives que nos prédécesseurs jugent sans intérêt».

¹¹ Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 261: «In fact, he was not so deprived of society or of pastoral opportunities (of a modest kind, perhaps) as he would like one to believe. From time to time, as the letters reveal, increasingly as the months slipped by, visitors found their way to Cucusus.» Cf. C. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398-404). Weltsicht und Wirken eines Bischofs in der Hauptstadt des Oströmischen Reiches*, Tübingen 2002, 400.

¹² Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, 142.

¹³ Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, 142-144.

¹⁴ R. Delmaire, *Les «lettres d'exil» de Jean Chrysostome. Études de chronologie et de prosopographie*, *RechAug* 25 (1991) 71-180. This work, which forms the basis of the introduction to a new edition of John's letters to appear in *Sources Chrétiennes* in c. 2007, remains little known.

summer of 406, by the end of summer 406 he remained in contact with just two correspondents – Olympias (herself in exile in Nicomedia) and Helpidius of Laodicea.¹⁵ The truth about his ability to retain networks and the number of visitors he received over the course of his exile probably lies somewhere in between. Delmaire's analysis of the identity and geographic and chronological distribution of John's correspondents offers only one, if significant, part of the picture. Careful assessment of how John exploits the topoi of exile and how and why he constructs his own exile for his readers/listeners in the way that he does is of equal importance, if the value of the full body of his correspondence for understanding his own perception of his role and identity as bishop is to be appreciated.

John's personal construction of his exile is not the only one that must be taken into consideration, however. In addition to the more or less standard picture of the urbanite in exile that derives from John's own letters, John's apologist Palladius promotes his own constructs of the exiled John for the purposes of his apologetic agenda. By styling John as both monk-bishop and martyr,¹⁶ and by fabricating a style of monasticism for him that comes with its own particular set of associations,¹⁷ he draws on topoi that are intended to place the deposed bishop above suspicion of guilt and to establish his innocence. The point to be made here is that of our two principal sources, neither the epistolary corpus nor Palladius' defense can be read as historical fact and the one must be carefully sifted and compared with the other in order to understand how we are to navigate our way through their pictures of John's exile. Reading the letters from the perspective of Delmaire's chronology, what we intend to do in the remainder of this article is to show via a few brief examples how a careful and critical reading can change the picture that is received. A more detailed analysis of the correspondence and of its disjunction with the picture presented in Palladius' *Dialogue* will be reserved for elsewhere.

One of the more obvious ways in which John carefully crafts his image of exile concerns his differing accounts of the same events. Thus in *ep.* 173 written after his arrival at Cucusus at the beginning of September 404 to Evethius, who had assisted him at Caesarea on the journey, John says that he completed the entire journey trouble-free and safely and that he is now resident at Cucusus, enjoying the quiet of the region, the lack of problems, and being looked

¹⁵ Delmaire, Jean Chrysostome, 309-310.

¹⁶ See S. Dagemark, John Chrysostom the monk-bishop: A comparison between Palladius' and Possidius' pictures of a bishop, in: Crisostomo, Oriente e Occidente, 933-1031, esp. 985 (on Palladius, Dial. 8) and 1005 (on Dial. 11), where John is styled as a martyr within the broader construct of monk-bishop.

¹⁷ See Illert, Johannes Chrysostomus, 95-105, who shows that the Egyptian style of monasticism that Palladius describes for John is inconsistent with Syrian tradition.

after kindly and well.¹⁸ He expresses similar sentiments in a letter sent at the same time to another resident of Caesarea, Helladius.¹⁹ This reassuring tone in fact permeates the majority of the cluster of letters sent at this time in order to foster continuing relationships with supporters at Caesarea.²⁰ In *ep.* 84 to Faustinus at Caesarea John does mention that the journey to Cucusus was extremely isolated and dangerous, but this is simply so that he can point out the irony of feeling more secure there than in well-governed cities (a pointed reference to events at Caesarea).²¹ The letter cheerfully starts out by saying that he arrived in good health.²² This is in marked contrast to the account of the journey from Caesarea to Cucusus in the first letter to Olympias upon his arrival (sent mid September 404). There he says that he didn't want to worry her, but the journey to Cucusus was appalling – he was sick for around thirty days or more with fever and stomach problems, with no doctors, no baths, no essentials, no other relief, surrounded by the Isaurian terror, and other discomforts of travel such as anxiety, care, and lack of servants. It takes him fifteen lines to get around to telling her that all is now well. Now he is in complete health; relieved of worry about the Isaurians because there are many soldiers at Cucusus, heavily armed against them; and has an abundance of essentials available despite the complete isolation of the place.²³ His comment to Faustinus, too, about arriving in good health, must be taken with a grain of salt, since in *ep.* 193 to Paeanius at Constantinople, written likewise at the beginning of September 404, he says that he has been able to recuperate at Cucusus by sitting constantly at home,²⁴ an indication that on arrival the after-effects of the illness persisted and left him too weak to do more.

Complaints of isolation are another item employed selectively. Whereas the isolation of Cucusus receives no remark in the above-mentioned letters to supporters at Caesarea,²⁵ it does turn up in one other letter of this period to that destination, *ep.* 236 to the governor Carterius. This letter begins with the statement that Cucusus is the most isolated place imaginable.²⁶ Although John goes on to modify this blunt statement, by saying that this isn't intended to upset the governor, but rather to emphasise the security he now enjoys, it

¹⁸ PG 52, 710-712.

¹⁹ *Ep.* 172; PG 52, 710.

²⁰ See *epp.* 80-84; PG 52, 651-653. In *ep.* 171 (PG 52, 710) to Montius he says nothing at all about his current situation, simply expressing thanks for Montius' support and the desire that he correspond.

²¹ On these see Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 256-257; and Brändle, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, 135-136.

²² PG 52, 652, 17 a.i.

²³ *Ep.* 6 ad Olymp., SC 13bis, 126-127.

²⁴ PG 52, 720.

²⁵ In *ep.* 84 the adjective is attached to the journey, not to the destination.

²⁶ PG 52, 740, 17-18 a.i.

is evident by the repetition of 'isolation' only four lines later that it is this concept, not the idea that he is now secure, that he hopes will stay at the forefront of Carterius' mind. Whereas the overt thrust of the letter is John writing to inform Carterius that he has arrived safely at his final destination and that he will never forget the help Carterius gave at Caesarea on the way, the covert message reads: «please use your influence to get me removed». Similarly, in letters to two high-ranking officials at Constantinople written at this same time John speaks of his isolation in hyperbolic terms. In *ep.* 194 to Gemellus he uses the same ploy as in *ep.* 236 to Carterius, opening the letter with the statement that he inhabits Cucusus, an isolated place, indeed the most isolated in the world.²⁷ Not only is it foreign and isolated, he reiterates a few lines later, but he is still carrying around the remnants of his illness, and he is besieged by the fear of Isaurian bandits (who cut off the roads and fill everything with blood). All of these horrors are used to exaggerate the nature of his love for Gemellus, an appeal to flattery intended to sustain Gemellus' support, but again the letter clearly operates at two levels: the overt appeal to *amicitia*, and the covert appeal for rescue. Again in *ep.* 234 to Brison, the cubicularius of the empress Eudoxia,²⁸ he opens the letter by emphasising his sufferings. After enduring most of seventy days on the road (during which time Brison can imagine what evils he suffered, besieged everywhere by the fear of Isaurians, and wrestling with unbearable fevers), it was only to arrive at Cucusus, the most isolated place in the world.²⁹ Here we find the most overt expression of the covert agenda that emerges in the letters to Gemellus and Carterius. He is not writing to Brison asking him to use his influence to get him transferred from there, John goes on to say, but simply asking him to make sure that he writes. The fact that John raises the topic in order to deny it indicates that this is precisely the reaction that he intends an opening of this kind addressed to a person of this status and influence to have. That he does not employ this tactic in every letter, but only selectively, is equally indicative.

What we have seen from these brief glimpses is that, far from an open record of his experiences in exile, John's letters present a highly selective account of his current status and of immediately preceding events. How ill he has been or not been on his journey, how well he is now, how comfortable or how isolated are all served up to his readers in ways intended to have a particular effect, with the identity and status of the recipient not unnaturally of influence. What John focuses on in his letters, what he emphasises or downplays, and what he neglects altogether to mention are all important for understanding how and why he constructs himself in the way that he does. This can

²⁷ PG 52, 720. On Gemellus' rank at Constantinople, see Delmaire, *Les «lettres»*, 128-129.

²⁸ On Brison's status see Delmaire, *Les «lettres»*, 115.

²⁹ PG 52, 739-740.

be seen when we examine the contents of the letters against information about visitors, clergy at his disposal, and his capacity to send and receive letters after the edict of 18 Nov. 404 had passed into effect,³⁰ particularly in light of his heavy emphasis on the difficulties of communication and on his isolation.

Despite Delmaire's pessimism about the continuation of networks after this point in time,³¹ at least one of John's former clergy, the presbyter Sallustius, had joined him at Cucusus by the end of November 404, since in *ep.* 219 to Severina and Romula at Constantinople John says that the presbyter could have brought with him letters from them.³² How long he stayed with John is unknown, since we find him in exile in Crete only in 408,³³ but it is possible that his situation was comparable to that of another Constantinopolitan presbyter, Evethius, who accompanied John on his journey into exile, and was available to him as late as spring 406 to take certain letters to Rome and bring back the replies.³⁴ Clergy from a variety of other sources were also available to him to perform a variety of tasks in the years 405 and 406. In the summer or autumn of 405 John is able to write to Rufinus telling him not to worry about acquiring relics of martyrs for the work in Phoenicia since he will send the presbyter Terentius to collect some from his friend Otreios, bishop of Arabassios, and have him then convey them on to Rufinus.³⁵ It is reasonable to assume that Terentius afterwards returned to John's side ready to perform further tasks as required. In autumn of the same year the presbyter John arrived after fleeing the troubles in Phoenicia.³⁶ John sends him and a deacon of Constantinople, Paul, on an embassy to Rome after the shipping lanes reopen in spring 406.³⁷ This same Paul had accompanied the deacon Cyriacus in conveying John's first letter to Innocent at Rome after the events of Easter 404, and Delmaire speculates that both Paul and Cyriacus had joined John early on in his exile.³⁸ If this is the case, then they may well have been conveying letters back and forth and generally assisting John at Cucusus from as early as October 404. In the winter of 405/406 two members of the Antioche-

³⁰ CTh 16.4.6 (Mommsen 1905).

³¹ Delmaire, Jean Chrysostome, 309, assumes that John's networks at Constantinople were largely broken off after the edict and the renewed persecution of his supporters, and that his networks elsewhere rapidly declined from the winter of 404/405 onwards. In the brief study that follows we examine only letters from winter 404/405 onwards.

³² PG 52, 732.

³³ Palladius, Dial. 20; SC 341, 400, 74.

³⁴ See Delmaire, Les «lettres», 125 s.v. Evethius 1.

³⁵ Ep. 126; PG 52, 685-687. Rufinus' location at this point in time is unclear.

³⁶ Ep. 148; PG 52, 700. See Delmaire, Les «lettres», 135-136 s.v. Iohannes 2.

³⁷ See Delmaire, Les «lettres», 88-89.

³⁸ Delamire, Les «lettres», 152.

ne clergy visit John, a deacon and lector both named Theodotus,³⁹ although by the middle of winter they are forced to leave because of Isaurian raids. The deacon Theodotus brings with him links to the households of several members of the Antiochene aristocracy – Carteria, Marcellinus and Bassiana.⁴⁰

John's ability to send letters to the West in spring 406 in an attempt to promote his cause is of particular interest, if we consider that early in 406 he was forced to flee Cucusus for Arabissos, a location which John describes in the most piteous of terms;⁴¹ and if we reflect that in autumn of the same year he is forced to quit Arabissos temporarily for an even more remote and unnamed fort due to what he depicts as incessant Isaurian raids.⁴² Despite being, as he says, a virtual prisoner in the fortress of Arabissos, John is nonetheless still receiving couriers and assistance from Olympias,⁴³ he appears to have the deacons Cyriacus and Paul and the presbyter John with him, since he says that Cyriacus is too busy to go, but that John and Paul have undertaken to convey the letters to the West,⁴⁴ while Evethius, the presbyter who had initially accompanied him into exile is able to take other letters,⁴⁵ and an unnamed presbyter yet other letters to the West.⁴⁶ Clearly, the situation is not the same as at Constantinople, where John was surrounded in the latter years of his episcopate by a large circle of visiting bishops, and a great number of clergy, but neither, with various presbyters to support him and ensure the continuity of his networks to important figures in Antioch, Constantinople, and the West, is it as isolated or is he as bereft of assistance as John is keen to portray.

External sources concerning his pastoral activities in Armenia offer a further corrective to the picture which John himself paints. Sozomen, the only source to dwell directly on the issue, claims that in Armenia John had ample money at his disposal, supplied by Olympias and others, which he used to ransom captives from the Isaurians and for alms to those in need; and that he offered consolation and pastoral advice to others.⁴⁷ The suspicion that John was receiving financial and practical support from wealthy individuals located other than at Constantinople, that is, in addition to Olympias, is supported

³⁹ Epp. 59, 61, 135-136; PG 52, 641-643 and 693-694.

⁴⁰ See Delmaire, *Les «lettres»*, 165-166 s.v. Theodotus 3.

⁴¹ See, e.g., ep. 69; PG 52, 646. Cf., however, ep. 135 to Theodotus from this same period, in which John, despite highlighting the Isaurian problem and the difficulties, says that Theodotus will know about the local situation at Arabissos from those arriving at Antioch from there and that he should write via those coming from Antioch to Arabissos. Clearly travel was not as impeded as at first glance these letters suggest.

⁴² For the chronology see Delmaire, *Les «lettres»*, 174.

⁴³ Ep. 15 ad Olymp.; SC 13bis, 358-360 (d).

⁴⁴ Ep. 148; PG 52, 700, 12-19.

⁴⁵ Epp. 127-128; PG 52, 687-688.

⁴⁶ See Delmaire, *Les «lettres»*, 90, re epp. 161, 164, 166 (PG 52, 705, 707-708).

⁴⁷ Soz., HE 8.27.

by his own correspondence in which he acknowledges gifts from Carteria and Diogenes, among others.⁴⁸ Palladius himself is more vague, but implies that John preached while at Cucusus,⁴⁹ which is not impossible if the local bishop was sympathetic to John, as Otreios, the bishop of Arabissos clearly was. John himself claims at Constantinople that it is the custom to allow a visiting bishop, especially one more senior, to preach in one's stead.⁵⁰

If we accept the idea that John was not passive pastorally in exile, but continued to operate in a *de facto* way as bishop in Armenia, just as he works in the first six months of exile to maintain via intermediaries the pastoral projects he had been directing from Constantinople,⁵¹ then we must ask why comment in his letters about his local activities in Armenia is non-existent. A clue resides, perhaps, in his complaints during the depths of winter as the year slid into 405 that the roads are closed and visitors rare. Even during this supposedly impossible time John implies that Tranquillinus, a bishop whose see is not too distant from Cucusus, regularly sends a courier, Euppsychius; and indicates that a colleague of Tranquillinus', the bishop Seleucus, has just been visiting.⁵² It is not the case, then, that John receives no visitors at this period, but more likely that the visitors he does receive at the times when his complaints are loudest are readily overlooked in his own mind in his correspondence to others, since they are of less interest to him, being local and lacking the vital links to his networks in Antioch and Constantinople. Admission, in

⁴⁸ Ep. 232, c. Oct. 404, and ep. 34, winter 404/405 (Carteria, Antioch); ep. 50, summer 405 (Diogenes, poss. Syria, but not Antioch); ep. 17 ad Olymp., spring 407 (re gift sent by Syncretism, still resident at that point at Constantinople).

⁴⁹ Dial. 11; SC 341, 220, 63-65.

⁵⁰ In illud: Pater meus usque modo operatur; PG 63, 511, 41-512, 6. Observing this custom will have depended on the local bishop's resistance to pressure from Constantinople after the edict of 18 Nov. 404.

⁵¹ Ep. 221 (4 July 404, Nicaea, to the presbyter Constantius at Antioch re mission work in Phoenicia and Arabia); ep. 123 (end Aug./early Sept. 404, to the presbyters and monks instructing the 'Greeks' in Phoenicia); epp. 53-54 (mid Sept. 404, to presbyters Nikolaos and Gerontius at Zeugma, re mission in Phoenicia); ep. 28 (autumn 404, to the presbyter Basil in Syria/Phoenicia, concerning the mission to the 'Greeks'); ep. 9 ad Olymp., SC 13bis, 234-240 (late November 404, re the problems of Bishop Herakleides, request for O. to assist with Bishop Maruthas' troubles in Persia, lengthy discussion re death of Onilas, bishop of the Goths, and request by Gothic king for a new bishop); and epp. 203-218 (end of Nov. 404, to clergy and laity at Constantinople, including the presbyters Sallustius and Theophilus and layman Theodore, re the former's dereliction of duty as preachers; the deacon Theodoulos, re problems faced by churches in the territory of the Goths; Gothic monks on the estate of Promotus in Constantinople's suburbs, thanking them for their continued care of the Church of the Goths; and the patron Valentinus, whom he asks to assist the presbyter Domitian in feeding orphans and widows).

⁵² Ep. 37; PG 52, 630-631.

any case, that his isolation is not as severe as he intends those actively seeking his rehabilitation to believe, would have been detrimental to his suit. In the same way, then, that John glosses over visits by people and clergy who are of little importance to the maintenance of his networks or to his agenda for return, the key to the above discrepancy is once again likely to lie in John's self-perception and personal agenda. What emerges from the letters is a man totally focused on rehabilitation and on regaining control of the reins of a see from which, he believes, he has been wrongfully deposed. John writes as someone who is still, despite his physical distance, the bishop of Constantinople. It is this reading of the letters that explains why pastoral comment in them is restricted almost exclusively to personnel in Antioch and Constantinople and to projects in which John clearly had an interest when active in Constantinople.⁵³ For his supporters and those whom he was trying to weave into that network of support, revealing his pastoral activities in Armenia would have softened their focus on the image that he intended to stay firmly fixed in their minds. Support for this reading of his letters comes from their failure to conform to the construct of the exiled John (monk-martyr) that emerges in Palladius. Capable elsewhere of exploiting the imagery attached to these two closely associated ideals,⁵⁴ in his correspondence John clearly chooses to construct his exile in neither light. The choice not to reveal his pastoral ministry in Armenia, which would have helped to promote his status as either monk or saint, underwrites his lack of interest at this point in his life in these kinds of personae.

In this article we have barely begun to scratch the surface of the exile of John Chrysostom, the bishop who has been the subject of a substantial strand of Professor Brändle's research and to the study of whose life and theology he has contributed so significantly. These findings serve to show that there is much still to learn in this field, even on so well-researched a subject as his episcopate. What they also suggest is this: that it is of value to view John's exile not as a cessation, but as an extension of his episcopate – a perspective which is consistent with his own understanding of his role and of events. It is important, moreover, to read the letters which he wrote in exile through this same lens. What the original addressees of his letters each received, to use the analogy with which we began this paragraph, was in reality little more than a surface, polished to reflect a particular image and rarely projecting faithfully what lay beneath. To fail to look beneath that surface is simply to accept at

⁵³ See n. 51 above.

⁵⁴ See W. Mayer, *John Chrysostom. The Cult of the Saints*, New York 2006, esp. 29-34; and the language of martyrdom employed to describe their sufferings in letters to his supporters at Constantinople persecuted in late 404 (epp. 94-97; PG 52, 657-660); and at Antioch in spring 406 (ep. 107; PG 52, 665-667).

face value the persona which the exiled John Chrysostom constructs, itself in turn a dismissal of the large body of exilic literature on which they rest.

Abstract

Recent research concerning the episcopate of John Chrysostom subtly alters the view of it upon which Prof. Brändle relied when he wrote his biography. In this article the view of that episcopate is further challenged by examining John's understanding of the role of bishop from the perspective of his exile. By considering the letters within the genres of exilic literature and late antique epistolography it becomes evident that in them John constructs a number of personae. When those personae are deconstructed it can be seen that, like other famous exiles before him, John's overriding concern is to achieve rehabilitation and that, despite his removal from the throne of Constantinople, he still views himself as its bishop.

Wendy Mayer, Banyo