CHAPTER 6

The Saint and the Citizens: Scripting Civic Behaviour in Early Medieval Hagiography

Robert Flierman

1 Introduction

By his own admission, Saint Severinus of Noricum (d. 482) did not much care for being a citizen in the world. He had turned up at the Danube frontier in the 450s, a stranger of unknown provenance, whose authority stemmed from his actions rather than his status, office or birth. When one of his close associates had finally plucked up the courage to ask him where he was from, the holy man had first responded with a very Roman joke: if you think I am a runaway slave, then you'd better get some funds together to pay my ransom when they come to collect me. He had then rounded on his questioner with a stern rebuke: the true servant of God cares only to be inscribed on the citizen-list of the heavenly fatherland, so why inquire about worldly credentials? No one had dared to ask Severinus about his background ever again.

This anecdote is recorded in the prologue to the *Commemoratorium vitae sancti Severini*, a hagiographical account of Severinus' life that was

R. Flierman (✉)
Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands
e-mail: r.flierman@uu.nl

E. Rose et al. (eds.), *City, Citizen, Citizenship, 400–1500*, The New Middle Ages, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48561-9_6

published in 511, three decades after the saint's death.[1] Its author, Eugippius, offered the story as a justification for failing to report on Severinus' parentage and place of birth.[2] He knew such details were required in a hagiography, but as the story was meant to show, he simply did not know, nor did anyone else. In the context of this volume, the anecdote is noteworthy principally for another reason: it is the first of many passages in the *Commemoratorium* that touch on the issue of citizenship. In fact, the story formed the opening salvo to a sustained reflection, kept up throughout the work, on what it meant to be citizen in a Christian and de-Romanizing world, and whether citizenship in such a world was still possible and desirable.

My aim in this contribution is to sketch the outlines of this reflection and to situate it in its historical context. On the one hand, I seek to understand Eugippius' thinking about citizenship as a response to specific historical circumstances. In 488, after decades of barbarian pressure and weakening of Roman control, Noricum had been abandoned as a Roman province, with many of its inhabitants crossing the Alps to resettle in Italy. The members of Severinus' community, too, had been among the evacuees, leaving Eugippius and his brothers wandering about Italy for years before founding a new monastery in the Bay of Naples. This

[1] The prologue takes the form of a letter, Eugippius, *Commemoratorium Vitae Sancti Severini*, ed. and trans. Rudolf Noll, *Das Leben des heiligen Severin* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1963), 42–45. The other scholarly edition currently in use is by Philippe Régerat, ed., *Vie de Saint Séverin*, Sources Chretiennes 374 (Paris: Cerf, 1991) with accompanying French translation. The most recent English translation is by Ludwig Bieler in collaboration with Ludmilla Krestan, *The Life of Saint Severin* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1965). This chapter was written as part of the project NWO VICI-Rose 277-30-002 *Citizenship Discourses in the Early Middle Ages, 400–1100*, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research NWO, carried out at Utrecht University 2017–2023.

[2] On Eugippius, see: Abigail Kathleen Gometz, 'Eugippius of Lucullanum: A Biography' (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2008); Johannes Hofmann, 'Das Werk des Abtes Eugippius. Zum literarischen Vermächtnis eines spätantiken Augustinus-Kenners and die frühmittelalterliche Kirche des Abendlandes', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 109 (1998): 293–305. For Severinus: István Bóna, 'Severiniana', *Acta antiqua Academiae scientiarum Hungaricae* 21 (1973): 281–338; Friedrich Lotter, *Severinus von Noricum, Legende und historische Wirklichkeit: Untersuchungen zur Phase des Ubergangs von spätantiken zu mittelalterlichen Denk- und Lebensformen* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1976); Andreas Schwarchz, 'Severinus of Noricum between Fact and Fiction', in *Eugippius und Severin: der Autor, der Text und der Heilige*, ed. Walter Pohl and Maximilian Diesenberger (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), 25–31.

experience of exile and resettlement shaped Eugippius' thinking about citizenship in the *Commemoratorium*. The work can be read as an attempt at community-building in post-Roman Italy, an environment that Eugippius recognised as familiar and in many ways more Roman than that of late-Roman Noricum, but that was home also to complex political and religious tensions.

On the other hand, my contribution looks beyond the specific context in which Eugippius lived and worked. I aim to situate him in a broader tradition of Early Medieval Christian authors who took ancient models of citizenship—Roman and above all Biblical—and developed them for their own ends. Recent studies have made it clear that the Latin language of citizenship remained a powerful rhetorical resource in the Early Medieval West, even for those who renounced its worldly aspirations.[3] Eugippius too was aware of this rhetorical potential, though renunciation was not what he was after. His account of Severinus' life celebrated the ideal of a heavenly fatherland, while stressing that becoming a citizen of that *caelestis patria* required a committed performance on earth. He did not want his readers to renounce the world. He wanted them to act in it.

What follows consists of three parts. A first section explores, succinctly, the ancient roots of Eugippius' thinking about citizenship. A second section looks into the circumstances in which he composed his *Commemoratorium* and asks who were his intended readers. In brief, I will argue for a politically engaged work with a diverse readership that reached well beyond the confines of Eugippius' monastery. The third and longest section turns to the text itself. We will see how Eugippius framed Severinus as an ambivalent figure: a stranger who himself refused to be a citizen on earth, yet spent his life going from town to town, instructing Noricum's Roman inhabitants about civic responsibility, participation and community.[4] This ambivalence suited Eugippius' diverse audience: his readers were left to follow the civic model that best fitted their station. All, however, were invited to read the story of Severinus with an eye to

[3] Els Rose, 'Citizenship Discourses in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 55 (2021): 1–21; Cédric Brélaz and Els Rose, eds., *Civic Identity and Civic Participation in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021); Robert Flierman and Megan Welton, 'De Excidio Patriae: Civic discourse in Gildas' Britain', *Early Medieval Europe* 29 (2021): 137–160; Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'Civitas Romana: the Fluidity of an Ideal', *Al-Masaq* 32, no. 1 (2020): 18–33.

[4] See also the contribution by Merel de Bruin-van de Beek in this volume.

the present. Situated in a late-Roman frontier province, the saint's life-story offered a script for how to act as a good citizen in a post-Roman world.

2 Ancient Citizenship: A Complex Heritage

When Eugippius had his saintly protagonist speak of a 'heavenly fatherland' (*supernae patriae*) in which he hoped one day 'to be enrolled as a citizen' (*civis inscribi*), the author invoked the language of two overlapping civic traditions: that of Rome and that of Christianity. Neither was straightforward.

The Romans had governed their polity as a network of city-states under Roman rule.[5] Within this polity, one could be a citizen of a local city or of the city of Rome, with the latter being the more prestigious. Cicero, writing at a time when dual citizenship was almost but not quite legal, famously spoke of two *patriae*: the city of one's birth and the city of Rome.[6] Both inspired loyalty and pride, both came with rights and duties. In practice, however, local and Roman citizenship operated in different ways.[7] Given the territorial dimensions of the Roman polity, only a small minority could ever participate fully in Rome's political institutions. For most, the participatory side of citizenship—voting in urban assemblies, holding office and engaging in public works—was thus acted out on a local level, as part of their local citizenship. Roman citizenship, by contrast, came to function principally as a legal status, conferring protection, tax-exemptions and access to Roman private law.[8] Though this status was valid anywhere in Roman territory, few outside of central Italy enjoyed it at first: being listed as a citizen on the Roman census lists was a privilege, coveted by many yet granted to few. It became more

[5] Clifford Ando and Myles Lavan, 'Introduction', in *Roman and Local Citizenship in the Long Second Century CE*, ed. Clifford Ando and Myles Lavan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 6–11.

[6] Cicero, *De legibus* II.5. On dual citizenship, see: Adrian Nicholas Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 292–306.

[7] Clifford Ando, 'Local Citizenship and Civic Participation in the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire', in *Civic Identity*, 39–64; and Cédric Brélaz, 'Democracy, Citizenship(s), and "Patriotism". Civic Practices and Discourses in the Greek Cities under Roman Rule', in *Civic Identity*, 65–92.

[8] Wallace-Hadrill, 'Civitas Romana'; Jed W. Atkins, *Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 63–90.

widely accessible over the centuries, until in 212 CE the Emperor Caracalla extended Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the empire.[9] This situation persisted until the end of the West-Roman Empire and beyond.[10] In many post-Roman successor kingdoms, the Roman citizen (*civis Romanus*) remained a distinct legal category with affiliated rights and duties, even if it was no longer associated with a Roman state.[11]

By that point, Christianity had become the dominant religion in the West, opening up yet other avenues of civic expression. As noted by Rowan Greer in a famous 1986 essay, early Christian thinking on citizenship was full of paradox, the roots of which can be traced back to the Christian Scriptures.[12] The biblical world is a world of cities and citizens. Many of its foundational stories are set in an urban landscape. Yet embedded in the Scriptures is the idea of the city as a locus of sin: the first city on earth was founded by Caïn, mankind's first murderer, and this moral stigma on urban life recurs throughout the Old Testament, from the fiery rains of Sodom to the righteous destruction of God's own Jerusalem.[13] The New Testament epistles deepen the case for renunciation by framing the Christian as an alien or stranger on earth, cut loose

[9] Myles Lavan, 'The Foundation of Empire? The Spread of Roman Citizenship from the Fourth Century BCE to the Third Century CE', in *In the Crucible of Empire: The Impact of Roman Citizenship Upon Greeks, Jews and Christians*, ed. Katell Berthelot and Jonathan Price (Leuven, Paris: Peeters, 2019), 21–54.

[10] It remains debated how meaningful Roman citizenship status still was by this point, see for instance: Clifford Ando, 'Introduction: Sovereignty, Territoriality and Universalism in the Aftermath of Caracalla', in *Citizenship and Empire in Europe 200–1900*, ed. Clifford Ando (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2016), 7–27; Ralph Mathisen, 'Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire', *The American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 1011–1040; Peter Garnsey, 'Roman Citizenship and Roman Law in the Later Empire', in *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Later Empire*, ed. Simon Swain and Mark Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 133–155.

[11] See Javier Martínez Jiménez and Robert Flierman, 'The Uses of Citizenship in the Post-Roman West', in *Citizenship in Antiquity. Civic Communities in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Jakub Filonik, Christine Plastow, and Rachel Zelnik-Abramovitz (London: Routledge, 2023), 669–690.

[12] Rowan Greer, 'Alien Citizens. A Marvellous Paradox', in *Civitas. Religious Interpretations of the City*, ed. Peter Hawkins (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 39–56.

[13] On Caïn and Sodom: Genesis 4:17, 18:24. For Jerusalem as a place of sin: Isaiah 1:21, 64:10; Jeremiah 6:6, 19:8–15; Ezekiel 24:6–9. See furthermore the lemma 'City', in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 5, *Charisma – Czaczkes*, ed. Allison Dale et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 361–379.

from worldly ties.[14] At the same time, the New Testament also sets the stage for Christian appropriation of Roman models of citizenship and associated civic idiom. The Apostle Paul had not been above invoking his privileged status as a Roman citizen to avoid a public whipping and bring his case before the emperor.[15] The Book of Revelation visualises the eternal abode of the faithful as a perfectly squared city, reminiscent in outline to a Roman colony, turning the city from a locus of sin into one of salvation.[16] This city is the heavenly fatherland (*patria superna*) in which Christians like Severinus hoped eventually to be enlisted.

Christianity's rise to dominance in the fourth century AD did not resolve the tensions presented by the Bible. Patristic authorities like Augustine chose rather to embrace them, developing further the notion of the Christian as a temporary resident in the world whose true fatherland was in heaven, while simultaneously manifesting themselves as energetic urban leaders and community-builders.[17] The Pauline suggestion that the legal instrumentarium of the state could be made to serve the Christian when needed, was similarly taken to heart. In late imperial legislation bishops and emperors worked together to disenfranchise heretics and other religious deviants, who were banished from the empire's cities and

[14] Paradigmatic passages include 1 Peter 2:11 and Ephesians 2:18–19. See also Benjamin Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 1–45.

[15] Acts 22:22–29, 25:10–13; Sean Adams, 'Paul the Roman Citizen: Roman Citizenship in the Ancient World and Its Importance for Understanding Acts 22:22–29', in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman*, ed. Stanley Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 309–326.

[16] Revelation 3:12, 21:2–27. On the distinctly Roman grid of Heavenly Jerusalem: Francis Haverfield, *Ancient Town Planning* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 55. More generally on ancient and medieval representations of Heavenly Jerusalem: Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Rome: Herder, 1987) and the contribution by Megan Welton in this volume.

[17] Hervé Inglebert, 'How to Define the Citizenship of the City of God: An Augustinian Problem', in *In the Crucible of Empire*, ed. Berthelot and Price, 283–300; Catherine Conybeare, 'The City of Augustine: On the Interpretation of Civitas', in *Being Christian in Late Antiquity. A Festschrift for Gillian Clark*, ed. Carol Harrison, Caroline Humfress, and Isabella Sandwell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 139–155; Arie J. Vanderjagt, 'Political Thought', in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. Karla Pollmann and Willemien Otten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1561–1569.

deprived of such rights as were still associated with citizenship status.[18] Christianity, in other words, could place itself in rhetorical opposition to Roman civic ideals, but could just as easily exist alongside them or even be mapped onto them.

3 Eugippius and the Citizens of Post-Roman Italy

Eugippius' thinking on citizenship was indebted to the civic traditions just outlined, above all to the Bible and Augustine. Yet it was also situational. That is, his *Commemoratorium* was crafted in response to specific circumstances and with a specific audience in mind. We will look at these two points in turn.

Eugippius was born around 460 CE, a Roman citizen of uncertain geographical provenance. He joined Severinus' community in Favianis, on Noricum's northern frontier in modern-day Austria, around the time of the saint's death in 482. It is possible, therefore, that he never met Severinus in person.[19] Eugippius' stay at Noricum was at any rate not destined to be a permanent one. Roman control over the province had been slipping for decades. By the early 480s, many of its forts and towns had been abandoned by its inhabitants; others had come under barbarian dominion, principally that of the Rugians. In 487, the Rugian kingdom was itself overthrown by the Italian king Odoacer, who promptly ordered Noricum to be evacuated and its Roman inhabitants to move to Italy. Many heeded the call, including the monks of Severinus' community. Eugippius later came to frame their journey as a second Exodus from Egypt, freeing the monks and their fellow Romans from barbarian servitude and delivering them to a new *patria*.[20] Yet leaving their monastery in Noricum had clearly been a major upheaval for the community. For several years Eugippius and his brothers moved about Italy, all the while carrying with them the saint's allegedly uncorrupted body. They were

[18] Robert Flierman and Els Rose, 'Banished from the Company of the Good. Christians and Aliens in Fifth-Century Rome', *Al-Masāq* 32 (2020): 64–86; Maria Escribano Paño, 'The Social Exclusion of Heretics in Codex Theodosianus XVI', in *Droit, religion et société dans le Code Théodosien*, ed. Jean-Jacques Aubert and Philippe Blanchard (Geneva: Droz, 2009), 39–66; Christina Lo Nero, 'Christiana Dignitas: New Christian Criteria for Citizenship in the Later Roman Empire', *Medieval Encounters* 7 (2001): 146–164.

[19] Lotter, *Severinus*, 21–37.

[20] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 44.

finally able to settle down near the Bay of Naples in the 490s. There, at the newly founded monastery of Castellum Lucullanum, Eugippius remained until his death in the late 530s or early 540s, serving as the community's abbot for the last three decades or so.

Finding a new *patria* in Italy did not entail a return to Roman territory. Lucullanum, like the rest of Italy, stood under Ostrogothic rule by this point and the site encapsulated well the continuities and discontinuities of living in a post-Roman kingdom. Located on the former estates of the Roman senator Lucius Licinius Lucullus, the site had become the residence-in-exile of Romulus Augustulus when he had been assigned a villa there upon his forced retirement in 476.[21] The last Roman emperor in the West may still have been alive when Eugippius and his fellow brethren arrived.[22] The monastery was on the outskirts of Naples, which remained a prominent city at the turn of the century, though it now housed a large Gothic cohort and was under the civil and military authority of a Gothic official, the *comes civitatis*.[23] The community's commercial and legal transactions were conducted under Roman law, guaranteed by the Gothic king Theoderic.[24] Latin served as the go-to language for most official and day-to-day communications.[25] There were tensions of course. The long-standing theological debate on the nature of Christ had gained new urgency in post-Roman Italy, where an Arian Gothic elite now ruled over a predominantly Nicaean Roman population. For the time being, Theoderic managed to avoid open conflict through a policy of religious tolerance and co-existence. Naples, like other Italian

[21] Geoffrey Nathan, 'The Last Emperor: the Fate of Romulus Augustulus', *Classica et mediaevalia* 43 (1992): 261–271.

[22] Legally, the last emperor in the West was not Romulus Augustulus but Julius Nepos, who was assassinated in AD 480. Eugippius seems to have considered the Western Empire to have continued up to that year as well, see: Katharina Winckler, '"Wie aus dem Hause der Ägyptischen Knechtschaft": Römer, Barbaren und Migration im Donauraum nach der Vita Severini', in *Wandel durch Migration? 26. internationales Symposium "Grundprobleme der frühgeschichtlichen Entwicklung im mittleren Donauraum, Straubing"*, ed. Hans Geisler (Büchenbach: Faustus, 2016), 29–38, here 31–32.

[23] Paul Arthur, *Naples. From Roman Town to City-State: An Archaeological Perspective* (London: British School at Rome, 2002), 12–13.

[24] Sean Lafferty, *Law and Society in the Age of Theoderic the Great: A Study of the Edictum Theoderici* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 54–100.

[25] Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 86.

cities, would have housed churches of both denominations.[26] Other religious tensions were less easily kept at bay. In 498, the city of Rome witnessed the consecration of two rival candidates for the papal dignity: Symmachus and Laurentius. This so-called Laurentian Schism quickly became a proxy for other contemporary issues and was further politized by what some partisans perceived as the high-handed interventions of the Ostrogothic court.[27] All in all, the monks of Lucullanum found in Italy a world that was more Roman than the one they had been forced to abandon, but also a world that was still coming to terms with barbarian rule and religious difference, where tempers were flaring and party lines being drawn up.

Such was the situation in Italy when Eugippius began working on his *Commemoratorium Vitae Sancti Severini*. He started in 509, when he was already Lucullanum's abbot, and finished it by 511. The resulting hagiography has long fascinated historians of the migration period. Gritty, bleak, yet rich in detail, it offers a visceral recollection of the disintegration of a Roman frontier province. All the same, the prevailing view is that Eugippius was an ingenious story-teller, who used the story of Severinus and fifth-century Noricum to say something about his own times. *What* exactly he was trying to say, and *who* among his contemporaries he was saying it to, are questions that are not so easily answered.

One type of answer is to read the *Commemoratorium* as an attempt at monastic community-building, addressed first and foremost to Eugippius' fellow brethren, in dire need of guidance following their forced retreat from Noricum.[28] This is a valid reading, but incomplete. That the monks of Lucullanum were among the text's intended audience is evident: the monks appear at crucial moments in the text, including a

[26] Samuel Cohen, 'Religious Diversity', in *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*, ed. Jonathan Arnold, Michael S. Bjornlie, and Kristina Sessa (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 503–532.

[27] Kristina Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy: Roman Bishops and the Domestic Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 208–246.

[28] Andreas Merkt, 'Splendens patria: die "Vita Severini" um 511 über irdische und himmlische Heimat', *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistums Regensburg* 43 (2009): 13–18; Ian Wood, 'The Monastic Frontiers of the Vita Severini', in *Eugippius und Severin*, ed. Pohl and Diesenberger, 41–51; Maximilian Diesenberger, 'Topographie und Gemeinschaft in der Vita Severini', in *Eugippius und Severin*, ed. Pohl and Diesenberger, 77–97; Harald Dickerhof, '*De instituto sancti Severini*. Zur Genese der Klostergemeinschaft des Heiligen Severin', *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 46 (1983): 3–36.

prolonged deathbed-scene in which Severinus gives his followers advice for the future.[29] Yet the text, and the circumstances in which Eugippius composed it, clearly hint at a wider readership. As outlined above, Lucullanum lay on the outskirts of Naples. The monks and their abbot would have been in frequent contact with the city's inhabitants. In fact, it had been the Neapolitan noblewoman Barbaria who had invited the wandering congregation to settle in Lucullanum in the first place.[30] It merited her a place of honour in the story.[31] Eugippius also took care to stress the eagerness with which the Neapolitan citizen-body as a whole had received the saint in their midst and to highlight some of the miracles that the worthy among them had experienced at Severinus' tomb.[32] If the *Commemoratorium* was an attempt at community-building, then the citizens of Naples were to be included in that community.

There are indications, however, that Eugippius intended his story to be read beyond the Bay of Naples and even Italy. Upon completing the work in 511, he sent it off to an influential contemporary, the Roman deacon Paschasius, for correction and validation. His dedicatory letter and Paschasius' response came to serve as the work's prologue and postscript respectively.[33] This was not the first time Eugippius reached out to the elite of Rome. In the 490s, he had compiled a major florilegium of the works of Augustine, which he had dedicated to the Roman virgin Proba, a member of the illustrious Anicii family.[34] Other prominent acquaintances in Rome included Dionysius Exiguus, the instigator of the anno-Domini system and the senator Cassiodorus, who also served

[29] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 43.

[30] Kate Cooper, 'The Widow as Impresario: Gender, Legendary Afterlives, and Documentary Evidence in Eugippius' Vita Severini', in *Eugippius und Severin*, ed. Pohl and Diesenberger, 53–63; Nathan, 'The Last Emperor', who argues that Barbaria was in fact related to Romulus Augustulus.

[31] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 46.

[32] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 46. Some of these miracle stories were probably added to the text by Eugippius at a later stage, Noll, *Das Leben*, 36.

[33] The letters are included in the earliest manuscripts, which date from the tenth century onwards, see: Karl Rehberger, 'Die Handschriften der Vita S. Severini', in *Severin. Zwischen Römerzeit und Völkerwanderung*, ed. Dietmar Straub (Linz: Landesverlag, 1982), 21–39.

[34] Eugippius' dedicatory letter to Proba survives as an introduction to the work, Eugippius, *Excerpta ex Operibus Sancti Augustini*, ed. Pius Knöll, CSEL 9.1 (Vienna: C Gerold, 1885), 1–4.

as *magister officiorum*, the most senior administrative official at Theoderic's court in Ravenna.[35] Beyond Italy, Eugippius' network extended towards North-Africa.[36] He corresponded with the renowned bishop Fulgentius of Ruspe, a fellow aficionado of the works of Augustine.[37] Fulgentius' deacon and hagiographer, Ferrandus of Carthage, kept up the correspondence after his bishop's death.[38]

While none besides Paschasius can with certainty be said to have read the *Commemoratorium*, this was a group of people who took pride in learning and engaged in a lively exchange of ideas and books. Dionysius sent Eugippius his Latin translation of Gregory of Nyssa's *De opificio hominis*.[39] Fulgentius' letter to Eugippius consisted of an in-depth exploration of the virtue of *caritas*, which was also one of the principal civic virtues extolled in the *Commemoratorium*. Fittingly, Fulgentius concluded his letter on a more mundane note of charity, promising Eugippius to send him the books that he had requested and asking that his friend return the favour by having his scribes copy and send over whatever he deemed of use in Lucullanum's library.[40] Beyond their shared reading culture, these correspondents also shared with Eugippius the experience of living in foreign lands and being uprooted from their *patria*.[41] Fulgentius spent much of his episcopal career as an exile on

[35] Dionysius, *Epistula ad Eugipium presbyterum*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL SL 67 (Paris, 1848), col. 345C–346B. Cassiodorus spoke of Eugippius as if he knew him personally, *Institutiones*, ed. Roger Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 1.23.1. *presbyteri Eugippii… quem nos quoque vidimus.*

[36] A link to southern Gaul and the monastic powerhouse of Lérins is more hypothetical, see Gometz, 'Eugippius', 94–96, 129–148; Lotter, *Severinus*, 33–34.

[37] Fulgentius, *Epistulae*, ed. Jean Fraipont, CCSL 91 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968), no. 5. On Fulgentius and his network, see: Susan Stevens, 'The Circle of Bishop Fulgentius', *Traditio* 38 (1982): 327–341.

[38] Ferrandus, *Epistola dogmatica adversus Arrianos aliosque haereticos ad Eugippium*, ed. Angelo Mai, Scriptorum veterum nova collectio 3.2 (Rome, 1828), 169–185. This letter was printed once more, together with another earlier letter by Ferrandus in *Florilegium casinensis*, ed. Angelo Mai and August Reifferscheid, vol. 1 (Monte Cassino, 1873), 194–202.

[39] Dionysius, *Epistula ad Eugipium presbyterum.*

[40] Fulgentius, *Epistulae*, no. 5.

[41] On the importance of exile in late antique Christian discourse, see Julia Hillner, Jörg Ulrich, and Jakob Engberg, eds., *Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016).

Sardinia after running afoul of the Vandal king Thrasamund. Dionysius had come to Rome from Scythia and would never return to his place of birth. His letter to Eugippius hints at the 'inconveniences of living as a stranger' (*peregrinationis incommoda*), while asserting at the same time that 'as long as one always pursues the [heavenly] fatherland with desire, one cannot be deemed an exile far from home'.[42] This is a familiar type of civic language that Eugippius' came to harness to great effect in his *Commemoratorium*.

Eugippius, then, was part of a network of prominent literati who made it their business to read each other's works and who would have appreciated the values and themes expounded in the *Commemoratorium*. Significantly, this network is an important point of refence also for those who discern a political agenda behind the text.[43] Eugippius' North-African correspondents Fulgentius and Ferrandus were active defenders of Nicaean orthodoxy against the Arian Vandal regime.[44] One of Ferrandus' letters to Eugippius, dated to around 533, consisted of a lengthy rebuttal of Arian theology. It was prompted by a series of questions that a certain 'Arian Gothic count' had recently put to Eugippius and which the latter had passed on to Ferrandus.[45] The phrasing does not in itself imply hostility, but begs the question all the same: if Eugippius was debating Arians in 530s, may he not also have interspersed his earlier hagiographical work with anti-Arian sentiments, possibly even veiled criticism of Arianism's Gothic royal adherents?

There was at least one contemporary who interpreted the work in such terms: Paschasius, the Roman deacon to whom Eugippius had sent off the *Commemoratorium*. A staunch supporter of pope Laurentius, Paschasius was not at all fond of King Theoderic, who was not just a heretic in his

[42] Dionysius, *Epistula ad Eugipium presbyterum*, col. 346B. *a patria non procul exsulare creditur, si semper patriam desiderio consequatur.*

[43] Winckler, '"Wie aus dem Hause der Ägyptischen Knechtschaft"', 33–36; Carl Hammer, 'The Examples of the Saints. Reading Eugippius' account of Saint Severin', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 59 (2008): 155–186; Walter Goffart, 'Does the Vita S. Severini Have an Underside?', in *Eugippius und Severin*, ed. Pohl and Diesenberger, 33–39; though see Gometz, 'Eugippius', 217–244, who notes rightly that not all people in Eugippius' network were on the same page politically.

[44] Daniel Bachelet, 'Fulgence et l'arianisme vandale', in *Lingua et ingenium: studi su Fulgenzio di Ruspe e il suo contesto*, ed. Antonio Piras (Cagliari: Sandhi, 2010), 3–16.

[45] Ferrandus, *Epistula dogmatica*, 170. *nunc interim dignare considerare, quales habeat vires ab arriano Gothorum comite nuper proposita quaestio.*

eyes but had made the still more aggravating mistake of coming down in favour of Laurentius' rival Symmachus.[46] The deacon was careful to couch his dislike in scriptural analogy. Praising Eugippius' hagiographical efforts, he compared them to those of the Maccabee Mattathias, who had used 'the examples of the saints' to inspire his sons to keep up the fight against their Seleucid oppressors. Paschasius explained:

> The father's instruction was not lost upon the sons. So profound an impact did the deeds of their elders have upon them, that they frightened armed princes with their candid faith, vanquished heathen army camps, tore down demonic shrines and altars across the land, and, having themselves been decorated with eternal wreaths, obtained a civic crown for their radiant fatherland.[47]

As Istvan Bóna and Karl Hammer have stressed, the analogy between the Seleucids and Theoderic's Gothic regime would have been hard to miss for Eugippius and his biblically-minded contemporaries.[48] Paschasius saw the *Commemoratorium* as a work that could inspire the Catholic inhabitants of Italy to rise up against their heretical overlords, and he called upon Eugippius to join in this cause. In doing so, Paschasius incidentally showed himself to be yet another member of Eugippius' network well-versed in the idiom of citizenship. Besides invoking the image of a shared *patria*, he referred to the Roman military distinction of the 'civic crown' (*civicam coronam*), a wreath of oak leaves traditionally bestowed upon a soldier who saved the life of a Roman citizen.[49]

Paschasius' interpretation is suggestive, but cannot be taken as a direct gateway into Eugippius' own intentions. In the next section, therefore, we will explore how Eugippius himself came to harness the language of citizenship in his *Commemoratorium* and what lessons he sought to impart with it.

[46] On Paschasius: John Moorhead, 'The Laurentian Schism: East and West in the Roman Church', *Church History* 47 (1978): 125–136, here 132, n. 25.

[47] Paschasii epistola ad Eugippium, ed. Noll, *Das Leben*, 46. *Nec paterna liberos fefellit instructio; tantum enim profuerunt memoratis facta maiorum, ut apertissima fide armatos principes deterrerent, castra sacrilega superarent, cultus arasque daemonicas longe lateque diruerent, ciuicamque coronam sertis decorati perennibus splendenti patriae prouiderent.*

[48] Bóna, 'Sever[in]iana', 285; Hammer, 'The Examples of the Saints', 159–161.

[49] Valerie Maxfield, *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army* (London: Batsford, 1981), 70–74.

4 The *Commemoratorium*: A Tale of Many Cities

The narrative proper of the *Commemoratorium* can be grouped into three sections: Severinus' ministry in Noricum (c. 1–39), his death (c. 40–43), and the translation of his body to Italy (c. 44–46). All three deal with citizenship, though from different perspectives and with different emphases.

The first section starts *in medias res* with the saint's arrival in the city of Asturis and then continues with a series of stand-alone episodes that show Severinus moving from town to town as Noricum gradually comes under barbarian rule. There is no strict chronology. Narrative coherence is achieved through recurrence, as episodes tend to conform to a strict formula. An urban community is facing a crisis of some sort—barbarians at the gate, citizens being captured, floods, famine, heresy—whereupon the saint arrives and offers the citizens advice on how to solve the problem. His tone and bearing on such occasions resemble those of an Old Testament prophet, lamenting his listeners' sinfulness and threatening divine retribution.[50] The episode's resolution depends on the citizens' response: if they heed the saint's advice, they are saved, if they ignore it, they suffer the consequences, which tend to take the form of biblical scenes of urban destruction.

There are several things to note here. First, that despite being set in a distant frontier province of an empire that no longer existed, the urban landscape of the *Commemoratorium* would have been instantly recognisable to its sixth-century readers. They would have identified with Noricum's circumstances: an embattled Roman society gradually yielding to barbarian rule. Moreover, Eugippius used various 'zooming devices' to bring his story closer to the experiences of his contemporaries.[51] In describing Noricum's settlements, he combined place names with general Roman urban terminology, distinguishing as a rule between cities (*civitates*, *oppida*, *municipia*) on the one hand, and forts (*castella*)

[50] Marc van Uytfanghe, 'La bible dans la "Vie de saint Séverin" d'Eugippius', *Latomus* 33 (1974): 324–352.

[51] On 'zooming devices', see: Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Assumptions and the Creation of Meaning: Reading Sophocles' Antigone', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 134–148.

on the other.[52] The inhabitants of such settlements he typically designated collectively, referring to citizens (*cives*), Romans (*Romani*) or town-dwellers (*oppidani*) when speaking of the inhabitants of cities, while using 'inhabitants' (*accolae*) for the residents of forts.[53] The result was a rather a-historical Roman landscape that the citizens of sixth-century Italy and North-Africa could easily map onto their own situation. The biblical typology that Eugippius simultaneously imposed on Noricum's urban landscape would have worked in a similar way, but was targeted mostly at readers proficient in exegesis, such as the monks of Lucullanum.[54] They would have looked at the Romans of Noricum as they had been trained to look at the Ancient Israelites in the Old Testament: a prefiguration of themselves. This raises a second point: the urban vignettes that form the backbone of the *Commemoratorium* were clearly meant to be instructional. They were more than a scenic backdrop to Severinus' saintly achievements. They were to be read as parables of good and bad communal behaviour: short and accessible stories set in a familiar urban landscape that would prompt the sixth-century reader—monastic and secular—to ruminate on what it meant to be a good citizen. The resulting model of citizenship was both Christian and Roman, but it emphasised communal responsibilities above legal rights. Good citizenship in Eugippius' book meant performing a number of duties for the good of the community.

One important duty that Eugippius had his protagonist Severinus instil in the citizens of Noricum was a particular type of Christian piety: public, communal and participatory. The text is riddled with scenes of citizens participating in the liturgy and engaging in communal prayer, fasting and penance. The importance of these practices is underlined right at the start through Severinus' interaction with two cities, Asturis and Comagenis.[55] Both are having trouble with barbarians: Asturis is facing an immanent attack, Comagenis is being bled dry by a barbarian cohort lodged within its walls as part of a treaty. Visiting these cities in turn, Severinus is clear about the remedy: start fasting, start doing penance. The citizens

[52] *civitas* (9x) and *oppidum* (38x) are his most common terms. Most major settlements are characterised by both terms. See furthermore: Bieler, *The Life*, 19–20, n. 21.

[53] But see Eugippius *Commemoratorium*, c. 11, which refers to one Marcianus, a citizen (*civis*) of the fort (*castellum*) of Cucullis.

[54] Winckler, '"Wie aus dem Hause"'; Wood, 'The Monastic Frontiers'.

[55] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 1–2.

of Asturis ignore the saint, and their city is razed to the ground soon thereafter. The citizens of Comagensis are also doubtful at first, but then an old man appears in their midst, the sole survivor of the carnage at Asturis, who corroborates the saint's predictions. Thereupon, the citizens of Comagensis start observing fasts and making amends for their past mistakes. On the third day, as they are all celebrating Mass together, the town is shaken by an earthquake, driving off the barbarians and saving the city.

Beyond such acts of Christian participation, the *Commemoratorium* put a special emphasis on charity or *caritas*. We have seen already that this was an important value for Eugippius. He had chosen *caritas* as a central organising principle for his collections of excerpts from Augustine in the 490s, and he continued to return to it in his correspondence thereafter.[56] In the *Commemoratorium*, he presented *caritas* as a practical and distinctly communal virtue: paying tithes, looking after the poor by sending food or clothes and paying ransom for fellow citizens captured by barbarians.[57] While *caritas* should thus be aimed at the wellbeing of the community as a whole, the text does on occasion zoom in on individual responsibilities. Early on in the narrative, we are told the story of the widow Procula, a citizen of Favianis, who is secretly hoarding grain in a time of famine.[58] She is found out by the saint, who publicly berates her: as 'a woman of noble birth' (*nobilissimis orta natalibus*) she has a special duty towards the poor, but her actions render her a slave of greed (*cupiditatis ancilla*, *avaritiae mancipium*). Castigated, she repents and starts to dole out freely to those of lesser means and status (*pauperibus*), and soon thereafter, a merchant fleet arrives, lifting the famine. There was more to this story than a general celebration of Christian charity. It was a carefully crafted reminder that with elevated social status came enhanced responsibilities. The doling out of grain had long been associated with elite and imperial munificence in Rome and was continued under the Ostrogothic rulers.[59] The blatant social reversal implied in the

[56] Gometz, 'Eugippius', 86–99.

[57] See, e.g.: Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 3, 12, 17–18.

[58] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 3.

[59] Michele Salzman, 'From a Classical to a Christian City: Civic Euergetism and Charity in Late Antique Rome', *Studies in Late Antiquity* 1 (2017): 65–85.

saint's exhortation—a woman of noble birth acting like a slave of greed—would have further driven home the point: the widow of Favianis had failed not just as a Christian but also as a member of the urban elite. Surely, Eugippius' aristocratic contemporaries in Naples and Rome could do better.

Evidently, Eugippius was not afraid to instil in his readers a sense of social control, even a feeling of being watched. This was the case above all with behaviour that defied public scrutiny, such as correct belief and worship.[60] The message is driven home in a story situated in Cucullis, a fort in the West of Noricum.[61] Severinus is called in by the inhabitants because they are afraid that some in their midst are still engaging in pagan practices. The saint orders all the families to come together for Mass and to each bring an unlit candle, which they have to affix to one of the church walls. Over prayer, the faithful in the congregation see their candles miraculously lit, while those who had engaged in sacrilegious practices are exposed by their unlit candles. With the 'secrets of their heart' laid bare for all to see, they confess and repent and are re-accepted in the community. Clearly, correct belief was another part of good citizenship for Eugippius. But the tale also reiterated the message he had already conveyed through the story of the widow Procula: citizenship is acted out in private as well as in public. Your fellow citizens may only see what you do out in the open, but God and the saints see all.[62]

Significantly, good citizenship extended beyond strictly Christian practices. Twice, the saint is shown to convince a city to take to the field against a barbarian threat, fortified by their faith and his intercessory prayers. In both cases, they are victorious, defeating an enemy that boasts superior numbers.[63] For Eugippius, then, the collective responsibility of citizens for their community's wellbeing could extend into the martial realm. But he took care to underline, all the same, that the greatest protection against external threats was provided by spiritual arms—communal faith and prayers—and that the sweetest victory was a

[60] On earlier Christian strategies to police communal belief and practice, see: Harry Maier, '"Manichee!": Leo the Great and the Orthodox Panopticon', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 (1996): 441–460; Flierman and Rose, 'Banished from the Company of the Good', 15–21.

[61] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 11.

[62] A sentiment already expressed in the Scriptures, see: e.g. Psalm 138; John 21:37.

[63] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 4, 27.

bloodless one.[64] This latter point was driven home in a lengthy episode situated in the city of Lauriacum, where the saint convinces the citizens to post watches on the city walls at night to guard against an immanent barbarian attack.[65] Unconvinced of the threat, the citizens agree only reluctantly. Yet on the fourth night, one of the watches accidently sets fire to a haystack with his torch. The city suffers no damage, miraculously, but the ensuing blaze does scare off a barbarian force lying in wait in the surrounding woods. When the citizens walk out of the gate the next morning, they encounter the abandoned ladders that the barbarians had brought 'for the destruction of the city' (*ad urbis excidium*).

It is fair to ask at this point how exactly the barbarians fitted into Eugippius' civic model. The examples shown so far placed the barbarians firmly in opposition to Noricum's citizens: they are a danger to the city, whether they threaten it from outside or are lodged treacherously within. This suggestion is strengthened by Eugippius' language, which combined specific ethnonyms with more general Roman terminology used for outside peoples. He identified *Rugi*, *Heruli*, *Alemanni*, *Thoringi* and *Gothi*—names that would still have rung familiar in the sixth century—but he also spoke frequently of barbarians (*barbari*), typically with pejorative connotations. In situations of conflict, he openly characterised them as enemies (*hostes, inimici*) or robbers (*praedones*, *latrunculi*).[66] References to barbarian Arianism are rare and implicit, but are not absent. Early on, Severinus is introduced as someone who commanded respect even among the 'heretical enemies of the Church', by which the reader was meant to understand the Rugi. Later in the text, the Rugian queen Giso comes in for special censure due to her plans to re-baptise Catholics, presumably into the Arian faith.[67]

Other segments of the text offer a more complex reading. The saint himself is shown to have been on friendly terms with barbarian kings

[64] A point that recurs in many early hagiographical works, e.g. Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, c. 4.

[65] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 30.

[66] Fritz Lošek, 'Freunde, Feinde, Fremde—Terminologie und Typologie in der Vita Severini', in *Sprache und Identität im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Walter Pohl and Bernhard Zeller (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012), 205–210; Matthias Skeb, 'Mit Fremden leben. Gottesbild und Umgang mit Fremden in der "Vita Severini" des Eugippius', *Studia monastica* 51 (2009): 33–48, here 35–36.

[67] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 4, 8; Winckler, '"Wie aus dem Hause"', 33.

and queens: he was welcome at their courts, where he offered advice and interceded on behalf of Noricum's citizens. The barbarian king Odoacer, in particular, is styled in positive terms, despite his Arian credentials. As a young man he sought out the saint for spiritual guidance and a blessing; later on, as king of Italy, he helped the Romans evacuate Noricum and find a new home across the Alps.[68] Eugippius' favourable account of Odoacer takes on a more poignant character by the subsequent lack of praise for his successor in Italy: Theoderic. The Ostrogothic king appears only once in the text, directly after the section on Odoacer. Eugippius refers to him as a barbarian king, but does not mention his rule over Italy, nor the fact that he would assassinate Odoacer to establish this rule. While lacking open hostility, the comparison between the two kings was hardly flattering for Italy's present ruler.[69]

All things considered, we can appreciate how someone like Paschasius would have read the *Commentatorium* as a call to arms against the Ostrogothic regime. There is anti-barbarian rhetoric in Eugippius' text. The citizens of Noricum had been the Romans: the concepts of citizen (*civis*) and Roman (*Romanus*) were for him nearly interchangeable. He had not included Noricum's barbarians in this model of citizenship, beyond their role as robbers and enemies that is. For a city like Naples, where Romans and Goths lived in close proximity, such imagery amounted to a plea for segregation rather than integration. That said, Eugippius did not of itself renounce barbarian rule: it was possible to be a good citizen in a barbarian kingdom, as long as the civic community would remain of sound spiritual conviction and keep to correct Christian practice. His views on the Ostrogothic regime were even more opaque. He refrained from openly criticising Theoderic.[70] Nor did he mention Arianism by name.[71] In this respect, his call to arms was more of a whisper.

Eugippius turned Severinus' ministry among the cities of Noricum into a powerful model of civic behaviour. Yet his story was not yet finished. The saint had eventually passed from the world. Shortly thereafter, Noricum had been given up as a Roman province and most of its

[68] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 7, 32, 44.

[69] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 44.

[70] Winckler, '"Wie aus dem Hause"', 33–34.

[71] Philippe Régerat, 'Der Arianismus in der Vita Severini', *Wiener Studien* 111 (1998): 243–251.

Roman inhabitants had abandoned their cities and sought refuge in Italy. This posed a serious challenge to Eugippius' narrative and its underlying message. For if the cities of Noricum had been doomed in the end, what had been the point of making them behave as proper civic communities? Eugippius used the final chapters of the *Commemoratorium* to lay out a response. Inevitably perhaps it saw him return to the civic values he had used to introduce his protagonist in the prologue: the Christian as an exile on earth whose real *patria* is in heaven. Yet crucially, he managed to effect this return without invalidating the model of civic participation he had so carefully laid out in the meantime.

Severinus' prophetic qualities proved a great boon in bringing about this resolution. Eugippius left no doubt that the saint had been aware of Noricum's imminent evacuation all along. Indeed, part of his ministry had been to prepare Noricum's citizens for this faithful day. When Severinus had aided the Romans of Batavis against an Alemannian force, he had tempered their jubilations by pointing them towards the future: their city, and many others, would soon have to be abandoned.[72] This did not necessarily mean leaving Noricum altogether. For the citizens of Lauriacum, for example, the saint brokered a deal with the Rugian king Fela, allowing them to resettle in nearby towns under a peaceful treaty.[73] For other Romans, Severinus predicted a longer, though ultimately no less beneficial, migration: they would move to 'a province of Roman land' and would suffer 'no loss of liberty'.[74]

With his death at hand, Severinus retreated to his monastery at Favianis. He informed his brethren about the impending evacuation using a biblical example that had reconciled many Christians to the sufferings of exile by reframing it as a return home. Just as the sons of Israel had departed Egypt for the Promised Land, so the peoples of Noricum would escape barbarian oppression and set out towards a Roman province. The monks too should join this Exodus, taking his bones with them.[75] On his deathbed, Severinus offered his followers a last piece of advice, invoking

[72] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 27.

[73] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 31.

[74] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 31. *asserens universos in Romani soli provinciam absque ullo libertatis migraturos incommodo.*

[75] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 40.

an earlier yet equally iconic Old Testament episode about displacement and homecoming:

> Abraham obeyed faithfully when the Lord called upon him to set out for the place that he was to accept in his possession. He went, knowing not where he would end up. Imitate the faith of this holy patriarch, imitate his sanctity, despise all worldly things, and always seek the home that is in heaven.[76]

It is doubtful whether Eugippius had himself been present during the saint's final hours. Few among the monks of Lucullanum in the 510s would have been. But even crafted after the fact it was a powerful memory. Their spiritual leader had foreseen their journey to Italy. Their 'state of wandering' (*peregrinatio*), as Eugippius came to style it, had followed in the footsteps of Abraham and the Israelites and had been sanctioned by their saint.[77]

The final chapters of the *Commemoratorium* described, in broad strokes, Noricum's evacuation and the translation of the saint's body to Italy. The past was now rapidly catching up with the present. The one remaining task for Eugippius was to show how his community had found a new temporary *patria* in Naples, and to underline how much the city and its surroundings had benefitted, and would continue to benefit, from the new saint in their midst. He fulfilled this task with relish, describing how the Neapolitan noblewoman Barbaria had inundated the wandering monks with letters asking them to settle at her estates in Lucullanum. Papal approval for the translation had been obtained swiftly, and the local bishop had with his own hands carried Severinus' remains to their new resting place.[78] All formalities had been observed, and more. As the people of Naples had rushed out to witness the scene and pay tribute to their new saintly protector, several citizens had been cured of long-standing ailments. Miracles had continued ever after. Even after his death,

[76] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 43. *Abraham namque uocatus a domino fide oboedivit, ut exiret in locum, quem accepturus erat in possessionem, et exiit nesciens, quo uenturus esset. Huius igitur beati patriarchae imitamini fidem, imitamini sanctitatem, terrena despicite, patriam caelestem semper inquirite.*

[77] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 44.

[78] Eugippius, *Commemoratorium*, c. 44.

Severinus continued to instil communal behaviour, and citizens continued to benefit from his presence and example.

5 Conclusion

Christianity played a crucial role in ensuring that the citizen remained a familiar concept in the Early Medieval West. One of the aims of this volume, and this contribution in particular, has been to get a better understanding of what this process looked like on the ground. To this end, this contribution zoomed in on the Bay of Naples around 510 CE, where the displaced monk Eugippius used the genre of hagiography to put forward a spectacular vision of Christian civic community. His *Commemoratorium Vitae Sancti Severini* confronted its readers with familiar but ostensibly contradictory ideas about citizenship. The two letters that came to serve as its prologue and postscript are a case in point. The former characterised Severinus as a stranger who denounced earthly ties to become a citizen of the heavenly fatherland, the latter celebrated the example of the Maccabees, who won civic honours by liberating their earthly *patria* from sacrilege and tyranny. In between, Eugippius told the story of a wandering holy man who taught the cities of a Late-Roman frontier province how to act as good citizens.

While Eugippius was a monk, his *Commemoratorium* was a work of the world. Written in the still heavily urbanised landscape of early sixth-century Italy, it aimed at a wide readership that included not just the community of Lucullanum and the citizens of Naples, but also a network of Italian and North-African clerics and aristocrats. The Roman and Biblical language of citizenship came easy to such readers: it was part of their textual horizon and cultural heritage and resonated with their circumstances. Not every reader would have read the text in the same way or distilled from it the same meaning. For the citizens of Naples and other Italian cities, the stories of Severinus' ministry in Noricum offered a script of civic behaviour. For their communities to thrive under a new post-Roman political constellation, they should act collectively. They should participate in the liturgy and other acts of public piety. They should engage in charity, with a special duty befalling the urban elite. They should be of sound Christian belief and see to it that their neighbours were as well. If necessary, they should take up arms against external enemies, trusting that God would aid the faithful city in its distress. For the embattled clergymen in Eugippius' Mediterranean network the text

could serve as a validation of their struggles under heretical barbarian rule. While never mentioning Arianism by name, the *Commemoratorium* celebrated Catholic orthodoxy and censured barbarian kings who did not respect it. For most part, it placed the barbarians outside its civic model. For the monks of Lucullanum, finally, the text held multiple interpretative layers. They could read the urban stories figuratively, taking from them what applied best to the monastic experience, such as the calls for collective prayer, penance and communal introspection. Yet the text was also meant to reconcile them to their recent migration to Italy, confirming they were on a path laid out by their saintly founder, a path that, if followed persistently, would lead them towards the heavenly *patria*.

The language of citizenship remained widespread in the early Middle Ages because it was flexible and could serve diverse purposes. Christianity played an important role as mediator in this respect, turning the already formidable heritage of Roman citizenship into a still richer compendium of values, terminologies, stories and rhetorical strategies. Still, it is one thing for us to observe this flexibility, it must have been quite another for a medieval author to harness it and direct it towards some cause, or in the case of Eugippius, multiple causes. His *Commemoratorium* was not a self-evident work. Nor was it a literary exercise. It was an act of imagination with practical aims and ambitions: a meticulously crafted story that was meant to change how a new generation of Christian communities acted and participated in the world.

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