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THE BUCOLIC MODE IN BYZANTINE ART

SOUND, WEATHER, IMPERIUM

by

PAROMA CHATTERJEE

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Figure 1. Shepherd and figures, fifth century CE. Linen and wool, 11.8 × 11.5 cm. New York, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund. Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

INTRODUCTION

A TEXTILE IN the Brooklyn Museum of Art displays an intriguing vista (Figure 1). This roundel of linen and wool, edged by a wave pattern, shows on the top a bare-bodied boy with a cloth covering his loins who lies on his stomach and plays a flute. A dog sits next to him. Below them, a child stretches out an arm to the left and a dog leaps toward him from the right. The child's arm points to a woman bearing an infant on her back and gesturing (with a stick?) to a herd of sheep and goats. This herd faces a man, also largely bare bodied, who holds a staff and is seated. The purple background, now much faded, is tempered by vegetation in a few areas. A grassy patch furnishes the backdrop to the flute-playing boy, and a tree flanks the woman on the left. Plants are otherwise sparse in comparison to the humans and beasts in the image field.

This object, barely studied in Byzantine art history, does appear in a major catalogue on late antique art from 1979 titled *The Age of Spirituality*.[1] The catalogue entry places the textile in the fifth century CE with a provenance in Egypt. It is said to be one of a set of four pieces, each displaying a distinct scene involving shepherds, animals, and music-making figures, all destined to adorn a single garment. The catalogue note elaborates on the imagery on our textile—and on my own staccato description above—by positing optical, acoustic, and affective relations between the figures depicted. So we read that the boy plays the flute "while his dog listens," and that the other dog "affectionately licks the left ear of a babe seated on the ground," and that an old shepherd watches the woman, identified in the note as a shepherdess.[2] Most importantly for the purposes of this study, the note places the textile and its counterparts in a section titled "Bucolics" and closes with the pithy but suggestive observation that bucolic imagery became popular in the fourth and fifth centuries, "a period when perspective yielded to paratactic arrangements."[3]

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1 Weitzmann, ed., *The Age of Spirituality*, 250–51.

2 Weitzmann, ed., *The Age of Spirituality*, 250–51.

3 Weitzmann, ed., *The Age of Spirituality*, 251.

This book examines a selection of bucolic images in Byzantium, some of which were produced and received well beyond late antiquity. As far as the literary tradition is concerned, we know that bucolic poets such as Theocritus, Virgil, Moschus, and Bion were read and cited in Byzantium, and that the mode itself was used in medieval Greek by poets such as Nonnus, John Geometres, Christopher Mytilene and John Mauropous, novelists such as Theodore Prodromos and Niketas Eugeneianos, and epigrammatists such as Cyrus and Agathias. Furthermore, literary allusions to Theocritean poetry appear throughout the Byzantine period, as Joan Burton demonstrates.[4] Images from the visual repertoire (such as the Brooklyn textile) also evince the fundamental elements that characterize bucolic literature: that is, shepherds and goatherds with their animals, other humans, and sometimes personifications inhabiting natural spaces. However, these have never been studied as a coherent set of pictorial conventions with significant cultural, political, and religious implications in Byzantium.[5]

This book argues that the basic conventions undergirding bucolic imagery enabled it to participate in and comment on (at least) three arenas of the Byzantine thought-world at different moments in time: namely, the magnetic role of the shepherd and his voice in Orthodox salvation; phenomena related to weather; and the values associated with imperium under a particular emperor, Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, and his milieu. A corollary contention is that bucolic conventions open up spheres of inquiry that entail, first, the significance of sound and the crafting of soundscapes via images to particular effects (think of the flute-playing boy on the Brooklyn textile, for example); secondly, the implications of the role of non-human animals and other species in a visual field shared with humans; and finally, the study of the subject of attention vis-à-vis an image, and the kinds of attentiveness (or otherwise) of the depicted beings in an image toward each other. The catalogue note mentioned above gestures to this last point by underscoring the tendency of bucolic scenes to display paratactic arrangements.[6] This dimension is evident in the looseness of relations between the figures on the Brooklyn textile—a looseness that the note attempts to resolve by attributing

4 Burton, "The Pastoral in Byzantium," 549–79.

5 Bucolic imagery has sometimes been invoked as a subset of Dionysiac imagery but has often been overshadowed by the latter. See, for instance, the very few references in the index to "bucolic" in Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art*, and Tsourinaki, "Late Antique Textiles of the Benaki Museum."

6 *Parataxis* in bucolic scenes on Roman sarcophagi is also discussed in Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning and Memory in Roman Sarcophagi*, 83.

particular affects and intentions to the figures (the affectionate canine, the listening canine, and the old man watching the woman approach).

But no definite visual parameters attest to those affects and intentions as being what they are claimed to be. If anything, the image indicates the multiple *possibilities* of human and non-human optical, tactile, and/or acoustic attentiveness to each other. Simultaneously, the image foregrounds the question of how it may solicit forms of acknowledgement from its viewer in the absence of the overt parameters that usually signal importance in Byzantine art. In such a scheme, as Byzantinists well know, centre triumphs over the sides, and size is in positive correlation to significance. But the Brooklyn textile places a child, a dog, sheep, and goats at its ostensible centre, whilst displacing the largest human figures (the standing woman and seated man) to the sides, thereby hinting at other regimes of significance at play. We shall find in the subsequent chapters that bucolic imagery tends to upset our normative parameters of viewing Byzantine art and, in doing so, invites us to interrogate the validity of those parameters.

Definitions

What does the word "bucolic"—as a descriptor, genre, and mode—mean? It is derived from the Greek verb *boukoleow* which, as Kathryn Gutzwiller observes, refers to a range of acts that include cowherding, grazing, tending, guarding, soothing, beguiling, cheating, and deceiving.[7] Despite being a rich, evolving, and capacious concept in the ancient and late antique world, the bucolic was nonetheless conditioned by the cultural understanding of what it meant to herd cows in its full connotative and denotative range.[8] Accordingly, the fundamental criterion I use to define bucolic imagery in this book is the presence of a shepherd in a visual field. (Cowherds are not as frequently depicted, to my knowledge.)

So much for the word. The genre of the "bucolic" is, if anything, even more complex with a long history of distinguished scholarship behind it.[9]

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7 Gutzwiller, "The Bucolic Problem," 390.

8 Gutzwiller, "The Bucolic Problem," 390.

9 The scholarly work on bucolic literature in the ancient and modern periods is vast. I mention here only a few representative works and their bibliographies that have been important to this study: Gutzwiller, "The Bucolic Problem"; Gutzwiller, "The Herdsman in Greek Thought"; Segal, *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral*; Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*; Schmidt, *Bukolische Leidenschaft*; Halperin, *Before Pastoral*; and Chaudhuri, *Pastoral Poetry of the English Renaissance.*

Simply put, the body of literary texts from the ancient to the contemporary period that we identify as "bucolic," or "pastoral" (from the Latin root) owes its origins to the poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and its major motifs are believed to have first appeared in the *Idylls* of Theocritus (third century BCE). But it was Virgil's *Eclogues* (42–37 BCE) that inspired literary variations of the bucolic and ushered in a long and relatively unbroken tradition on the subject well into the medieval and post-medieval eras in Europe, although its medieval versions are severely understudied.[10]

As a mode, the bucolic may be defined most simply and succinctly as "a way of writing about life in the countryside that emphasizes the gentle, leisurely, and often pleasurable aspects of that life…the lived experience of shepherds and goatherds…its goal is less to recreate [that] reality than to create a version that seems in some way desirable."[11] The presentation of the desirable rather than the "realistic" dimensions of the shepherding life imbues bucolic themes with an element of artifice. As Charles Segal puts it, "this most easeful of literary forms paradoxically has tension and antithesis as an inherent part of its mental world. Pastoral's deliberate simplification of life, therefore, is far from simple."[12]

Paul Holberton observes that the entire conceit of the bucolic rests on echoed allusions couched in that most un-simple of forms—song—in that most serene, but nonetheless ontologically complex setting—a sylvan landscape, which may or may not be entirely natural. Holberton underlines that that landscape not only listens to the melody (and text) voiced by its human and non-human inhabitants, but also participates in the melody by returning a refrain.[13] That refrain may emanate "from the woods or within the song or from fellow shepherds…"[14] or be intertextual or subtextual. We find similar overtones in a tenth-century description of a garden (either real or ideal) by John Geometres in which varieties of birds are said to sing in response to each other in tandem with the melody of the pines and the gushing of streams.[15] These sounds, overlapping and individual, man-made and

10 Little, "Pastoral." On studies of pastoral in the medieval era and their paucity, see also Little, *Transforming Work*.

11 Little, "Pastoral."

12 Segal, *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral*, 6.

13 Holberton, *A History of Arcadia*, 4.

14 Holberton, *A History of Arcadia*, 4.

15 See the original text and translation in Maguire, "A Description of the Aretai Palace," 209–11. See also Demoen, "A Homeric Garden in Tenth-Century Constantinople," 114–27.

otherwise, are vital to the kinds of sonic (and other) interactions the bucolic mode generates.

Holberton's insight nicely brings out the entanglement of the woods with humans and non-humans through the medium of song, which is itself an amalgam of text and melody, and which could refer to past iterations that have been sung before.[16] The "wood" (often with a river and its bank) is an undefined area, "a hinterland between organized life and the wild."[17] The bucolic setting, in turn, is "both sheltered and natural, both habitable and remote, in time and timeless, on the cusp between the civilized and the wild."[18] The connotative resonances of this particular configuration of the shepherding universe are manifold, and contain ostensible polarities between song and dialogue, music and text, leisure and work, urbanism and ruralism, art and nature, human and non-human, and the seasonal and permanent.

We might summarize all of the above by invoking David Halperin's influential theory of the bucolic mode in three main points: first, it is literature related to herdsmen and their activities, including tending to animals, making music and, sometimes, love; second, it attains significance by oppositions, the most obvious being that between natural simplicity and the power of statecraft; and third, the bucolic's essence is that of a "manner of representation…between a confused or conflict-ridden reality and the artistic depiction of it as comprehensible, meaningful, or harmonious."[19] Halperin's points pertain to *literary* expressions of the bucolic. Additionally, at least two of the three listed resonate with Byzantine modes of viewing since "significance by oppositions," or the antithetical habit (of comparing and making sense of oppositional elements in an image) and of granting rhetorical coherence and comprehensibility to "conflict-ridden" imagery were habitual to elite viewers, as textual sources show.[20] Indeed, various types of sources suggest that viewers relished the chance to show off their verbal and visual ingenuity when confronted with complicated or straightforward images.

Studies of the bucolic as a visual category unto itself are relatively few and concentrated in the ancient and early modern epochs. Bettina Bergmann,

16 Paul Alpers' classic study of modern pastoral makes this point by referring to the "re-singing" engaged in by Virgil's shepherds, and the possibility of "revoicing." See Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, 6.

17 Holberton, *A History of Arcadia*, 57.

18 Holberton, *A History of Arcadia*, 57.

19 Halperin, *Before Pastoral*, 70–71.

20 Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*.

however, points out that the pictorial version of the bucolic is not simply (or reductively) a distinct subject matter or scene comprising shepherds and flocks in a quiet place, in a peaceful mood. Rather, in the discipline of art history, the bucolic also alludes to "certain compositional structures or relationships of pictorial features that offer spectators 'inviting occasions' for escape and reverie."[21] Bergmann examines the bucolic in relation to ancient Roman images of sacred groves, indicating that these highlight the enticement to reverie even as they underscore the dialectic between nature and civilization. To be sure, the association of pictorial bucolic with the themes of reverie, escapism, melancholic rumination and nostalgia for an ideal, better, or different life is powerful, be it in readings of sarcophagi from the Roman era or in Erwin Panofsky's famous account of Poussin's Louvre painting, *Et in Arcadia Ego*, in the early modern era.[22]

We find strains of similar themes in more recent studies as well. In her exploration of Venetian Renaissance "green worlds," Jodi Cranston characterizes the pictorial bucolic as images with the potential to craft intimate ambiences and generate spaces for the acts of imagining and viewing.[23] Although it is argued that idyllic reverie is not the exclusive lens through which to read images featuring shepherds in landscapes (at least in the ancient period),[24] Bergmann's and Cranston's studies do highlight a dimension important to this book's themes. The parameters for a "green world"—that is, the image's capacity for retreat even as its structure encourages visual ambling on the part of a viewer—foreground the problem of viewer attention alluded to earlier, and also the possibilities proffered by imagery without apparent resolutions in the form of a beginning and ending, or a definitive moral or narrative "message."[25] That such images were produced and viewed in Byzantium is a challenge that we still need to grapple with seriously, given the preponderance in the scholarship of biblical and imperial images which usually do have—or at any rate, are presumed to have—clear accompanying narratives and resolutions. Here one might include the moralizing dimensions scholars tend to read even into images which evince

21 Bergmann, "Exploring the Grove," 21.

22 See the account of bucolic sarcophagi in Allen, *The Death of Myth on Roman Sarcophagi*, 74–96, and Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego," 257–62. See also the comments in Rosand, "Pastoral Topoi," 160–77.

23 Cranston, *Green Worlds of Renaissance Venice*.

24 Platt, "Art, Nature and the Material Divine," 3–13.

25 Cranston, *Green Worlds of Renaissance Venice*, 10–12.

paratactical relations and which cannot be placed comfortably in the imperial or religious domains in terms of their content.[26]

Drawing from the above insights, one may turn to the visual domain in Byzantium to define the bucolic image as one that brings together shepherds and/or goatherds making music or conversation in a landscape together with sheep, goats, dogs, and other such creatures in attendance. A bucolic image may contain all the above (and other) features or may be minimal in only depicting a shepherd and one sheep and no other creatures at all. The word "creatures" is apposite since trees, plants, flowers and even winds can, and do, constitute a bucolic scene and are often invoked in the textual sources as integral to the latter (see the Geometres description above).

This book studies depictions ranging from the literal figure of the shepherd shown with a sheep or goat slung across his shoulders (see Chapter 1), to images in which the shepherd is one figure among many (including plants and animals) who vie for, or sometimes elude, the viewer's attention and enact narratives not immediately discernible in terms of a clear endpoint or even an end, as it were. Indeed, almost all the images studied here implicate the viewer and the depicted figures in a set of interactions that lack a definite resolution. Thus, we shall see that the image of a shepherd carrying his sheep is as much an invitation to Christian salvation (as scholarship has stressed) as it is an open-ended and contingent configuration *because* it excludes the viewer from its space and from the all-important bodily shelter of the shepherd (see Chapter 1, Figure 2). Indeed, as I demonstrate, the very power of the Good Shepherd depends upon the disposition of his audience, as the evidence attests. Similarly, a shepherd making music among his flock and other beings seems to deflect a direct visual encounter with the viewer (unlike most figures in Byzantine art), even as it is implied that the power of the shepherd's music endures well into the viewer's own epoch (see Chapter 3, Figure 22). And in that vein, the bucolic imagery said to adorn a Constantinopolitan windvane displays no particular "plot" or direction, but requires an ambulatory viewer who must take in the depictions against the actual and potential contingencies of the weather that this structure was intended to signal (see Chapter 2). Absolute readings of all these images are, of course, possible (as is arguably the case with any image). However, the contexts and habitus in which they were viewed indicate otherwise.

26 Ivory caskets depicting putti and erotic themes are a case in point. See the comments in James, "Eros, Literature, and the Veroli Casket," 397–413.

No matter the visual configuration of the bucolic, it almost always contains embedded, and sometimes explicit, contradictions. The very packaging of the shepherding life as idyllic is a conceit; a temporary and deliberate illusion which can turn on itself in vengeful exposure. We find this phenomenon in many instances of bucolic poetry, such as in the description, amid beautiful peaceful surroundings, of the violent death suffered by a musical shepherd in Theocritus' very first *Idyll* (discussed in the section below). Such reversals are sometimes made explicit in the imagery as well, as discussed throughout this book. So we shall observe in the tenth-century Paris Psalter that an ideal depiction of the bucolic (Figure 22) is shattered when, upon turning to the succeeding folio, we are confronted with the image of a lion menacing the sheep herded by David (Figure 25). The bucolic setting—the imagery shows—is susceptible to radical transformation, even destruction, because of its very artificiality which cannot be sustained over a length of time.

Just as the bucolic image is often haunted by its potential disruption (via marauding lions, bad weather, or other such factors), so too can it push the boundaries of nature (*physis*) and art (*techne*) to their limits by introducing overtly manufactured objects as integral and seemingly naturalized parts of it. One example would be the *psalterion* held by David in the prefatory folio of the Paris Psalter (Figure 22). The *psalterion* is an instrument made by humans; it plays on the boundaries demarcating the products, sounds, and spaces of nature, and those cultivated by humans and, possibly, non-humans (see Chapter 3). The plethora of ekphrastic descriptions throughout the Byzantine era indicate that viewership by the elite entailed the purposeful and pleasurable transgression of the limits of *techne* and *physis*. Those categories, even whilst being recognized as distinct, were also regarded as having porous limits. Consequently, the bucolic mode is apposite for inviting both serious and playful observations regarding the layers of artifice and "nature" embedded in the images at hand, and about their contingency (on which more later in this chapter).

A word about landscape is required here. This (like the bucolic) is an art historical category that lacks the traction in the medieval era that it has received in the ancient and early modern periods and beyond.[27] (Note that I speak of the field of medieval *art history* specifically in relation to landscape, and not *history* which has produced more studies on the subject.) What we think of as "landscape" certainly exists in Byzantine art and would seem to

27 See the discussion and literature cited in Elsner, ed., *Landscape and Space*, 2–5. For two recent studies on landscape in medieval art, see Goehring, *Space, Place and Ornament*, and Palladino, "Dynamics of Medieval Landscape," 13–26.

be indispensable to bucolic images (in the form of rivers, trees, etc.). However, I have not treated it as a distinct aspect of this mode for two reasons. First, in most of the images examined, landscape is scanty, operating on the level of allusion. Secondly, even in its most luxurious delineation (Figure 22), the landscape is implicated in a network of other actors, including humans, non-humans, and monuments. As Jaś Elsner emphasizes, pictorial landscapes are largely "absent of defined or intrinsic meanings except…in relation to (or in opposition to) the human constraints imposed on them by monuments."[28] The landscape in Byzantine bucolic imagery takes on meaning precisely through the other elements—living and non-living, monumental and non-monumental—that constitute and appear in it.

Additionally, the very associations of escapism and nostalgia that often imbue readings of landscapes termed "bucolic" may, in turn, be yoked to the contemporary yearning for a return to a (supposedly) more responsible or innocent era, one devoid of the environmental rapaciousness and other ills that characterize the Anthropocene. Although the Byzantine period—like many others, one presumes—was invested in thinking about potential and actual natural calamities, and about different kinds of ecological relations (see Chapter 2), I do not believe the bucolic mode was overtly harnessed to maximalist concerns regarding the environment, or landscape, or other such topics. In other words, simply because this mode allowed for productive ruminations on human-nonhuman interfaces and the weather back in the day (among other things), does not necessarily mean that it was also a tool for the kind of ecological and/or environmental messaging we might assume such ruminations to have in our current scholarly moment.

The Bucolic in Text and Image

Let us now turn to a prototypical instance of the bucolic mode, the themes of which we find recurring in later versions in both text and image: the very first *Idyll* of Theocritus.[29] The piece lays out the conditions of the literary genre by introducing a network of musicians, voices, and musical references. A pipe-playing, unnamed goatherd asks a shepherd named Thyrsis to sing about another legendary shepherd, Daphnis, and his sorrows. Even as the musical afternoon unfolds in a setting of pine trees and bubbling springs, the poet also makes a point of including man-made objects in the scenario.

28 Elsner, "Space–Object–Landscape," 133.

29 Theocritus, *Idylls*, www.theoi.com/Text/TheocritusIdylls1.html.

These are hinted at as being images, or statues, of Priapus and fountain goddesses in the vicinity, thus bringing art into the domain of nature and vice-versa. Note that this is not strictly a garden setting; indications are that this is a slice of landscape studded with images.

Importantly, the goatherd introduces a cup, or bowl, as a prize promised to the shepherd, Thyrsis, in exchange for the quality of his song. This bowl is then described as containing a self-enclosed universe of images, akin to the more widely renowned, all-encompassing shield in Homer's *Iliad*.[30] It is said to show a suite of scenes comprising a woman placed between two rivalrous men (perhaps her suitors), an old fisherman plying his trade and combating the elements in the process, and a lad observing the antics of two foxes as they vie for grapes. These figures are hemmed in by a sinuous pattern of ivy curling around the bowl's lip. The seeming lack of relations between the scenes coaxes a reader/listener to exercise a degree of associative ingenuity in order to tie them together. Although this interpretative gesture does not explicitly occur in the *Idyll*, recall that such exercises in rhetorical and visual acuity were habitual for elite, informed readers and viewers in the Byzantine era.

Apart from furnishing the opportunity for elaborate description, the exposition of the bowl firmly implants visual and material culture into the very heart of the *Idylls*, with Thyrsis being asked to enter into the same agonistic spirit exhibited by the male suitors, the foxes competing for the grapes, and even the fisherman fighting against the elements as he labours, on the bowl.[31] The bowl is posited as the desired end of Thyrsis' song; he will obtain it if he sings well. It embodies the measurable, material value of the shepherd's melody and his ultimate mastery over the world of the first *Idyll*. The surrounding landscape—the pines, springs, oaks, statues, and the very air—recedes to the status of a frame for the prize of the bowl and the pictorial world depicted on and around it: one world encompassing another, just as intricate in detail, if on a radically different scale. The bowl is temporarily pushed to the forefront in the discourse whilst the "actual" landscape becomes, for a few moments, no more than a surround for this vessel.

Some of the above points resonate with the images on the Brooklyn textile (Figure 1). As in the first *Idyll*, here too we find a shepherd, shepherdess, flocks of animals, plants, and the theme of music-making. But the

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30 For a fundamental and still relevant discussion of this vessel, see Gow, "The Cup in the First Idyll of Theocritus," 207–22.

31 For literature on the qualities of the song and the bowl, see Frangeskou, "Theocritus' *Idyll* I," 23–42; see 24n5 for more scholarship on this subject.

transposition of textual themes to images is expectedly more complicated. The songs and dialogues integral to the bucolic mode permit an expansive cast of characters from nymphs, Muses, men, women, children, sheep, crickets, and others to inhabit a bucolic scene, even if only as verbal or musical allusions and not actual depictions. In fact, part of the appeal of the bucolic lies in the possibilities it proffers for a wide all-encompassing reach by virtue of the sounds perceived to be embedded in it, be these shaped as conversations or songs.[32] Just as in literary versions a poet could introduce any range of subjects via the imagined conversations between the characters, so too can images conjure up a spectrum of beings, some of them perhaps products of the imagination of the figures shown.

Given the above conditions, we might claim that even as the Brooklyn textile includes the fundamental components that constitute a bucolic world, the very conditions of that mode also muddy the boundaries between what may be taken as absolute depictions (of people, animals, things deemed present in the visual field) and those that are not as absolute. Some of the elements we see in an image may be understood to inhabit a different world and/or medium altogether, such as music, or words, despite their *pictorial* depiction in the medium at hand (in this case, linen and wool) (Figure 1).

So, for instance, are we to imagine that the boy, the child, and the shepherd each inhabit the image at the same moment? Or could we read some of those human (and even the animal) figures as the *subjects* of the songs being played by the boy? Alternatively, could they represent distinct temporal stages in the life of a human, with the child in the centre growing up to become the boy at the top, and then taking his seat at the bottom right as the adult shepherd?[33] All these readings are arguably valid. My point is that the very conditions of the mode enable both a simultaneous view and a cumulative one across time over the surface of the image. This principle comes to the fore in later Byzantine exemplars, which can include personifications and figures which the viewer cannot place in a purely human realm, or even in the same temporal continuum as the other figures. The Paris Psalter folio shows such beings in the form of Melody (a personification) who sits at the centre right beside David, and the figure who peeps out from behind the column (Figure 22). The latter's hidden body, in stark contrast to the full-bodied depictions of the other human forms, hints at gradual revelation or no final

32 See the discussion and notes in Allen, *The Death of Myth on Roman Sarcophagi*, 94–96.

33 I am grateful to Tina Bawden for this insight.

revelation at all, thereby alluding to figures in the process of being conjured up and/or entirely concealed. (See Chapter 3.) The processual potential of this image complicates any straightforward understanding of its temporality. In short, the bucolic mode in the pictorial domain entails an admission of its limits, such as when an image purports to represent music, or sound, and its effects. Simultaneously, the mode also opens the possibility for an image to gesture *beyond* its own medium (from linen and wool, or parchment, to music or speech).

Finally, the agonistic element so marked in Theocritus' first *Idyll* is embedded in the very composition of the textile (Figure 1). The boy playing the flute occupies the top tier even as the largest figure in the ensemble—the man with the staff—is shifted to the surface below to the right. Both figures thus may be said to vie for attention as per the normative rules regulating Byzantine art. Both also subvert the posture of rigid erectness usually assumed by the figures—emperors, members of the Christian pantheon, and/or holy people—who are allotted those particular attributes of importance. Note that the centre depicts the child playing with (or fending off?) the dog, and a herd of goats and sheep. This area may be said to constitute an emphatic rejection of the primacy usually granted to human figures with a high spiritual or social value.

The flute ushers in yet another sphere of attention that potentially competes with the rest of the surface in terms of its sonic emphasis. The old man's staff and the stick-like object in the woman's hand are effective counterpoints to the flute: all these are slender instruments designed for human hands, and media intended to communicate with various kinds of species. Do the erect postures of the goats and sheep with their heads turned in one direction signify the authority of the shepherd, as opposed to that of the flute-playing boy since the latter's supposed auditor—the dog—seems to have turned its gaze *away* from the musician? Or does that canine gaze denote instead a distinct and concentrated form of attention, even if the visible signs of that attention are not congruent with those that inform Byzantine art? All these questions underscore the lack of a gravitational force toward any single dominant figure, or element, within the composition. Attention may focus itself on, or skirt around, any of the given figures or surfaces on the textile, and this condition is enabled partly because of the relative imprecision of the subject matter and the mode it depicts.

Adding to that imprecision is also the absence of specific geographical or temporal co-ordinates. If the bucolic literary genre construes itself as

existing in a timeless present,[34] then the image on our textile may be said to display the same. The place and season are undefined, although it is certainly not winter. In this respect, the image aligns itself with the principle underlying many Byzantine depictions of imperial and holy figures who are also shown to occupy spaces and times devoid of specificities, their background a sheet of gold. This is usually the case even with the depiction of biblical narratives such as the Nativity or the Baptism, although some images of the Annunciation do include the seasonal markers of spring and the components of gardens.[35]

The image on the Brooklyn textile, in contrast, operates differently (Figure 1). It oscillates between one specific moment, or duration, over which the figures behave as they do, and an unknown space and time. Bursts of green-yellow vegetation erupt around the flautist, the woman, and the man. A leafless tree looms on the far left. These markers, though much abbreviated, nonetheless attest to the desire to supply the basic contours of a landscape to constitute the bucolic. This image, therefore, is endowed with a tension between the necessity of articulating the lineaments of the mode and the simultaneous desire to empty the depiction of any single point of focus. As a consequence, *taxis*—the overpowering and pervasive principle of order, hierarchy, and rank that defines most Byzantine images[36]—is messed up and tumbled around in this particular visual category. This occurs no matter the medium (textile, manuscript, silver, or mosaic) or the context (intimate, monumental, in an urban space, or a private garden), as the following chapters show.

The Bucolic in Byzantium

In Byzantine studies the bucolic genre has received some attention in the literary sphere.[37] Art historians, however, have not explored it, nor have we considered its *specific* valence in the contexts where it appears. "Bucolics" is a subsection of "The Classical Realm" in the afore-mentioned catalogue *The Age of Spirituality*; thus, the pictorial convention is recognized in its ancient form and for its continued deployment in late antiquity.[38] The unifying fac-

34 Segal, *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral*, 3–4.

35 Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*, 50–51.

36 For a discussion of *taxis*, see Dauterman Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons*, 135–45.

37 Burton, "The Pastoral in Byzantium," 549–79.

38 Weitzmann, ed., *The Age of Spirituality*, 247–54.

tor here is imagery depicting shepherds and shepherdesses in media such as textiles, glass, silver, and illustrated manuscripts of Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, and Nicander's *Theriaca*.[39] A total of eleven images constitute this section, indicating the general paucity of examples identified as "bucolic." Yet, it does occur in other contexts and media (notably mosaic, which is missing from this section of the catalogue).

Why has the bucolic not been granted the attention I believe it deserves in the art historical annals of Byzantium? Some of the reasons are all too familiar and have already been hinted at. First, this sort of imagery is nowhere as numerous as depictions of episodes and protagonists pertaining to the Orthodox religion. Sacred icons of Christ, the Theotokos and the saints abound and have attracted a correspondingly dominant share of scholarly scrutiny. (It should be noted that even sacred icons, despite their numbers, constitute a paltry segment of what was evidently a far more diverse visual culture in the religious domain than we imagine.)

Another reason for the neglect of the bucolic, directly connected to the first, is that it is harder to define—if not iconographically, then in terms of narrative and order—than its religious counterparts. If one can characterize a "religious" image via its content, then any depiction of a character or episode from the Christian tradition qualifies as such. The Orthodoxy of such an image is measured by certain established stylistic and iconographic features which often include the niceties of a hierarchical arrangement, particular colour schemes, attributes, a defined message, and so forth. These criteria are also discernible in Byzantine imperial imagery in which the figures of emperors and empresses order the pictorial composition by occupying centre space (or spaces adjacent to Christ), looking out directly at the viewer, and bearing a set of unmistakable attributes. These figures are disposed in the visual field as per the principle of *taxis* (see preceding section).

However, Eunice Dauterman Maguire and Henry Maguire demonstrated that *taxis* is *not* the sole or even principal criterion for Byzantine images outside the realm of emperors and holy figures; moreover, they brought to bear a corpus of images in diverse media bereft of *taxis* for art historians to reconsider.[40] I would go a step further to argue that the very depiction of order and hieraticism we find in imagery based on *taxis* was *understood* in the era as an artificial condition that did not obtain in other kinds of worlds (such as

39 Weitzmann, ed., *The Age of Spirituality*, 247–54.

40 For a discussion of this facet of Byzantine art, see Maguire Dauterman Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons.*

the bucolic), inhabited by other kinds of beings. Additionally, I contend that this insight has significant implications for how visual products might have been received in the period in general, for it tempers an appropriate reverence for figures of authority with consciousness of the man-made—and thereby, contingent—structures designed to present them as such. In short, the understanding of *taxis* as artificial permits the space for reflections on the contingencies implied by, and in, an image and its reception in the era.

Contingency—here defined as the existence of an object or condition which is dependent on an unpredictable set of factors—is barely considered in the realm of Byzantine art. Again, this is because within the dominant logic governing imperial and sacred imagery, "unpredictability" is not regarded as a factor, let alone a given. What we find instead are visual structures of legitimization, and cause-and-effect, which direct the viewer to an unambiguous end, in which an emperor or a saint assumes their position because divinely ordained events have dictated that they do so. However, the notion of such absolutism in the actual political landscape of Byzantium has been recently challenged by Anthony Kaldellis, who makes the critical point that the emperor's position was not an unmitigated given; rather, it was profoundly and continuously contingent on the approval and consensus of various groups such as soldiers, farmers, elites, and others.[41] In line with this argument, I contend that contingency is rendered as a value constitutive of imperium at its very source even if it is shown to be gradually shorn off as the imperial persona develops and consolidates itself in the representations at hand (see Chapter 3). The image of the emperor thus strives to present itself as anything but contingent, despite—and probably because of—the reality that his position was anything *but* absolute, as Kaldellis argues. Contingency also helps to explain the choice of bucolic depictions for instruments relating to the weather, since this is changeable, anticipated, but also feared, and acknowledged as such, as explored in Chapter 2.

As for contingency and Orthodoxy (by the latter, I refer to the pictorial images sanctioned by the Orthodox church), the two would seem to be incompatible, for how could the grand plan designed by an all-knowing God allow for pockets of chance? Yet one could argue that, in fact, the teleological arc of biblical narratives is not intended to do away with the apprehension of chance, or danger, or indeed, luck. The horrors of the massacre of the innocents are not diminished—quite the contrary—because an informed viewer knows that Christ will escape them. Nor is the visualization of the birth or

41 Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*.

death of Christ any less awesome because one knows they were bound to occur. In tune with Chapters 2 and 3, Chapter 1 argues that chains of contingency are evident in the renditions and exegeses of biblical narratives, such as that of the Good Shepherd and of Jonah and the sea monster/*ketos*. In these texts and images, corporeal well-being (whether of sheep or humans or others) is posited as being conditional upon specific kinds of voices, locations, and dispositions. Those specificities eliminate contingency and allow for the intended effects of Christian salvation to come to fruition. In advancing such arguments in relation to bucolic imagery, this book seeks to lay the ground for more sustained explorations of contingency in relation to other kinds of images in this epoch as well.

The most useful avenues in Byzantine studies for themes associated with the bucolic mode occur in investigations of nature and gardens, even if these do not deal directly with the mode per se.[42] Henry Maguire's analysis of images of nature from late antiquity to the post-Iconoclastic period argues that Byzantine attitudes to it were ambivalent.[43] The ambivalence was amplified after the iconoclastic upheavals of the eighth and ninth centuries when motifs prevalent earlier were modified or made to disappear owing to a new (or renewed) consciousness of the dangers of idolatry associated with them.[44] Maguire also brings many important insights to bear on the depiction of animals in Byzantine art, especially in terms of predation and violence, and their talismanic powers.[45]

This book uses several insights from Maguire's studies even as it departs from the allegorical and symbolic readings advanced therein, and the strictly theological causation traced around the existence or otherwise of images of nature. Without denying the import of allegory, symbol, and theological underpinnings, this study claims that the literal presence and visceral apprehension of animals and other creatures are vital to the meaning of the images under discussion. Furthermore, I believe that this apprehension on the part of some audiences could be untethered from anxieties about idolatry or theological matters. Sometimes an image of a tree or a bird could be appreciated for its tree-ness and bird-ness without religious or even talismanic thoughts intruding. For instance, if we look at the descriptions by

42 Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn eds., *Byzantine Garden Culture*, and Bodin and Hedlund eds., *Byzantine Gardens and Beyond*.

43 Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*; Maguire, "The Byzantines and Nature," 181–202.

44 Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*.

45 Maguire, "Profane Icons," 19–34.

Procopios in the sixth century CE and George Pachymeres in the fourteenth century CE of an equestrian monument in Constantinople, we find that both linger lovingly on the features of the horse depicted in it. The creature's bronze immensity, the disposition of its hoofs, its readiness to advance, the straining of its head against the wind, the unruliness of its mane, the swelling of its flanks, and the motion of its bushy tail are all recounted in minute detail (especially in Pachymeres' account) with no apparent symbolism or allegory appearing in the descriptions.[46] Although one might wonder about the accuracy of these accounts, this still does not belie the fact that the *animal* was as valued a locus of viewership as its human rider.[47] There is no reason to imagine that similar kinds of responses were not possible when viewers looked at animals and other species depicted in other media as well.

Indeed, there exist period accounts (not necessarily attached to visual objects per se) that evince a deep and abiding curiosity about non-human species, their habits, and possibilities in a larger ecosystem containing humans. Scholars of late antiquity have examined facets of nonhuman creatures and the implications of their presence, forms, and actions in the literary and religious domains.[48] In Byzantine studies, Thomas Arentzen, Virginia Burrus, and Glenn Peers have explored that culture's engagement with trees and the arboreal imagination.[49] Tristan Schmidt and Przemyslaw Marciniak have delved into attitudes towards, and engagements with, distinct animal species in the era.[50] This book picks up some of the epistemic threads suggested by these studies. Just as shepherds and sheep are integral to the bucolic, so too are trees, brooks, insects, zephyrs, humans, personifications, and so forth. The appreciation of these varied beings and their ontologies on the part of a viewer (quite apart from their symbolic or allegorical values), are evident in the sources, as is the importance of their interactions.

A related dimension that crops up insistently in bucolic imagery is sound, or the possibility of its occurrence. As briefly etched above, this consists of the music played, songs sung, and stories narrated by the shepherds and other characters. It also consists of elements such as the whispering of

46 See the translation in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 110.

47 Stavros Lazaris comments on the profound interest in animal behaviour among the Byzantines in "Scientific, Medical, and Technical Manuscripts," 85.

48 For a few recent studies, see Cox Miller, *In the Eye of the Animal*; Schaaf ed., *Animal Kingdom of Heaven*; and Neis, *When a Human Gives Birth to a Raven*.

49 Arentzen, Burrus, and Peers, *Byzantine Tree Life*.

50 Marciniak and Schmidt eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Relations in the Byzantine World*.

pines, rustling of brooks, bleating of sheep, and the humming of bees. Layered into this resounding universe are remembered or imagined sounds in the form of stories told long ago, echoes of songs, and Pan's pipes, among others. Enveloping them all is the sound of silence that descends in the shady afternoon, the time most propitious for enacting the bucolic and its bounties.

The fields of Classics and late antiquity have seen an efflorescence of sound studies.[51] Byzantinists, in their turn, have broached the subject of sound in the context of ritual, monastic, and church interiors.[52] I have found Amy Papalexandrou's approach particularly instructive in its cultivation of a rigorous, insightful sonic anthropology through a close reading of the sources, even where a precise reconstruction of a particular soundscape is not admissible.[53] We must shift this approach to a sphere not dominated by the concerns of Orthodoxy when we broach the bucolic world. Yet another field I find useful is that of Chinese art, specifically the category of Chinese landscape painting, in which the sounds of the elements and the implications of listening subjects and aural subjectivities intersect with some of the themes explored in this book.[54] Each chapter studies strands of sounds woven explicitly or implicitly into the images under discussion. These include the imperial voice, the sounds of wind and water, birdsong, angelic pronouncements, and the music of the psalms, all of which are critical to the intended and perceived effects of the artefacts examined.

Chapter Breakdown

This book does not purport to offer a survey of every single image that might be deemed bucolic in the Byzantine repertoire, nor is it strictly a history of bucolic art in Byzantium. It does, however, strive to introduce some of its salient themes and to underscore the variety of media and contexts in

51 A few recent examples are Nooter and Butler eds., *Sound and the Ancient Senses*; Nooter, *When Heroes Sing*; Nooter, *The Mortal Voice in the Tragedies of Aeschylus*; and LeVen, *Music and Metamorphosis in Greco-Roman Thought*.

52 Pentcheva, *Hagia Sophia*; Antonopoulos, Gerstel, Kyriakakis, Raptis, and Donahue, "Soundscapes of Byzantium," 321–35; Papalexandrou, "Perceptions of Sound and Sonic Environments," 67–86; Frank, "Crowds and Collective Affect," 169–90; and Antonopoulos, "Kalophonia and the Phenomenon of Embellishment," 87–110.

53 Papalexandrou, "Perceptions of Sound and Sonic Environments," 67–86.

54 I am grateful to Lihong Liu for insights on this subject. See Nelson, "Picturing Listening," 30–55.

which such images existed throughout the era. Each chapter focuses on one image, or a small set of images, that exhibit bucolic features and encompass a thematic value. The examples I have chosen range from the intimate to the monumental. This is partly by design, since the evidence spans a spectrum of scales and functions, thus testifying to the vitality and flexibility of the mode.

Chapter 1 examines some iterations of the image of the Good Shepherd in late antiquity. A literal distillation of the bucolic, the Good Shepherd has long been regarded as a visual message of Christian salvation, encapsulating related themes such as paradisiacal fulfilment, good fortune, spiritual leadership, and peace. However, the implications of the vivid conglomeration of human and animal that the image displays, such as in the famous but understudied exemplar at Cleveland, have rarely been considered. The chapter explores similar conglomerations from the period, such as Jonah and the sea monster (*ketos*), which often appeared with the Good Shepherd in catacombs, sarcophagi, and lamps. Instead of reading these only as types of Christ (or of salvation more broadly) as has been done, I situate them within an exegetical context that underlines the salvific possibilities of the *entanglement* of distinct types of bodies, their metamorphosis, and the potential of human bodies (like Jonah's) to engage in, and also escape from, those entanglements unblemished and intact. The chapter also demonstrates the integral role of voice in the Good Shepherd and Jonah narratives; sources posit the voices of the sheep, the prophet, and the shepherd as fundamental to the entanglements and consequent salvation at hand. The chapter ends with a proposition regarding the effacement (if not total disappearance) of the human-animal combination in the Good Shepherd imagery by tying it to period concerns regarding appropriate modes of touch vis-à-vis Christ's body.

Chapter 2 studies the textual descriptions of bucolic imagery said to adorn a magnificent windvane (*anemodoulion*) that stood in Constantinople over centuries until its destruction at the hands of the Crusaders in 1204 CE. Whilst windvanes are not common in Byzantine sources, the Constantinopolitan device seems related in key aspects to its ancient counterparts such as the Tower of the Winds in Athens and the wind-clock mentioned in Varro's famous description of his aviary in Casinum. The chapter considers similar kinds of imagery on depictions of the Nilometer, an instrument designed to measure the rising levels of the Nile river. Whilst these images have been rightly—but exclusively—yoked to the larger values of abundance and fertility, I demonstrate that the bucolic principles of interspecies connectedness and sonic layering are equally prominent features and demand to be acknowledged as such in the images under study. Ultimately, the chapter contends that bucolic images were deemed suitable for scientific devices

designed to measure the elements of wind and water since this pictorial mode best articulated the contingency of human and natural relations. Part of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of winds and their relation to bucolic scenes. Considerations of wind, and sometimes air, as an existing space against and around which the world functions, inflect certain kinds of images, pushing viewers to recognize empty space, or a "background," as a vessel for an element that is not always depicted, but which is acknowledged in texts as making and occupying such a space.

Chapter 3 is a close reading of the prefatory folio of the so-called Paris Psalter (mentioned above) dated to the tenth century CE, which depicts one of the finest and most complex examples of the bucolic via David playing to animals, a mountain, a possible nymph, and other characters in an idyllic setting. Since this folio is part of a suite of illuminations culminating in a grand, gilded image of David as a Byzantine emperor, I argue that the very source of imperium is here posited as having its roots in the bucolic world. In scripture and imperial ideology, Moses, David, and the figure of the Good Shepherd are all linked to the values of leadership; it is this association elaborated into its most granular form that we find in the Paris Psalter prefatory folio. At the same time, by virtue of its bucolic conditions, the image also features the element of contingency which is skilfully eliminated as the depictions on the following folios reinforce the principles of *taxis* appropriate to delineating the emperor. Additionally, the chapter also argues for the imperial voice as an integral component of this particular image, thereby invoking the vocal turn as fundamental to the concept and practice of imperium. The bucolic mode is harnessed as the most powerful facilitator of the imperial voice under the rule of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, the patron of the psalter, whilst drawing on a longer tradition of similar images of David and Orpheus in media such as silverware, mosaics, and textiles.

The book closes with a brief look at a pair of images from the so-called Paris Nicander dated to the tenth century CE. The *Theriaca* and the *Alexipharmaka* were authored by Nicander in the second century CE. They outline the injuries shepherds could sustain during their toils, and remedies thereof (if some rather outlandish ones). Nicander, thus, presents a decidedly dark side of the bucolic; the dangers that the mode obliquely alludes to, but which come across only via the adoption of an emphatic dialectical move away from its literal—and visual—face. We might recall that in Theocritus' first *Idyll*, the song Thyrsis sings contains a description of the afflictions of the ideal shepherd, Daphnis, who in turn describes the terrible fates that befell Anchises (blinded by bees) and Adonis (slain by a boar). Daphnis himself pines away and dies for love. Clearly shepherds and their lives are not

free of heartsickness, danger, and death, and the mode itself tells us so, if in the most harmonious of natural surroundings banished—at least temporarily—of bees and boars.

Accordingly, the Nicander manuscript closes with such an image of serenity, showing a shepherd striding in (or out of?) a wooded landscape. This image encapsulates the open-ended nature of bucolic imagery, its lack of a clear and definite resolution, and its presentation of the artifice and contingencies underlying what appears to be an idyllic vista. It is also an invitation to the reader of this book to consider other expressions of the bucolic mode and its related themes not considered here, but which may abide at different moments of the Byzantine era and which may enrich our understanding of its visual diversity.

Figure 2. Shepherd, 280–290 CE. Marble, 49.5 × 26 × 16.2 cm. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art's Open Access Initiative.

Figure 3. Shepherd, fourth–fifth century CE (restored?). Marble, 100 × 36 × 27 cm. Vatican City, Vatican Museum. © Alamy Stock Photo.

Chapter 1

THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM of Art houses a moderate-sized marble statue dated to the end of the third century CE (Figure 2). It shows a man with sheep, two of which sit by his feet. Staff in left hand, the man carries a third sheep aloft on his shoulders, its legs resting garland-like around his chest. The man's right hand is placed with gentle firmness on the creature's limbs, seeming to caress them. His elbow juts out sharply where the tail grazes it. This detail throws into relief the visual counterpoint of the man's fingers, so fluidly entwined with the sheep's bony extremities. In this respect, the Cleveland statue differs emphatically from another exemplar in the Vatican Museum dated slightly later to the first quarter of the fourth century CE (Figure 3).[1] The Vatican statue also shows a man carrying a sheep on his shoulders; however, this creature's limbs are deliberately set apart from the human torso supporting it. Apart from the expanse of the shepherd's shoulders, a part of his head, and his hands which grasp the sheep's legs, no other points of contact obtain between human and animal. It should be noted that the Vatican statue is believed to have been extensively restored.[2] Nonetheless, it serves as an illuminating contrast to our piece in Cleveland in which, even as the two species depicted are unmistakably distinct, they are also unmistakably entangled. Human head, torso, shoulders, and limbs are in contact with the sheep carried aloft; indeed, in some parts, the proximity between the human and beast banishes areas of bodily autonomy for both altogether. This may appear to be an inevitable consequence of a human placing an animal on his shoulders. However, in this case, the bringing together of the human and the animal foregrounds an interface where they merge to form a physical unity. This unity was interpreted specifically as a Christian motif,[3] and was considered by church fathers to be the fundamental expression of salvation.

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1 As has been commented, the Cleveland and Vatican shepherds are most often juxtaposed because of their excellent state of preservation. See the comments in Hornik, "Freestanding Sculpture," 79.

2 de Blaauw, "Early Christian Art Exhibited and Re-considered," 25–26.

3 Eusebius interpreted the shepherds on fountains in Constantinople as Christian. See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Cameron and Hall, 140 (3.49).

By virtue of depicting shepherds, the images discussed above distil the essence of the bucolic to its most incisive and salient components. The shepherd evinces a long ancestry stretching back to ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman iterations, as scholars have noted.[4] The *criophoros* or *moscophoros* showing a youth carrying a ram or bull on his shoulders, had sacrificial and protective connotations, while the Hermes *psychopomp* was a guide for the deceased and a shepherd of souls traversing the boundary from the world of the living to that of the dead. The motif could refer to good fortune and a state of felicity, love, and peace.[5] It could harbour an evocative dimension by conjuring the vision of a paradisiacal garden or the earthly bounties of nature.[6] Alternatively, it could allude to the qualities of leadership and defensive violence in order to protect those in danger.[7] In keeping with its multivalent references, the shepherd was popular in late antiquity across a range of media such as gems, lamps, textiles, sculptures, sarcophagi, and frescoes. The immense exegetical flexibility and syncretism of late antique visual culture meant that it could be read as a generic figure presiding over a pastoral scene, or as the Christian Good Shepherd encompassing the concept of salvation, albeit with the shepherd now offering himself as the sacrifice on behalf of his sheep.[8] The occurrence of the shepherd motif on a variety of objects in no way conflicts with its intrinsic ability to signify the *criophoros*, Hermes, Christ, or simply a shepherd. If anything, the motif could acquire some, all, or only one of those identities depending on the audience, which itself could encompass Christians and non-Christians of all stripes. Thus, the very designation of the "shepherd" opens up a rich set of associations relating to funerary, imperial, baptismal, and pastoral discourses in the pre-Christian and Christian dispensations.

But despite its many layers, the kinds of questions the shepherd imagery has elicited remain relatively limited. These entail excavating its visual and literary sources from antiquity; of determining its pagan or Christian affiliations; of gauging its monarchical and spiritual undertones; and of highlighting its significance within Christian rituals and themes regarding baptism,

4 Literature on this topic is extensive. For recent studies, see Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 65–72, and Awes Freeman, *The Good Shepherd*.

5 Provoost, "Pastor or Pastor Bonus?," 34.

6 Zanker and Ewald, *Living with Myths*, 28–29, 127–29.

7 Awes Freeman, *The Good Shepherd*.

8 On the syncretism of late antique visual culture, see Elsner, "Art and Architecture," 736–61, and Couzin, "Syncretism and Segregation in Early Christian Art," 18–54.

death, paradise and/or the afterlife. Allegorical, theological, and abstract ideals associated with the shepherd are usually highlighted at the expense of questions that probe its pictorial, material, and spatial qualities specific to the context in which it occurs. For instance, little is said about the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep as it is depicted in an image other than to mention the shepherd's stance, and thereby to assert the general theme of care and leadership undertaken by the pastor/shepherd. Nor do we reflect on the larger implications of the human-animal interface via the shepherd imagery. Finally, the range of interactions possible between the shepherd and a viewer, and the implications of such interactions, have not been probed.

This chapter examines a selection of images depicting shepherds and sheep in the late antique period whilst seeking to situate them in a richer art historical—rather than mainly theological or allegorical—context. In doing so, the chapter makes two broad arguments. First, it proposes that the image of the shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders (be he the Christian Good Shepherd, or simply a shepherd) is an intentional pictorial expression of the physical closeness of two (or more) distinct species or categories of being. Theologians in late antiquity were certainly invested in definitions of the "human" vis-à-vis the divine, and the possibilities for those categories to unite, separate, or overlap.[9] The theme of "mixing" or "blending" (*krasis* in Greek) was a more or less continuous concept in discourses about the body and the proper ordering of the material world; this was evident in early Christian discourses as well.[10] In a similar vein, I would argue that the relations between humans and non-human animals, their "blending" and otherwise, were also serious considerations in the period. This is evinced in numerous instances in late antiquity that situated humans and animals in a spectrum rather than strictly in opposition.[11] In our case, the shepherd—whether he is read as an ordinary shepherd, or the human representation of Christ, or as the complicated admixture of humanity and divinity that was Christ—is shown as so entwined with his sheep as to make them appear as a unified being. That this particular human-nonhuman combination was significant and appreciated as such in the period, is attested to by the frequent pairing of the shepherd motif with other figures also dealing with animals,

9 Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa*.

10 See the insights in Penniman, "Blended with the Savior," at 519.

11 See Cox Miller, *In the Eye of the Animal*, and Neis, *When a Human Gives Birth to a Raven*.

such as Daniel and the lions, or more commonly, the prophet Jonah being swallowed by, and/or emerging from, the *ketos*/sea creature, and of Jonah reclining under the vine.[12] Whilst recognized in the scholarship as narratives of salvation and typological stories relating to Christ in the New Testament, it is not acknowledged that each of these episodes also shows a human body in close relations with a non-human species (be it terrestrial, marine, or vegetal) and the implications arising therefrom. Furthermore, in depicting the episodes of Jonah swallowed by the *ketos* and his subsequent repose under the vine, these images yoke the bucolic setting to the biblical tale by presenting that setting as the desired aftermath to an anguished physical experience. Paradoxically, this yoking also has the effect of underlining the dark edge of the bucolic, since the prophet's repose is also the time of his waiting on the downfall of Nineveh. This is a resonance distinct from the themes of protection and salvation usually accorded to the mode. Finally, it is surely of importance that the Jonah imagery, among the most popular in early Christian art, concentrates *almost exclusively* on the human-nonhuman interfaces rather than on other episodes from the prophet's life.[13]

My second argument is that the human-animal combination evident in the shepherd imagery was abandoned because it posed problems regarding the physical integrity of Christ and his tactile presence vis-à-vis his followers. Boniface Ramsey's argument (broadly accepted in the scholarship with some variations) is that the image of the Good Shepherd was no longer necessary or useful once Christianity had taken firm hold from the fifth century onwards, and that a commanding imperial saviour, rather than a rustic keeper of sheep, was better suited to the epoch's needs.[14] This claim has been somewhat tempered by arguments that posit Christ as an amalgam of the shepherd's leadership qualities with imperial overtones.[15] However, I claim that also at stake was the viscerally tactile implication of that specific version of shepherding with the sheep on the man's shoulders; that is, of the specifically human-animal interface at play in that depiction. We already gauge this in the famous image in the chapel of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, where the sheep are removed from the shepherd's body

12 For more on the term "multispecies," see the articles in the special issue of *Environmental Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2016).

13 Jensen, "Early Christian Images and Exegesis," 71–72, and Jensen, "Introduction: Early Christian Art," 10.

14 Ramsey, "A Note on the Disappearance of the Good Shepherd," 375–78.

15 See the arguments in Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 83, and Awes Freeman, *The Good Shepherd*, 101–5 discussed in a later section of the chapter.

except in one delicate visual passage. In the pictorial repertoire following upon the drastic waning of the Good Shepherd motif, it is rare for Christ's body to be shown as touching, or being touched, to any great extent by anyone other than his mother. When tactile contact does occur, it is usually for purposes of legitimization, such as in the episode of the Doubting of Thomas, or when Christ is shown with imperial figures. (In the latter, the crown usually serves as an appropriate barrier separating Christ's body and that/those of the ruler/s.)[16]

Apart from these two arguments, I shall also demonstrate that the shepherd imagery in monumental and miniature contexts exerts a literal magnetism. Positioned on unavoidable thresholds, or in the very centre of the surfaces of ceilings or rings, it exercises a gravitational power that pulls viewers and other images toward itself. Furthermore, it invokes the component of voice as part of this magnetic quality; specifically, the shepherd's voice as an essential and reciprocal component of his relations with his flock. Biblical passages and patristic commentaries reinforce the sonic bond between shepherd and sheep which is said to be reflected, in turn, in the bonds forged between any self-respecting bishop and his congregation.

The chapter ends with a brief consideration of the Quinisext Council's ban on images of Christ as a lamb in favour of images of him as a human, all the better to depict his suffering. Through this ban, the Council's edict reinforces prevailing perceptions about the limits inherent to animals, and animal imagery, in relation to the complexity of Christ's nature and depictions of him. Specifically, the ban reinforces the perceived *limits* of animals as a species and their capacity to manifest and communicate a narrative of Christian suffering to a human audience.

Shepherds and Sheep in Late Antiquity

Shepherds and sheep are fundamental to the iconography of Orthodox Christianity, particularly in the late antique era.[17] Images of shepherds and shepherding themes are fairly common up till the early fifth century CE. Elements integral to the bucolic, such as pastures and springs amongst which shepherds, sheep, and other creatures rove, are alluded to in the books of the Bible, notably the Psalms, and they also appear in the visual domain. By extension, we find many references to them in the sermons and

16 Aurell, *Medieval Self-Coronations*, 96–126.

17 Henri Leclercq's famous study counts some 300 examples. See Leclercq, "Pasteur (Bon)," 2272–390.

commentaries of the church fathers. Indeed, it has been argued that Gregory of Nazianzus drew on literal aspects of ancient bucolic poetry to fashion some of his orations, which were arguably among the most popular of his output in Byzantium.[18] In this general corpus, one of the consistent tropes informing the shepherd's relationship with his sheep is the mediating element of voice, and vocal address to the flock and/or to an individual.[19]

This relationship is dramatically outlined in the text known as the *Shepherd of Hermas* dated to the years between the late first and the second centuries CE.[20] To judge by the number of surviving manuscripts, the *Shepherd* was immensely popular and unmatched by any New Testament text in antiquity barring the Gospels of Matthew and John. The *Shepherd* consists of 114 chapters, a sizeable portion of which is devoted to visions and instructions, regarding the virtuous life that leads to salvation.[21] Importantly, the being who delivers the divine commandments and explanations of ethical conduct to the narrator is a shepherd. This shepherd frequently uses concrete examples of elements rooted in the bucolic world—distinct types of vegetation (vines, elms, leafless and budding trees), styles of shepherding, and the behaviour of sheep—to outline the path to redemption or damnation. The text thus advances the figure of the shepherd as an intermediary and emissary between God and humans. It also embeds the bucolic as setting and context into the very fabric of the ethical teachings on offer.

Similar aspects inform the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep in the New Testament as well. Take the famous passage in the Gospel of John 10:1–20; the Parable of the Good Shepherd. At its core the narrative outlines an ethics of ingress; appropriate behaviour engaged at the threshold of the dwelling of sheep, thereby transforming both that dwelling and its door into spaces that induce a moral comportment. First, the parable posits the good shepherd as one who enters by the door, unlike the thief who breaks in through some other aperture. The very mode of ingress is a marker of one's identity as the shepherd who belongs in that space, or conversely as an interloper who belongs elsewhere.

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18 MacDougall, "Callimachus and the Bishops," 171–94.

19 Some themes related to textual voice, or the persona projected via a text, are explored in Maramodoro and Hill eds., *The Author's Voice in Classical and Late Antiquity*.

20 Lookadoo, *The Shepherd of Hermas*.

21 For printed work, see Hermas, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, ed. Taylor.

The parable goes on to observe that:

> To him [the good shepherd] the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep listen to his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts all his own sheep outside, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. However, a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.

Thus, the conduct of the good shepherd consists both of his using the door (and not some other mode of entrance), *and* the deployment of his voice. Herein lies an insistence on the shepherd's calling of the sheep by their individual names. Moreover, the good shepherd's vocal role is opposed to that of his negative counterpart (the thief), whose voice does not function in the ideal mode because it is unknown to the flock; the thief cannot call to each sheep individually because he does not know them; the interloper's voice serves to scatter the flock instead of bringing it together. Even as the tenor of the passage in John is about the flock in its collective sense, folded into it is the import of the call to each individual sheep.

The parable then states that Jesus' words were opaque to his listeners, underscoring their difficulties in grasping language that exceeds the literal. Jesus is compelled to explain the truth by the letter, saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All those who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture… I am the good shepherd."

The development within the parable from object to subject (that is, from door to Christ); of behaviour at a particular space, which threshold is then transmuted to identity (the door *as* Christ), entails a number of cognitive imperatives. Christ is Christ. He is also a door through which salvation is guaranteed. (Importantly, Christ-as-door permits both entrance and exit to the believer who "will go in and out and find pasture.") Christ is also the good shepherd who himself comes to that door (which, we recall, is also himself) and leads the flock out. Patristic literature lifted the essence of this relationship between the human caregiver and the non-human creature, both of whom are shown to engage in a dialogue concerning their roles, expectations, comportment, and shifting affects in the extant commentaries.

Gregory of Nyssa's second homily on the *Song of Songs* (Cap 2, *Patrologia Graeca* 44, 802) is a concise instance of the above points. Gregory calls on the Good Shepherd who carries the flock on his shoulders to show the way to the peaceful pastures, and to "lead me to the good grass that will nourish me…and the spring…[to] fill myself with God." Apart from the pleasant grass

and watery spring, Gregory also specifically asks for the shepherd to "call me by my name so that I, your sheep, hear your voice, and by your speech give me eternal life. Answer me, you whom my soul loves."[22]

The ideas animating this homily, at once so tender and so filled with foreboding for those who are not part of this particular flock (and who shall, therefore, be denied entry into heaven), are clear. The basic concept consists of the shepherd leading his sheep to the pastures where they may eat and drink their fill, and where they may lie down in the noontime sun "unstained by any shade." This is a vision of bucolic entirely abstracted from earthly contingencies, such as shadows formed by the play of the sun's rays. If the bucolic itself is an artificial literary and visual construct (see Introduction), a conceit attained through the temporary suspension of the ordinary labours engaged in by humankind and other species, then the scene conjured in Gregory's commentary is informed by yet another level of artificiality and suspension. Here, natural conditions (such as shade) are eliminated.

Shade is an implicit component of the bucolic tradition. The first *Idyll* of Theocritus describes the shepherd's seat beneath the elm tree during high noon, invoking a shady spot.[23] In Gregory's commentary, the good sheep are those who have deliberately rejected the changes of the day marked out as morning and evening, and which entail variations of light and shadow. When the bucolic is transposed to a conception of the Christian paradise, it is sundered of the contingencies that lead to the cycles of day and night, and their accompanying patterns of light and shade.

The nourishment Gregory speaks of in his commentary (food, drink, and rest) is as much spiritual as it is material. But essential to it is the role of voice enacted by both the sheep and the shepherd. In the commentary, it is the sheep (via Gregory) who articulates the need of the pasture, its delights, and its import for the larger enterprise of spiritual salvation. That salvation in turn is contingent on the shepherd's voice which must necessarily call to the sheep. Indeed, the shepherd must go a step further and name each sheep individually. The love and longing of the sheep for the shepherd is mediated, sealed, and manifested by the latter's voice.

Arguably one of the most important tools a Christian bishop has at his disposal is his vocal prowess. If Christian believers are figured as sheep, then the bishop of a congregation is figured as a shepherd who must necessarily wield his voice in instructing and moulding his flock. This is a point Peter

22 Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, trans. McCambley, 37.

23 Theocritus, *Idylls*, www.theoi.com/Text/TheocritusIdylls1.html.

Brown made more broadly by underscoring the bishop's role as advocate for his community, in part qualified to do so on the basis of his *paideia*, or the language of culture encompassing a classical education that includes rhetoric and persuasion.[24] Conversely, a canny bishop could also modulate his literal voice—sometimes into silence—to score a point.[25] In his sermon on the Baptism of Christ, Gregory of Nyssa evinces an understanding of such vocal dynamics. He claims to recognize his flock and to feel a shepherd's affections for them. Here Gregory assumes a persona and its appropriate affect which entails a varied emotional landscape conditioned by the behaviour of the sheep. Importantly—and pertinent to my point about the pulling, or magnetic power of the shepherd—Gregory identifies the success of the bishop as one who can gather together his congregation (or sheep). He remarks,

> I wish, when I am set upon this watchtower, to see the flock gathered round about the mountain's foot: and when it so happens to me, I am filled with wonderful earnestness, and work with pleasure at my sermon, as the shepherds do at their rustic strains. But when things are otherwise, and you are straying in distant wanderings, as you did but lately, the last the Lord's Day, I am much troubled, and glad to be silent.[26]

For our purposes, the passage regards the shepherd's voice in relation to his emotional affect. The latter is contingent partly on what the shepherd (or Gregory, in this case) sees regarding his flock. When that flock is gathered together, the shepherd is inspired to make his rustic music. By the same token, Gregory as the bishop is enthused to work at his sermons. But when the flock strays, the shepherd falls silent. The very presence and/or absence of voice signals the shepherd/bishop's state of mind which, in its turn, signals the moral comportment of the flock/congregation.

Finally, the physical proximity between, and the near-indistinguishable human-nonhuman amalgam that is the shepherd and his sheep, acquires significance within the discourse on shepherds and flocks. Again, it is Gregory of Nyssa who underscores this in his polemic against Apollinarius of Laodicaea whose teachings denied that Christ was of human flesh.[27] Appropriately enough, Gregory begins his anti-Apollinarian polemic with the metaphor of shepherding. He asks whether Apollinarius is a wolf in sheep's clothing or a

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24 Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*. See also Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, 156, on a bishop's ability to persuade through rhetoric.

25 Maier, "The Politics of the Silent Bishop," 503–19.

26 Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Baptism of Christ*, ed. Schaff and Wace, trans. Wilson.

27 Gregory of Nyssa, "Against Apollinaris," 37, 39.

true shepherd. It is critical to recall here that the polemic concerns the true nature of Christ, a subject that had occupied theologians throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, and beyond. Gregory uses the figure of the Good Shepherd as proof positive of the fleshly constitution of Christ. In doing so, he is at pains to point out that Christ as shepherd carries *the entire sheep* on his shoulders, and that this has implications regarding the voice of him who carries, and the voice of the being who is carried. Gregory remarks,

> He does not carry the skin nor leave behind the innards as Apollinarius would like it. Having placed the sheep on his shoulders, it becomes one with him by partaking of his divinity…He who bears the sheep upon himself bears no trace of sin…Once the pastor takes the sheep upon himself, he becomes one with it and speaks with the voice of the sheep to his flock. How does our human weakness hear the divine voice? In a human fashion, that is to say, in the manner of sheep he says to us, "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10.16). And so the pastor who has taken upon himself the sheep speaks our language and is both sheep and shepherd. He assumed the sheep in his own person, and what he had assumed is a pastor.[28]

This remarkable passage emphasizes the importance of the intense tactile contact between shepherd and sheep, the carrying of the latter by the former, which leads to union between them. This is no superficial or partial burden for the shepherd ("he does not carry the skin nor leave behind the innards"); it is a complete entity he bears upon his body such that "he becomes one with it." Moreover, that union also implicates the unity of voice which here is advanced as an instrument for conveying divinity to all too human listeners (or all too nonhuman sheep). Significantly, all of this occurs because the shepherd lifts the sheep bodily, and in its entirety, such that the two species appear to be one.

Keeping all the above considerations in mind, how might we envision the ontological implications on a human viewer who looks at such an image? This viewer is placed firmly outside the physical proximity and tactility of the shepherd–sheep ensemble. Yet, the viewer may have still identified with the sheep, which would entail a consideration of the human identifying with a different species altogether. On the other hand, perhaps the image functioned as an address, a call from the shepherd, via its sonic and visual dimension, to the one looking at it. In such a case, the image would have functioned less as the focus of immediate identification for the viewer than as proleptic aspiration; a call to be heeded that would lead to a place of salvation.

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28 Gregory of Nyssa, "Against Apollinaris," 38.

Figure 4. Shepherd and figures, intaglio ring, fourth century CE. Red carnelian, 1.3 × 2.2. × 2.4 cm. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum. Courtesy of the Walters Art Museum. CC0 1.0.

Human and Nonhuman

The human-nonhuman component of assemblages such as the Good Shepherd and their implications are evident in other image combinations but with effects that vary according to their medium. A red carnelian ring at the Walters Art Museum shows the shepherd with two sheep at his feet, flanked by a vine and an anchor with the Christian monogram (Figure 4). The surface area, small to begin with, nicely accommodates all the figures. The vine may be an enticement to imagine other biblical stories (notably that of Jonah resting under the vine) which are often shown in conjunction with the shepherd. In this instance, he is shown emphatically facing away from the viewer toward the right. The negation of direct visual address implies a different route to salvation for the owner, possibly through implied touch (via the finger on which the ring may rest), and a *vocal* invitation that may perhaps encompass the owner despite the shepherd's gaze being deflected in a direction that expressly excludes that owner.

The shepherd statue in Cleveland is a particularly compelling instance of the above observations, especially when viewed in conjunction with the other statues in the hoard in which it was originally located.[29] The hoard consists of a total of eleven sculptures, six being pairs of male and female busts, and the remaining five depicting scenes believed to be drawn from Christian scripture. In this latter group, we find two exuberant statues identified as the prophet Jonah and the sea creature that first swallowed him (Figure 5) and then spat him out (Figure 6).

This is not surprising, since one of the most frequent motifs to be paired with the shepherd is the story of Jonah. Scholars rightly observe that both motifs are related because the Jonah cycle is perceived as a representation of the burial and resurrection of Christ, and as the spiritual death and renewed identity of the believer in Christ.[30] However, what is less observed is that these particular sculptures are also viscerally graphic manifestations

29 Wixom, "Early Christian Sculptures," 67–88.

30 Awes Freeman, *The Good Shepherd*, 84.

Figure 5. Jonah swallowed by the *ketos*, 280–290 CE. Marble, 50.4 × 15.5 × 26.9 cm. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art's Open Access Initiative.

Figure 6. Jonah cast out of the *ketos*, 280–290 CE. Marble, 41.5 × 36 × 18.5 cm. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art's Open Access Initiative.

of a human enmeshed with, and within, a nonhuman creature.[31] They are the biblical visions of monstrous metamorphoses, the end result of which is the restoration of Jonah's integral human body, free of any external or nonhuman entanglement.[32] And if they were placed in juxtaposition with the male and female busts, then the contrast between the complexly entwined human-nonhuman ensembles and the portraits free of any such entanglements, would have been even more pronounced.

31 Hornik does very briefly touch upon this aspect by analogizing the statues of Jonah and the *ketos* with the concept of the centaur. Hornik, "Freestanding Sculpture," 80.

32 See the comments on the visual bipartite, tripartite, and four-part possibilities of Jonah, the *ketos*, and the vine in Sandin, "Salvation, Correctness, and Healing," 73–74.

Take the statue of Jonah ingested by the *ketos*, itself perceived to be a hybrid as it was part land creature and part fish (Figure 5).[33] William Wixom points to the many possible precursors to have inspired the *ketos*, and the amalgams of different species entailed therein.[34] This hybrid assemblage extends to encompass the human figure of Jonah as well. The work unfolds in an organic cascade of curves, the *ketos*'s tail frozen into an S-shape, inverted or otherwise, depending on one's view. Meanwhile the prophet's legs bend and stretch at the knee so that his feet, joined tidily as an acrobat's, graze that tail. (Recall that the sheep's tail similarly grazes the shepherd's elbow in the statue of the shepherd in the same hoard.) The human limbs are more angular, less powerful and expansive than those of the *ketos*. Yet even as the contrast between the human and the creature is played out in the upper reaches of the sculpture, Jonah's head and torso are forcefully rammed inside the creature's mouth below. Is the bulge in the *ketos*'s neck a testament to its own oral strength? Or is this a sign of the human Jonah infiltrating that massive bulk? It could be both; the point remains that the prophet and *ketos* are shown as beings that are entirely merged. (This is particularly apposite in visual contexts such as the pyxis in which the narrative of Jonah being ingested by the *ketos* complements Jonah's role as a sign of the eucharist, to be ingested in turn by the believer—in this case, the motif of transformation via ingestion is literalized.)[35] The back view of the sculpture gives no hint that this is not a single being. Part of the visual delight and salvific relief afforded by the piece is the gradual discovery that it is *not* in fact a single entity.

The episode from the Book of Jonah (Jonah 1, Jonah 2) tells us that he was swallowed by a big fish and that he spent three days and three nights in the beast's belly. Of equal significance as this marine residence, is the fact of Jonah's vocal pleas throughout the period of his captivity. Jonah 2:1–10 delineates a symphony of voices starting with the prophet's cry to God ("I cried by reason of my affliction…out of the belly of hell cried I, and you heard my voice…my prayer came in to you, into your holy temple") and ending with God's command to the *ketos* to spit him out ("And the Lord spoke to the whale and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land"). Where Jonah's physical presence was obliterated—or at least obscured—by the beast, his sonic presence managed to escape that marine interior and make itself heard in

33 Hornik, "Freestanding Sculpture," 79.

34 Wixom, "Early Christian Sculptures," 85.

35 Sandin, "Salvation, Correctness, and Healing," 84.

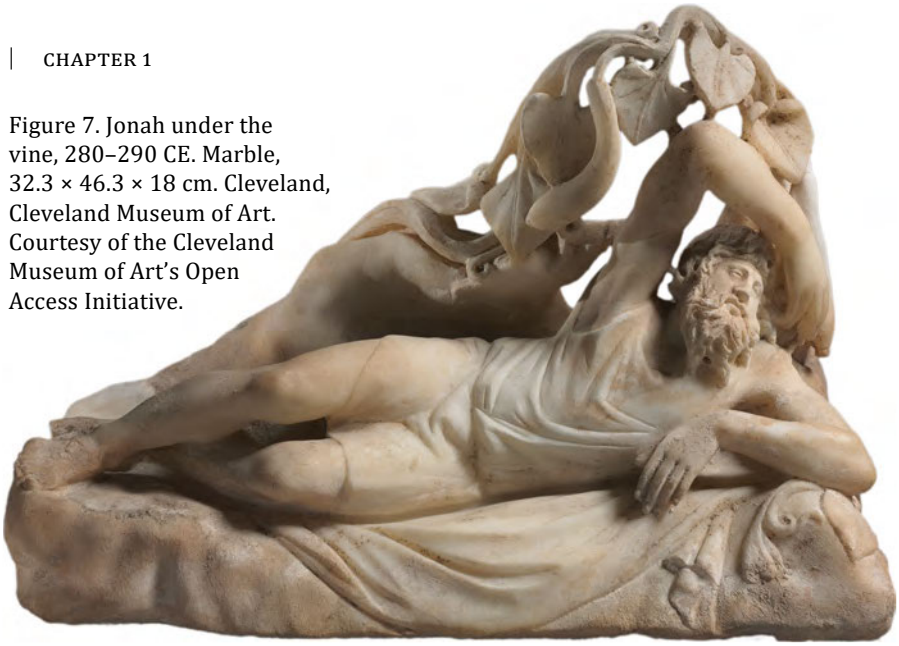

Figure 7. Jonah under the vine, 280–290 CE. Marble, 32.3 × 46.3 × 18 cm. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art's Open Access Initiative.

God's temple. Per the biblical story, Jonah's voice had as penetrative and visceral a materiality as his own body with regard to the *ketos*. Such conceptions about voice are embedded in late antique commentaries. Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron* treats the subject of creaturely voices which, according to him, are a manifestation of the tongue or the mouth striking air, and which manifest a material presence. This phenomenon is unlike God's voice which, according to Basil, is immaterial and unnecessary as the latter communicates via thoughts, and not a complex vocal apparatus entailing the brain, impressions, the vocal canal, tongue, and air (*Hexaemeron*, Homily 2.7, Homily 3.2)[36]. Voice as an integral component of creation appears in Basil's commentary well before the appearance of man or any other beast in it. It is thereby accorded a certain primal significance.

The Cleveland statue displaying the egress of Jonah (and consequently, the strength of his vocal presence which enabled his escape) is as extravagantly sinuous as the one that shows his ingestion (Figure 6). Once again the beast's tail contours up and forward in an S-shape; Jonah's hands (one fragmented) graze the tail. This time we see Jonah's head, torso, and arms stretched up and outwards. Without some knowledge of the episode and the accompanying statue (of the ingestion), it is impossible to tell whether this is a figure being cast out, as the museum label in Cleveland would have it, or in the process of being taken in. Suffice to say that both pieces together depict an extraordinary, tortuous, and heightened version of human and nonhuman enmeshment.

36 Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron*, in *Letters and Select Works*, ed. Schaff.

In contrast, the statue of the shepherd and his sheep is a relatively more sedate image of two distinct species inhabiting the same space (Figure 2). The sheep flanking the shepherd on either side are at a slight remove from him. But that distance, small as it is, only reinforces the physical closeness between the man and the sheep on his shoulders. This ensemble resembles the intimacy between man and plant as depicted in yet another sculpture from the same hoard, believed to be a representation of Jonah reclining under the vine (Figure 7). The stone that furnishes the ground billows up like a wave behind the man and sprouts an elaborate botanical shelter, its shape echoing his raised arm. As Thomas Arentzen, Virginia Burrus, and Glenn Peers point out, "the gourd plant and the resting prophet take shape together as two necessary, interdependent parts of a single visual thought."[37] Jonah's pose itself is modelled after depictions of Endymion and river gods who are often shown reclining in a similar manner. The choice of Endymion as a model is particularly apt since the figure's connections to the themes of shepherding and eternal sleep relate well to the bucolic tenor of Jonah's pose, and his restful sleep under the plant's shadow.[38] A couple of leaves brush lightly against Jonah's elbow and arm. Further on the right, the vine and the human limb are conjoined. This passage is akin to the conjoined nature of the sheep's legs and the man's torso in the statue of the shepherd.

The implications of this sort of human-animal and human-plant entanglement were pondered over in late antique exegeses on the Book of Jonah. Bishop Irenaeus (second century CE) in a sermon on the imperishability of chosen human bodies, seizes on the example of Jonah because despite being swallowed by the deep (the *ketos*'s belly), he was cast out safely on land by the command of God. Irenaeus underscores the natural expectation that a human being ingested by a marine creature shall not survive, or shall at the very least suffer grievous bodily damage. That this did not occur is similar, in Irenaeus' view, to the three boys who were flung into the furnace and miraculously survived with not even the smell of smoke clinging to them when they emerged from the flames. In both cases, the bodies are posited as extraordinary precisely because they escape the experiences anticipated by a normative human—or mortal—materiality (*Against Heresies*, 5.5.2).

A couple of centuries after the proposed date of the Cleveland statues, Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, elaborated on the possibilities of that same

37 Arentzen, Burrus, and Peers, *Byzantine Tree Life*, 60.

38 Hornik, "Freestanding Sculpture," 80.

human-*ketos* entwinement in the Book of Jonah. Although the prophet is deemed a prefiguration of Christ because of his temporary residence inside the *ketos* and unharmed emergence from its depths (as Christ rose from the dead), Cyril takes pains to underline their differences. He admits the resemblance between Jonah and Christ before going on to provide a resounding refutation of it so as to prove Christ's greater feat. In the process Cyril, like Irenaeus before him, ruminates upon the transformations that a human body might undergo when forced into the belly of a marine creature. Cyril asks,

> whether [it] is harder, for a man after having been buried to rise again from the earth, or for a man in the belly of a whale, having come into the great heat of a living creature, to escape corruption. For what man knows not, that the heat of the belly is so great, that even bones which have been swallowed moulder away? How then did Jonas, who was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, escape corruption? And, seeing that the nature of all men is such that we cannot live without breathing, as we do, in air, how did he live without a breath of this air for three days?[39]

Whilst both Irenaeus and Cyril conclude that God's grace allowed Jonah to emerge unblemished from the *ketos*, striking here is their awareness of and insistence on the varieties of bodily transformation (mouldered bones, lack of breath) that are the real possibilities of such an entanglement. The pertinence of this insight to the Cleveland statues is that if some viewers understood them to allude to the Book of Jonah, they might also have been acquainted with similar discourses around the body and the multispecies possibilities enabled by such episodes, even if at a rudimentary level. The entire point of the Jonah story—and one well captured by the statues—is the restoration of a sound, undamaged physical self even after the distortions it endures via the entangled collision with a different species. The convulsions of that body are resolved by the peacefully reclining figure of Jonah on land, under the vine; the bucolic idyll after the storm. This image, however, is emphatically temporary, a precursor to decay, since God withers away the plant specifically in order to make Jonah understand *the value of humans* vis-à-vis other species. If the other two statues of Jonah depict the miraculous preservation of a human body despite its metamorphic entanglement with the marine creature, the vine denotes the flourishing of a vegetal form immediately before its decline. Thus, in these four sculptural pieces we find dramatic and deliberate visual commentaries on the possibilities of humans, non-human animals, and plants approaching, devouring, sheltering, touching,

39 See Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures* 14.18. Cited hereafter parenthetically in the text.

Figure 8. Jonah praying, 280–290 CE. Marble, 47.5 × 14.8 × 20.3 cm. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art's Open Access Initiative.

and echoing each other in myriad ways. Some of these actions overlap; the *ketos* in devouring Jonah also shelters him (and this is emphasized in contemporary exegeses on the episode), and in spitting him out retains for a while, its tactile contact with the prophet's human form.

One final statue depicts a man (believed to be Jonah) standing in the orant position, hands and head raised in address to somebody or something unseen (Figure 8). The orant pose, common in figures in catacombs and sarcophagi, is usually read as the pose of prayer to God. If we project such an interpretation onto the image, we find that it rounds out the leitmotif of human-nonhuman contact animating this group of statues. In this case, it is a human who addresses a divinity that is emphatically non-human, and of a species deemed impossible to capture in ordinary matter. In keeping with the themes of salvation and renewal associated with Jonah and the Good Shepherd, it is proposed that these sculptures once adorned a funerary or baptismal space. Equally plausible is the suggestion that they formed part of a garden, perhaps placed on or around a nymphaeum or fountain.[40] Each of these spaces—baptismal or funerary monument, or garden—resonates with the themes of metamorphosis, be it from life to death, from one dispensation to another, or from season to season. To my mind, however, the proposition of these sculptures decorating a fountain is the most attractive for a number of reasons. Recall that among the earliest Christian images mentioned by Eusebius are those of the Good Shepherd and Daniel and the lions which, he claims, were depicted

40 See Wixom, "Early Christian Sculptures," and Fliegel, *A Higher Contemplation*, 23, 191.

on a fountain.[41] A fountain is an especially appropriate structure for displaying such ensembles because it foregrounds the distinct ecologies at play in them. It is a man-made infrastructure for coaxing a natural element into artificial configurations, and it affords intricate sight- and soundscapes (via water, and birdsong, and possibly other sonic components). If the Cleveland sculptures of Jonah and the shepherd were placed around a fountain, they would have reinforced the power of those seeming opposites (natural-manufactured) as a spectrum of possibilities rather than as conflicting absolutes. Evidently the patrons (and the sculptors) relished those possibilities and delighted in having them visualized in these images.

The Magnetism of the Shepherd

The magnetism embedded in the figure of the shepherd and his voice is intentionally orchestrated in the contexts in which this imagery appears. One view of the Cleveland shepherd, for instance, shows the man and the sheep on his shoulders, as well as those by his feet, looking in the same direction, as though heeding a summons enthralling enough to captivate human and animals alike. Although that summons is a purely implied external force (and evident only from one particular viewpoint), it is nonetheless instructive for its shaping of the entire image as a response on a specific vector, and as coaxing a unified stance (for the viewer, along with the shepherd) toward that call. A similar phenomenon is evident in the Walters ring examined earlier (Figure 4). Precisely this sort of gravitational power is evident in several key examples explored in this section, on both intimate and monumental scales. In these, the position of the shepherd vis-à-vis the viewer undergirds and reinforces the call of the shepherd to his sheep; the image literally pulls the viewer and other surrounding imagery towards itself, much as the shepherd draws his flock around him by naming each individual sheep.

A terracotta lamp dated to the last years of the second or the early third century CE is a perfect instance of this phenomenon (Figure 9).[42] Produced in the Florentius workshop in Rome, it is an example of a Christian image emanating from a source that was, however, known to produce lamps decorated with all kinds of pictorial themes for an audience comprising Christians and non-Christians alike.[43] The lamp shows the shepherd with a sheep

41 See note 3, above.

42 Spier, *Picturing the Bible*, 172.

43 Spier, "The Earliest Christian Art," 5–6, 171–72.

Figure 9. Shepherd and figures, lamp, third century CE. Terracotta. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. © Art Resource.

draped across his shoulders at the very centre in a frontal stance. More sheep cluster around the shepherd's feet, all of them facing him, either with a direct gaze or with twisting heads. Other smaller figures appear on either side, which the literature reads convincingly as Jonah under the vine and Jonah being spit out from the *ketos*, a dove perched upon Noah's ark, and symbols of the sun and moon. All these figures are hard to detect amidst the swirling reliefs.

Significantly, the two vignettes identified as episodes from Jonah's life are placed in the middle ground, squarely within the bucolic landscape. Or to put it another way, the bucolic setting envelopes the figures such that it becomes their natural—if not strictly accurate—habitat. The bucolic is advanced here not only as the appropriate landscape for salvation involving humans, animals, and vegetation; it also holds the potential to expand and eclipse all other settings to its advantage. The entire surface of the lamp is presented as the shepherd's domain, the others subordinate to him in scale and position, and all of them participants of the bucolic setting. Since such lamps were used not only for the practical function of illumination, but also in funerary, apotropaic, and devotional contexts, the theme of the shepherd and Jonah fits well into the roles enabled by this object.[44]

Some of the most striking examples of the centrality and drawing power of the shepherd imagery occur in the Roman catacombs. Scholars have generally associated the motif in these funerary spaces with themes of salvation, deliverance, and guidance in the underworld, closely related to the functions of Hermes from pre-Christian times.[45] But an additional consideration is that the shepherd imagery essentially occurs within a space intended for,

44 For an overview of scholarship on terracotta lamps, see Schoolman, "Image and Function," 165–77.

45 Awes Freeman, *The Good Shepherd*, 83.

and occupied by, human remains, which are themselves in interface with the earth and in a state of transition as they decompose. The Good Shepherd, as an amalgam of a human and nonhuman species, is a powerful—and ideal—expression not just of salvation, but also of the kinds of transitions and interfaces a human body may be subjected to.

Consider the catacombs of Priscilla, one of the most frequently reproduced images of which features the Good Shepherd. This fresco adorns a ceiling in the "Cubiculum of the Velatio" (Chapel of the Veiled Woman), named thus because of the image of a veiled woman in an orant position who features in the centre of a composition on a lunette on one wall. The shepherd is depicted in a roundel on the ceiling directly above this chamber in the centre of a suite of four lunettes featuring birds, among which are two resplendent peacocks (Figure 10). Our shepherd stands bearing a horned creature over his shoulders, one arm extended in address, (perhaps in the process of reaching out to an animal), toward his right. He is flanked by sheep on either side. The crisp geometry of the contour encircling the composition is softened by the wavy green lines signifying plants that frame the shepherd on each end, and atop which perch birds. The inclusion of these winged creatures within the shepherd's image field, in almost as close vicinity to him as the sheep, underlines the man's distance from the other birds who are trapped in their own compartments and separated from the shepherd, both as a figure in his own right, and as part of a bucolic composition. The larger variety of species and colours in the centre offsets the relative paucity of vegetation, creatures, and corresponding colours in the other compartments on the ceiling. The bucolic scene is the most vibrant and crowded of all, signifying this as a culminating space, expansive enough to contain a diversity of elements. This is also a reminder that the human remains in the catacomb are at a relatively large physical distance from the images laid out on the ceiling, and certainly from the central image of the shepherd. The latter is at the opposite end of the spectrum, occupying an area filled with colour, vegetation, and nonhuman species such as birds, in emphatic contrast to the immediate surroundings of the actual humans buried in that space. The shepherd occupies the heart of the ceiling, much as the image of a Christ Pantokrator might function on a dome from which the cascading images of the Theotokos, apostles, and the Holy Spirit emanate.

The above effect is intensified in the catacombs of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus. Here again the shepherd features on the ceiling of a chamber, occupying its own roundel at the centre of a series of arches and lunettes (Figure 11). The shepherd looks toward his right, like his counterpart in the catacomb of Priscilla, the requisite sheep on his shoulders. The surroundings underscore

Figure 10. Catacomb of Priscilla, fourth century CE. Fresco, Rome. © Alamy Stock Photo.

Figure 11. Catacombs of Peter and Marcellinus, third century CE.
Fresco, outside Rome. © Alamy Stock Photo.

the bucolic by including leafy trees and two seated animals on each side of the man. The framing lunettes and arches include episodes from the life of Jonah and orant figures respectively. The orant figures supply visual pauses in the narrative rhythms set by Jonah's misadventures at sea and on land. They also constantly reinforce the centrality of the shepherd by raising their arms up toward it. The shepherd roundel thus would seem to consolidate Jonah's life story and the praying figures, as though the bucolic were the very source of the narratives radiating outward from it. It is also, simultaneously, the latter's culmination at the centre of the ceiling. Just as such a setting furnished the entire landscape for the biblical episodes on the terracotta lamp examined previously, so too in the catacomb frescoes, the bucolic furnishes the foundation and climax for the other episodes, with the shepherd figure in command at their centre. And once again, this is the scene that is arguably situated at the greatest distance from the space of the dead occupying the catacomb. It is simultaneously a commentary on, and the ideal image for, the kinds of interspecies relations a human body can aspire to enter into even as it underlines its pictorial, spatial, and physical differences from the deceased.

I end this section with a consideration of two sarcophagi: one, a renowned exemplar known as the Santa Maria Antiqua sarcophagus at Rome, and another a relatively little-known one from Singidunum/Belgrade in the Roman Balkans which has not received much attention from scholars outside that region. Sarcophagi are, of course, related to the theme of death and the transformations implied and imagined to inform the transition to that state. Recent literature on the conceptual and material resonances of Roman sarcophagi underlines the themes of framing, sub-framing, entrances and exits, mimesis and transitional moments, depicted on and around these objects; essentially containers for the dead in material and/or conceptual form.[46] Some of these themes certainly apply to the two early Christian sarcophagi under discussion here. Both are notable for their depiction of the shepherd along with scenes from the life of Jonah. A critical point is that the images on these sarcophagi literally appear *between* the living human being/viewer, and the remains of the deceased human the containers are intended to house.[47] Thus, the human bodies depicted on the sarcophagi—and their entanglements with other bodies or beings, escapes therefrom, and other states they might assume—mediate between a living body/viewer (that may

46 Elsner, "Decorative Imperatives," 178–95, and Ewald, "Paradigms of Personhood," 41–64.

47 Platt, "Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi," 353–81.

Figure 12. Sarcophagus, third–fourth century CE. Limestone. Belgrade, National Museum of Serbia. Photograph by the author.

or may not be in interface with other human viewers and/or species), and a dead body. The conditions and transitions of the latter are relatively more predictable than those that might afflict a living body, although the dead are still susceptible to contingencies such as violence, destruction, or removal of their remains. And, in the same vein as the lamp and catacombs studied above, the shepherd and Jonah episodes on the sarcophagi also place human bodies in close physical contact with nonhumans, each with important implications about the longevity of the state/s in which they occur.

The Singidunum sarcophagus was discovered in the eponymous region in the province of Moesia, which was known to have had Christian martyr cults, but a relatively small number of archaeological finds that can definitively be labelled as early Christian.[48] The sarcophagus was excavated in Belgrade and is a unique instance of such an object from the region (Figure 12). It is made of limestone with a pitched roof adorned with acroteria.[49] Its sides are carved with scrolls. It was probably reused during its history.[50] The centre of its front

48 Pilipović and Milanovic, "The Jonah Sarcophagus," 219–45, and Pilipović and Milanović, "The Traditional Model," 261–78.

49 For comments on the visual complexities of sarcophagi lids, see Elsner, "Decorative Imperatives," 180.

50 For an overview of the scholarship on the sarcophagus, see Pilipović and Milanovic, "The Jonah Sarcophagus," 219–22.

panel displays an elaborate narrative, showing a ship with a billowing sail supported by a cross. From this vessel, the naked body of Jonah is tossed headfirst into the sea and into the waiting mouth of the *ketos*. The water teems with another fish, or dolphin, (or *ketos*?) on which a putto perches. As we move to the left, Jonah is spat out from the monster's maw. His arms are raised like an orant, directly towards a shepherd holding a sheep on his shoulders. This figure is the largest, most imposing, and centrally disposed of all the living creatures depicted in the hectic image field. If many Roman exemplars show clear-cut frames and subsets of frames, even if only to subvert them in complex and playful modes,[51] the front of the Singidunum sarcophagus intentionally obscures such separating devices in favour of a melee of scenes with overlapping human, fish, monsters, water, and plant.

Pictorially and thematically, Jonah's direct address (via his outstretched arms and body) to the shepherd makes perfect sense, since the latter is read as a symbol of salvation. But more interesting is the passage concerning Jonah with the sea monsters and the fish/dolphin ridden by the putto. This comprises a writhing mass of human and nonhuman bodies stacked against and above/under each other, all engaged in a variety of interactions. The image has been interpreted typologically as salvific, with Jonah's disgorgement alluding to his physical resurrection, and the dolphin, putto, and *ketos* alluding to the salvation of the soul, or alternatively the putto being a non-Christian motif that could be interpreted as Christian.[52] But equally and emphatically, this visual passage is also a meditation on the range of attitudes that a human, or human-like (in the case of the putto) body may assume in its interface with a sea-monster and other marine creatures: in Jonah's case, the headfirst descent into and then ascent out of the *ketos*; in the putto's case, its straddling stance vis-à-vis the fish/dolphin. These entanglements are also (in Jonah's case) temporary states from which the human will extricate himself to be rendered whole and integral.

Towering above Jonah and on top of the composition is a magnificent flourishing plant with a bird (perhaps a peacock or dove?) embedded in it. This would seem to allude to the vine under which Jonah rested. This image, like the marine passage, is a transitional and temporary phase of the sort that we find in the depictions of certain myths on and around Roman sarcophagi.[53] As in the Cleveland sculpture, the plant is allowed a moment of glory in

51 Platt, "Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi," 353–81.

52 Pilipović and Milanovic, "The Jonah Sarcophagus," 230.

53 Platt, "Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi," 361.

Figure 13. Sarcophagus, third century CE.
Marble, S. Maria Antiqua, Rome. © Art Resource.

the visual field before the informed viewer recalls its subsequent withering. Importantly, the plant does *not* shelter the shepherd, who stands at a slight remove from the marine and land adventures depicted on the right. This separation may be intended to recall that the plant is a *temporary* refuge—and thereby, of a different category—in contrast to the shepherd. The latter is the only figure to look out directly at the viewer. Just as Jonah addresses him, so too is the sarcophagus' viewer implicated in a direct address with the shepherd. It is the latter who denotes certain and eternal salvation, unlike the figures in the other transitory episodes depicted. Although not centrally placed (as is often the case with portraits of the deceased or other focalizing figures on sarcophagi), the shepherd categorically exhibits his pulling power vis-à-vis Jonah, and the viewer, as he certainly did with his sheep as per the biblical parable—the animal now shown draped across his shoulders in an image of perpetual deliverance.

The S. Maria Antiqua sarcophagus is not as explicit in exhibiting the pull of the shepherd for Jonah or other figures and episodes (Figure 13).[54] However, a little-observed fact is that its entire front panel is organized to accommodate bucolic themes. The two shorter side panels, in categorical contrast, show marine scenes with a ship and an oceanic divinity holding a trident in one case, and men handling fishing nets in the other. Many possible vectors of narratives are enabled by this (or any other) sarcophagus: the shorter sides could be imagined as leading to the elongated panel on the front. Indeed, the side showing the ship (which intrudes on the front panel)

54 Bovini and Brandenburg, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage I*, no. 747.

is a plausible prelude to the first vignette on the left of the front panel, which is the aftermath of Jonah's shipwreck and ingestion by the *ketos* (Figure 13). However, each side could also be viewed as independent of the others.

The centre of the front panel features a female orans figure and a male "philosopher" with a scroll who might perhaps be the patrons of the sarcophagus. Although no bucolic features are evident here apart from the setting of the trees, the vegetal component is significant since it occurs right across the rest of the panel. One could argue that pictorial choices were made so as to intensify the human-vegetal and human-animal relations gradually from the sides toward the centre. So accordingly, we find on the left, Jonah's naked body stretched Endymion-like, with one leg directly touching and supporting the *ketos*'s belly such that the human limb and monstrous stomach seem one, the former flowing out of the latter, and Jonah's toe merging into the patterned striations of that stomach. A vine shelters Jonah (more on this detail below). On the right of the central couple under the trees, we find a shepherd with a sheep slung on his shoulders and two standing sheep on either side of him. Further on, we see a child who stretches an arm to fondle one sheep, and a man who touches the child's head whilst a dove perches above and looks down upon them. This vignette has been read as a scene of possible baptism (although such an interpretation is mainly speculative). Whether a baptism or not, it is certainly part of a series of cascading instances of tactile relations between humans and animals or nonhumans (the *ketos*, and the dove which almost touches the older man's outstretched arm) each of which culminates in the central figure of the female orant whose raised arms intersect with the leaves: the vegetal counterpart of Jonah's bodily engagement with the *ketos* directly to the left. The male philosopher contains resonances of the figure of the shepherd to his right—seated by a tree in a bucolic landscape, albeit with a scroll and sans sheep. Björn C. Ewald made the point that sarcophagi depicting philosophers replace the "scopic" paradigm of mythological sarcophagi with an "aural" paradigm and the dramatization of the act of listening, which chimes in well with the dimensions of sound in relation to the bucolic.[55]

A word about the vine under which Jonah rests. This is not simply a (transitory) shelter for the prophet; it also supports a diagonal ledge on which three rams sit, two facing toward the right and one to the left. Rams or sheep (without a shepherd) also appear in seemingly random, unexpected areas near Jonah on other sarcophagi, such as one in the British Museum,

55 Ewald, "Paradigms of Personhood," 57.

and another fragment in the Princeton Museum of Art. In these, as on the S. Maria Antiqua exemplar, the animals seem to occupy and oversee areas close to Jonah's reclining body. They are explicit markers rounding out a bucolic setting which the flourishing vine is a mere hint of. The difference, however, lies in the fact that the vine withers, but the sheep remain; again, a play on temporary vis-à-vis eternal rest and salvation. Consequently, the bucolic is itself signalled as a transitory state, all too liable to shatter if the underlying conditions alter (via the vine). But critically, it also holds the possibility of everlasting endurance because of the imminent presence of the shepherd who shall, in time, reclaim his flock.

On the S. Maria Antiqua sarcophagus, the bucolic setting is expanded to flank the centre and serve as a universal space—as on the Berlin terracotta lamp—to encompass all the characters, including those implicated in the "baptism" scene. It serves both as detail (via the trees and rams and sheep) and as an entire episode unto itself (via Jonah under the vine and the shepherd figure). Interestingly, the front view of the panel also occasions a slight glimpse of the curved sides. We see a part of the ship encroaching the flat surface on the left, signalling the transition from the marine to the pastoral. But in a more complicated twist, the curved end on the right depicts a tree and a man under it, with the exigencies of relief being such that this appears as an unusually tight human-vegetal assemblage in its frontal configuration. Upon moving to the right, one realizes that this human is in fact independent from the tree and, presumably, the other scenes unfolding on the front. Whether the human-plant entwinement was intended or not, it is nonetheless an effect of the stacking of scenes and figures. In such a capacity, it furnishes an intriguing play on the Jonah-and-vine configuration on the other end; a coda to the kinds of entanglements made possible by the narrative twists of biblical and non-biblical episodes, and the material possibilities of the object itself.

The Last Shepherd

In a short but influential article from 1983, Boniface Ramsey ponders the reasons behind the gradual, and then near-total, disappearance of the Good Shepherd motif from the visual discourse in the first half of the fifth century CE.[56] Ramsey offers four reasons for this phenomenon: the rustic, humble shepherd was increasingly incompatible with the image of Christ;

56 Ramsey, "A Note on the Disappearance of the Good Shepherd," 375–78.

the Christian church was a in a less defensive position and saw no need for an essentially pastoral figure to represent it; whereas the Good Shepherd emphasizes a gentle leader and guide, by this era there was a greater imperative to show Christ as a king or teacher; and that the shepherd gradually became irrelevant to major Christological developments of the era. Ramsey's points have not been refuted, and for good reason, as they seem to sum up the basic trends of the epoch and its imagery. However, I would argue that at least as far as Christological matters were concerned, the Good Shepherd motif was critical in that it further complicated one of the most essential subjects debated in the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries and beyond: the nature and ontology of Christ. Furthermore, I suggest that the complications entailed in the representation of a human (and in the case of Christ, an extraordinary human) and nonhuman are a major factor behind the disappearance of the Good Shepherd. We find strong hints of this in the debates regarding not just the ontology of Christ, but also in his relations to God, the Theotokos, and his mortal followers.

In brief, the First Councils of Nicaea and of Constantinople in the fourth century among other things condemned Arianism, which posited that the nature of Christ was created by God, and therefore was subordinate to God. The ecumenical councils of the fifth century aimed to resolve this subject whilst also determining the relational nature of Christ and the Theotokos.[57] Nestorianism, which posited that Christ's human and divine natures were distinct, was condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431 CE) and then again at the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) which asserted that Christ had "two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."[58] It was also at the Council of Ephesus that the Theotokos's status as Theotokos, or "Mother of God," was determined.[59] This chapter is not the appropriate venue to launch into a detailed excursus of these Christological debates; suffice to say that the heated discussions about the nature and relations of Christ also inevitably included questions about Christ's bodily relations with other humans (such as the Theotokos) and his congregants.

Two important spheres in which the above ideas are most strikingly encapsulated are 1) in representations of the Theotokos and Christ, and 2) in ideas about the eucharist—the body and blood of Christ—and the most

57 See the authoritative volume by Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*. See also Price and Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*.

58 Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 262–63.

59 One study is Price, "Marian Piety and the Nestorian Controversy," 31–38.

appropriate ways to distribute and receive it. The tactile interface between Christ and his congregants as once exemplified in the ubiquitous Good Shepherd imagery (and as explicated by Gregory of Nyssa, among others, discussed above), was evidently not a straightforward matter; hence the prevalence of, and consequent need to condemn, Arianism, Nestorianism, Apollinarism, and other such so-called heresies.

Ioli Kalavrezou argues that in the centuries following upon the Council of Ephesus and the confirmed status of the Virgin as "Theotokos," she was represented holding her son, but that there was clearly a reluctance to delve any deeper into the mother-son relationship.[60] Even as late as the sixth century, the visual evidence suggests a bare minimum of physical contact between Christ and his mother, with the imagery being "unemotional and distant. Mary is still the Theotokos as defined at the council, a concept which precludes the establishment of any direct emotional connection between her and her son that could imply a family relationship."[61] It is exactly this reluctance to depict the relations between Christ and other beings, even his own mother—and particularly, the tactile relations between Christ and other humans and non-humans—that I suspect were at play in the disappearance of the Good Shepherd imagery. If the mother could not hold her son close, then nonhumans such as sheep were certainly to be denied such proximity.

We find a similar caution, if not outright chariness, in the dispensation and reception of Christ's body and blood as well in this period.[62] Although church fathers and bishops asserted that communion is desirable and a necessity, the specific bodily and tactile attitudes toward it on the part of humans are deemed important enough to be enumerated. The *Didache* (second century CE), a manuscript used for the instruction of catechumens, warns that the eucharist is exclusive; it is not intended for those not baptized in the name of the Lord and one should "not give what is holy to the dogs."[63] Basil of Caesarea underscores the importance of receiving communion and avers that desert fathers and solitaries do so without the aid of a priest. He is also careful to underline that in times of persecution or strife, ordinary people may partake of the eucharist without a priest since, even when the latter

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60 Kalavrezou, "Images of the Mother," 165–72.

61 Kalavrezou, "Images of the Mother," 168.

62 Markschies, "Current Research on the Eucharist in Ancient Christianity," 417–46.

63 See Draper, "You Shall not Give What Is Holy to the Dogs," 242–58; and van de Sandt, "Do Not Give What is Holy to the Dogs (DID 9.5D and Matt 7.6A)," 223–46.

Figure 14. Lunette over the north portal, 425 CE.
Mosaic, chapel of Galla Placidia, Ravenna. © Alamy Stock Photo.

administers it in times of peace, once the sacred matter touches a recipient, that person has complete power over it and lifts it to his lips with his own hand.[64] Basil's comments are particularly significant because of the incipient power play implied in the tactile handling of Christ's body and blood by the communicant who, one hopes, would treat this matter with due reverence since he alone has control over it once it has been administered.

Cyril of Jerusalem goes even further to specify exactly how the communicant's hands should touch the eucharist. He instructs, "Come not with your wrists extended, or your fingers spread; but make your left hand a throne for the right, as for that which is to receive a King. And having hollowed your palm, receive the Body of Christ, saying over it, Amen. So then after having carefully hallowed your eyes by the touch of the Holy Body, partake of it; giving heed lest you lose any portion thereof; for whatever you lose, is evidently a loss to you as it were from one of your own members" (*Catechetical Lectures* 23.21).

Cyril even underlines the ideal mode of receiving the blood of Christ which differs from the reception of his body: "Then after you have partaken

64 See Basil the Great, *Letters and Select Works*, ed. Schaff.

of the Body of Christ, draw near also to the Cup of His Blood; not stretching forth your hands, but bending, and saying with an air of worship and reverence, Amen" (*Catechetical Lectures* 23.22).

These instructions reflect the urgency of the subject of Christ's physical nature, its manifestation, and above all, the necessity of mandating a set of tactile relations to mortal humans when they handle it. I believe these considerations also determined the separation of the shepherd from his sheep in what is virtually the final expression of this motif in late antiquity and thence onward: the renowned mosaic image of Christ as the Good Shepherd which graces the north entrance to the chapel of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (425 CE) (Figure 14). This serene composition depicts the shepherd in a rocky landscape, relieved somewhat by grasses, plants, and robust sheep. Three of these creatures flank the shepherd on each side; he strokes the one closest to him tenderly under the chin. Physical contact here is radically modified in relation to our Cleveland statue and other instances studied above, but it is still important enough to be retained in the shepherd's gesture. All the sheep face their keeper. We find no hints here of the occasional inattention of the beasts that inflects similar images of shepherds (discussed in Chapter 3). This is an undernoted but important point, since it firmly establishes the shepherd, or Christ, as the focal centre of vision, both within the picture field and for the viewer positioned outside it. Moreover, we recall that this image occurs on the threshold *within*, and facing toward, the chapel. Thus, it faces the viewer when they turn and prepare to leave the building. In this respect, the image resonates well with Christ's words about his flock attaining salvation by "going in and out" (as the viewer is clearly supposed to do vis-à-vis the chapel), rather than inviting the viewer to traverse only one sole direction. The image is intended as the culmination of the other representations in the chapel, being the ultimate vision encountered as one advances to the door to *exit*. Thus, it exercises a pulling power by explicitly provoking movement towards itself—movement, moreover, that is inevitable because a viewer must at some point depart from the building.

The major thrust of analyses of this image tends to focus on the imperial stance—and thereby, nature—of Christ whose golden robe overlain by the purple cloak and majestic seated posture would seem to allude to his status as something more than just a shepherd. Added to this is the evidence of the cross standing upright in his hand in place of a shepherd's crook.[65] This interpretation is convincing in all respects. But I wish to add the point

65 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, 83.

(again, undernoted) that Christ is still depicted in *tactile* contact with both the cross and one of the sheep in a manner that would seem to make each of those entities profoundly integral to the Saviour's figure. The salient iconography of the Good Shepherd as one whose very bodily composition is touched by non-human creature/s is immediately apparent, even if it is much tempered from the earlier iterations of the shepherd with the sheep bodily held on his shoulders.

The Quinisext Council: The Limits of the Species

A couple of centuries after the Ravenna mosaic was manufactured, a church council was convened under Justinian II at Constantinople that explicitly dealt with the subject of an image bound to the bucolic: the lamb as Christ. The fact that a council broached this matter lends further credence to my argument that a similar set of concerns probably played into the disappearance of the Good Shepherd imagery as well, albeit without those concerns having been articulated as concretely and clearly. The 82nd canon of the Quinisext Council, held in 692 CE, is well known to Byzantine art historians as it mandates the replacement of one iconographic choice (the lamb) with another (Christ as a human). The canon states:

> In some depictions of the venerable icons, the Forerunner is portrayed pointing with his finger to a lamb, and this has been accepted as a figure of grace, prefiguring for us through the Law the true lamb, Christ our God. Therefore, while these ancient figures and shadows have been handed down as symbols and outlines of the truth passed on by the church, we prefer grace and truth, which have been received as fulfilment of the law. Therefore, so that what is perfect may be depicted, even in paintings, in the eyes of all, we decree that the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Christ our God, should from now on be portrayed as a man, instead of the ancient lamb, even in icons; for in this way the depth of the humility of the Word of God can be understood, and one might be led to the memory of his life in the flesh, his passion and his saving death, and of the redemption which thereby came to the world.[66]

Charles Barber points to the canon's concern regarding the inadequacy of the lamb, and remarks that it is "an insufficiency in this type of symbolic representation. Instead, the canon decrees that such figures should be replaced by the representation of Christ as a man."[67] Although it has been argued that

66 I have used the translation in Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 42.

67 Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 42.

the canon was not an unequivocal prohibition on lamb imagery so much as a suggestion, its formulation is nonetheless interesting for our purposes.[68] In highlighting the insufficiency of the symbol, the canon also highlights a perception regarding the insufficiency of a nonhuman species vis-à-vis the experiences of a human. The reasons put forward for replacing the lamb with Christ regard the greater understanding such a substitution would enable. Christ as human would allow for the apprehension of the intensity of his human suffering; the profundity of his teachings; and the terrifying nature of his death, which is also the source of redemption for humankind.[69] The subtext is that the image of the animal is incapable of exhibiting the same features and of exciting the same response to the same degree. This is a profound shift not only in iconographic terms, but also for its implications for the human-animal configuration that was comfortably—even vigorously—propounded in earlier centuries.

We find the consequences of Canon 82 in some (not all) subsequent imagery, in which the picture field is dominated by human beings—or to put it another way, largely cleansed of beings that do not bear superficially human features.[70] The visceral union between the shepherd and his sheep that was so integral to the early church fathers' conception of salvation, is now replaced with a world in which *humankind* and its concerns regarding an all too human suffering and salvation are paramount.

68 Anderson, "Images in Byzantine Thought and Practice," 150–51.

69 See further discussion in Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 42–52.

70 Barber, *Figure and Likeness*, 42–52.

Chapter 2

THE WINDS AND THE WEATHER

Let the fifth place be taken…
By the loftily soaring bronze construction…
A four-legged structure full of wonder…fitted with four bronze sides,
Adorned on all sides both with carved creatures,
And tendrils bursting with fruits and pomegranates.
Naked erotes entangled in vines, stand there sweetly smiling
…making fun of those below…
Youths kneeling…blow out the winds through bronze trumpets,
One the west wind, again another the south.
At the summit of this a monstrous creature made of bronze
With bronze wings being blown around,
Depicts the sharp blasts of the winds,
All the gales that blow towards the city,
The north wind, the south wind, and the fair northerly,
The bold east wind, and the hard-blowing southerly.[1]

THUS DID POET and orator, Constantine of Rhodes, describe a windvane that stood in Constantinople for centuries before it was destroyed in the rampage of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 CE. Constantine wrote this description some time in the first half of the tenth century CE. He ranked the windvane fifth among what he deemed were the seven marvels of the Byzantine capital.[2] Its splendour was also captured by another later commentator, Nicetas Choniates who, soon after 1204, lamented its destruction at the hands of the Crusaders. According to Choniates, the windvane was

> a four-sided bronze device…almost equal in height to the tallest columns…a marvel…every musical bird, giving its springtime song, was carved upon it… the tasks of husbandsmen, the pipes and milk pails, and the bleating sheep and bounding lambs, were depicted. The widespread sea and schools of fish were to be seen, some caught, and others breaking out of the nets…there were the erotes shown in pairs and groups of three…innocent of clothing but armed with apples…they shook with sweet laughter as they threw these…

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1 Constantine of Rhodes, *On Constantinople*, trans. James and ed. Vassis, 31–33.

2 For details on the poet and his poem, see Constantine of Rhodes, *On Constantinople*, trans. James and ed. Vassis, 131–57.

> This four-sided monument terminated in a point like a pyramid, and above was suspended a female figure which revolved at the first breath of winds, for which reason it was called the *anemodoulion*.[3]

Evidently the wondrous dimension of this windvane, as per our sources, consisted of the cumulative effect of its size, height, automotive quality, and material. For our purposes, this monument also supplied the backdrop, or support, for imagery of a decidedly bucolic bent; a point underscored in Choniates' description of the husbandsmen's work, and the pipes, pails, bleating sheep and skipping lambs that adorned the structure along with the depiction of other activities such as fishing and apple-throwing, although we are not told precisely where on it such imagery was made visible. If the motif of the shepherd carrying a sheep could stand alone as a sculpted image (as examined in Chapter 1), in this case figures akin to the shepherd seem to be embedded in a larger, more riotous visual narrative. Despite the frustrating paucity of information proffered regarding the precise location of the windvane, if we take our commentators seriously, we must accept that bucolic imagery played a role and occupied an important space in the public sphere in Constantinople, on an object whose immediate function was to measure the weather.

This chapter takes on a two-fold challenge: first and most obviously, it gauges the reasons why bucolic imagery was deemed most suitable for an instrument designed to capture weather patterns. This question is partly inspired by the secondary literature on the object, which is far from copious, and which has mainly concerned itself with questions regarding the windvane's possible location, political significance, the number of winds it depicted, and the identity of the bronze female figure on the top. Dunstan Lowe points to the fact that structures such as the windvane (and lighthouses, as a parallel category) were mechanistic devices that doubled as marvellous sculptural objects in their own right.[4] Additionally, Benjamin Anderson has argued that the original Constantinopolitan structure was an ancient tetrapylon *later* adorned with the pastoral scenes under the reign of Leo III as a consequence of his naval win over the Arabs in 717–718 CE. According to Anderson, the windvane was redeployed as a victory monument, with the bucolic images invoked as part of an iconography of triumph.[5] This is a useful, if necessarily speculative, claim, but Anderson does not

3 Nicetas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, ed. and trans. Magoulias, 358.

4 Lowe, "Twisting in the Wind," 147–69.

5 Anderson, "Leo III and the Anemodoulion," 41–54.

explain why *bucolic* elements (rather than epic imagery or the cross) were deemed suitable as an expression of victory in this period. My argument expands on Lowe's and Anderson's contributions by questioning the fundamental relationship between the general form and function of this structure, and the role of the bucolic in relation to the weather. As we have seen, the mode was integral to a certain strand of early Orthodox discourse regarding the bishop and his flock, and the sonic and other kinds of physical relations imaginable between human and non-human entities. In this chapter, I shift to an examination of monumental structures that overtly articulated a link between the bucolic mode and weather-watching.

My second concern is to demonstrate that the windvane was a scientific instrument in its own right, with the bucolic imagery perceived to play a role in the study and manipulation of weather patterns. Objects like the windvane were officially designated as scientific instruments only in the late modern era.[6] However, the fundamental attribute of this category—that is, the utility of an object for measuring a natural phenomenon—is applicable in this case as it is for other public objects intended for a similar purpose, such as sundials (briefly examined later in the chapter). The sphere of Byzantine science has largely and rightly focused on the knowledge fields contained and developed within manuscripts.[7] The windvane, when studied at all, has been examined as part of the monumental corpus of Constantinople rather than as a device related to the weather.

Gauging the weather remained a more or less consistent concern throughout the Byzantine era.[8] If scholars designate a category of scientific instruments on the basis of their generation of a signal after interaction with a particular phenomenon (which signal can then be understood as information about that phenomenon), then the windvane falls into such a category.[9] It is an image-bearing object operating as a sign which, in turn, indicates a relatively unpredictable element (wind, in this case), and its actual and/or anticipated behaviour; a gnomon of sorts. In its role as a scientific instrument, the windvane must have invited some rumination on the associations between the pictures permanently displayed on it and the changeable sign

6 See the comments in Taub, "What is a Scientific Instrument, Now," 453–67, and Taub, "On Scientific Instruments," 337–43.

7 See the essays in Lazaris ed., *A Companion to Byzantine Science*.

8 Telelis, "Meteorology and Physics," 177–201. Telelis does not mention the Constantinopolitan windvane in his overview.

9 See Davis Baird's study of different categories of scientific instruments in Baird, *Thing Knowledge*, 68.

it indicated. Moreover, by dint of its position in an open urban space and its interaction with the elements (certainly wind, but perhaps also water via rain), the windvane operated in tandem with the weather and its vagaries as a changing backdrop over time. Indeed, in ancient handbooks (and well into the middle ages), wind was regarded as an irregular element relative to others, and certainly in comparison to the rotation of the spheres, thus averring the contingencies it entailed.[10] The element of wind, its measurement, embodiment, and description, were all a means of creating links between the human and nonhuman worlds; by extension, the windvane can be regarded as a "heuristic for understanding where nature begins and ends."[11] The "weather," in this period, comprised a broad range of phenomena pertaining not simply to rain or snow or sunshine, but also to earthquakes and astronomical elements.[12]

No less important is the fact that the windvane and its imagery was also embedded within the larger urban context of the Byzantine capital with its wealth of existing statuary and monuments (both pre-Christian and Christian) and various ritual and social relations mediating between them and their audience. Pictorial aspects of the windvane were reflected in other monuments; think of the Good Shepherd imagery on fountains or in gardens, for instance, as discussed in the previous chapter. By the same token, the statue on the top of the windvane that signalled the direction of the winds seems to resemble other statues in Constantinople with their hands or arms outstretched in deictic gestures. It is within these interpretative frameworks that the chapter positions this striking but understudied monument.

Significantly, but not surprisingly, both Constantine's and Choniates' descriptions of the windvane are redolent with actual, imagined, and depicted sounds: trumpets wielded by youths, songs sung by birds, the bleating of sheep, the pipes, and above all, the whistling of the winds. Where Orthodox discourse cast the shepherd's voice as an essential component of the concept of the Good Shepherd, here the winds and the birds, specifically, are understood to possess their own vocal presence which coalesce around the windvane with the other sounds it displays and evokes via its imagery. This multispecies soundscape—embedded in and integral to the bucolic—is intimately related to concerns about the weather and its portents.

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10 Obrist, "Wind Diagrams and Medieval Cosmology," 37.

11 This formulation appears in a study of winds in the medieval west in Robertson, "Embodying the Wind," 247.

12 There is lots of contemporary scholarship on "weather." I mention here one major study pertaining to the period at hand: Taub, *Ancient Meteorology*, 2.

In fact, the textual and pictorial evidence suggests that bucolic imagery was regarded as the appropriate expression for staking claims about the coexistence of the natural and human worlds more broadly. Since wind direction presaged weather, the bucolic scenes on the device play into a discourse regarding the immediate and changeable atmospheric conditions that affect sentient beings, and the material and sensorial experiences that weather conditions facilitate.[13] This dimension is also apparent in other instruments such as the Nilometer, designed to measure the rising levels of the Nile river.[14] Several depictions of Nilometers exist in a range of media, in contrast to the windvane of which no remains or representations are extant. Although no Nilometer imagery, to my knowledge, depicts the motif of the shepherd and/or sheep, many examples display the other components (erotes, birds, fish, plants) mentioned in Constantine's and Choniates' descriptions of the windvane. Finally, my argument claims that on these particular devices the bucolic mode articulated the principle of contingency, defined here as an event or condition which may, but is not certain to, occur in the future and which is dependent on variable and mostly uncontrollable factors. Just as contingency was alluded to as a recuperable condition in the conception of the Good Shepherd imagery via the narrative of the lost sheep who shall be found and saved by its keeper, so too here it operates on the scale of the predictable and unpredictable weather patterns discerned by all too human—and therefore, potentially fallible—interpreters.

The Windvane: Sources, Scholarship, Context

Windvanes are not common in the literature or art of Byzantium. The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* contains no reference to such structures, apart from one allusion in a fourteenth-century *praktikon* which suggests that that particular example was located close to a watermill, and that peasants could own shares in it.[15] Our Constantinopolitan windvane is severely understudied, partly owing to its complete material disappearance and partly because of the very few sources we have about it. Apart from the accounts of Constantine of Rhodes and Choniates, the only other references to it are in the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* and the *Patria*. The *Parastaseis* is a

13 Hulme, "Climate," 175–78.

14 Katary, "Nilometer," 4794–95

15 Kazhdan, Nesbitt, and Cutler, "Mill." Laura Borghetti discusses a few instances of watermills and windmills (though not windvanes) in Borghetti, "Energies," 112–34.

compilation from the eighth century of the various monuments of the capital, but riddled with errors of grammar and data.[16] The *Patria* is a tenth-century patriography of Constantinople which repeats, in some cases, parts of the *Parastaseis*.[17] Despite their inaccuracies and grammatical infelicities, both texts are useful indicators of the kinds of associations and perceptions invested in the capital's monumental legacy.

One reference in the *Parastaseis* places a bronze statue of the empress Verina near the "anemodourion," (instead of "anemodoulion") whereas a couple of others refer to a similar structure but without naming it. One such passage alludes to an ensemble of reliefs of birds and animals, including rams and heifers, and even two gorgons on a monument near, or at, the Bread Market. Another refers to a "female statue engraved on all four sides with zodiacal signs," which expression, Lowe suggests, may also be interpreted as "animal carvings."[18] Lowe argues that the bronze female statue placed atop the windvane was Iris, mother of the erotes by Zephyrus, and one who directs the actions of the wind gods in Homeric and other literature.[19]

Anderson's argument regarding the windvane posits that the structure's conversion from tetrapylon to a windvane and the addition of the accompanying images of the pastoral scenes occurred when, during the reign of Leo III, an Arab siege (717–718 CE) was successfully warded off by means of prayers for a powerful storm. This argument rests in large part upon one reference from the *Patria* and speculations regarding a processional route and the monuments along it.[20] Little of the discussion is devoted to the specifics of the imagery. As mentioned in the preceding section, my interest lies in recuperating the value and impact of the latter. In order to do so, it is useful to look back to ancient exemplars of windvanes as possible models for the Constantinopolitan one.

The most renowned ancient windvane still stands today in Athens and appears in the writings of Vitruvius and Varro. This chapter is not the space in which to delve into the archaeological intricacies of this monument.[21]

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16 Cameron and Herrin, eds. and trans., *Constantinople in the Early Eighth Century*.

17 Berger trans., *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople*.

18 Lowe, "Twisting in the Wind," 158n33.

19 Lowe, "Twisting in the Wind," 164.

20 Anderson, "Leo III and the Anemodoulion," 41–54.

21 A few studies on this object are Robinson, "The Tower of the Winds," 291–305; and Noble and de Solla Price, "The Water Clock," 345–55; and more recently, Kienast, *Der Turm der Winde in Athen*, and Webb, *The Tower of the Winds in Athens.*

Figure 15. Tower of the Winds. Marble, Athens. © Alamy Stock Photo.

Figure 16. Zephyrus, Tower of the Winds (detail). Athens. © Alamy Stock Photo.

Figure 17. Kaikias, Tower of the Winds, (detail).
Athens. © Alamy Stock Photo.

Suffice to say that the so-called Tower of the Winds, built either toward the end of the second century BCE or 50 BCE, is an octagonal monument about 12 metres tall and 8 metres wide, made of Pentelic marble and overlooking the Roman agora (Figure 15). It contains a sundial on each side, and a ninth on the curved surface on the semi-circular annex on the south side. Relief carvings appear in a frieze framing its top. Each of these carvings personifies a wind and some of them carry attributes pertaining to their nature: Zephyrus, being a pleasant and balmy wind, carries a basket of fruits and flowers (Figure 16), whereas cold and wet Kaikias carries a container, or a shield, filled with pebbles (or hailstones) (Figure 17). Looming above the spectator, each wind thus promises to hurl down bounty of one sort or another, be it in the form of flora and vegetation, or conversely, rain and storm. And as per Vitruvius' description of the monument, "On the top of the roof of this tower, a brazen triton with a rod in its right hand moved on a pivot and pointed to the figure of the quarter in which the wind lay" (Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 1.6.4).

Lowe highlights the automotive nature of ancient windvanes such as the Athenian example, rightly contending that they operated as luxury monuments in addition to their functional dimensions. These structures furnish

a missing link between mechanisms and sculpture.[22] I would argue that the bronze statue of Triton placed atop the Athenian windvane is doubly suggestive. Triton was a god of the sea and a son of Poseidon, who himself ruled over the seas and the winds that blew over them. Ancient Graeco-Roman literature refers to tritons as dwelling in marine environments. Placing the god of watery realms atop an instrument as the indicator of wind demonstrates the intimate coexistence of these elements. Wind affects water.[23] So too does the direction of wind affect the statue of Triton. By the same token, water affects wind. Aristotle and Theophrastus made this observation in their treatises respectively titled *Problemata* and *On the Winds*.[24] Apart from scientific treatises, poetry also played a major role in disseminating and reformulating meteorological information and remains a valuable (if perhaps unexpected) source for it.[25] In Homer's *Odyssey*, water—or more accurately, the sea—and wind are often invoked together, sometimes in reciprocal behaviour in which the sea is said to toss rafts about just as the autumn wind might whirl thistledown, and conversely, when the winds raise the sea in storms.[26]

In the overlapping realms of myth, science, and poetry (none of which were entirely discrete spheres in the premodern era), the nature of the wind, or winds, affecting Triton's statue might be traced back to Triton's mythical influence. The relationship between wind and water thus might range from the agonistic to the mutually functional. The sundials placed on each side of the Tower of the Winds also introduce the observation of light into the picture, rendering the structure both a windvane and a time-keeping device. Its interior is believed to have had a relatively sophisticated mechanism for a water clock. However, even as it brings together the functions of wind-observation and time-keeping, the Tower necessarily signals, in visual form, the priority of wind in its structure simply because the highest—and therefore most visible (even if not in a detailed view)—object is the statue of Triton that functions as the indicator of wind.

Apart from their allusions to the marine world, windvanes in ancient discourse could also be directly linked to bucolic settings. So, for instance,

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22 Lowe, "Twisting in the Wind," 147–69.

23 For more on wind and water, see Borghetti, "Water, Ubiquity, and Multiplicity," 317–43.

24 Neumann, "The Sea and Land Breezes in Classical Greek Literature," 5–8.

25 Taub, *Ancient Meteorology*, 2–3.

26 Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. Butler, 5. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

the reference to the Tower of the Winds by Varro is embedded within a famous description of his aviary near Casinum. This aviary was a complex structure with many natural and man-made elements in it. Shut in by high walls and shaped like a writing tablet, the bottom was lined with cages. Nets covered the surface from the walls to the architrave to keep the birds inside.[27] In one part, directly below a dome, it "had a ring of the eight winds, as in the horologium at Athens…There, a spoke projecting from the axis moves around the compass, so that it touches the wind which is blowing, so that you can tell from indoors which one it is."

Varro's comment indicates both a broad network of knowledge relating to scientific devices in antiquity and simultaneously a more particular context within which wind activity is evoked: namely, a space populated by birds and their habitat, meticulously reconstructed to reflect their natural surroundings in an artificial universe. Per Varro's account, the winged creatures frolicked in verdant areas composed of shrubs native to the lands from which each species was imported. Watery features were a part of this space as well. Scholars are divided over whether the windvane in the aviary was intended for a human or a purely avian audience. C. M. C. Green makes the intriguing suggestion that it was intended for the birds. These winged creatures were themselves regarded as instruments of augury, "but in captivity their movements signify nothing, and they, like humans, must look to machines to know which way the wind is blowing."[28] I will return to the implications of this observation later. For now, note the striking similarity between the actual components of the aviary (in terms of the different species of birds, the water, the fish, and the human visitors it presumably attracted) and the depicted components of the Constantinopolitan windvane as per Choniates' account. This is not to suggest that the latter was directly inspired by the former; rather, it is to propose that spaces bringing together many species and scientific instruments could share a similar repertoire of images bound by certain conventions. Following from this, how might the bucolic scenes have worked with and/or against the image of the female figure on the top of the Constantinopolitan windvane? Would these have been perceived to evince any connections at all? We could try to answer these questions by balancing our few sources on the device with the general principles undergirding Byzantine visuality in the period, and the effects of other similar monuments in the capital city.

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27 Green, "Free as a Bird," 441.

28 Green, "Free as a Bird," 443.

Evidently, the windvane was very tall, since Choniates compares its height to the columns of Constantinople which were among the highest in Europe. The monument, thus, could have resembled and even rivalled the majestic columns bearing the statues of emperors. These statues were sometimes endowed with a deictic function, indicating the direction of a conquered land, or a horizon beyond, soon to be conquered. Procopios' description of one of these monuments mentions the "huge bronze horse turned towards the east…he seems about to advance…Stretching forth his [emperor's] right hand towards the regions of the East and spreading out his fingers, he commands the barbarians that dwell there to remain at home and not to advance any further."[29] This statue does not simply assert its own presence; it actively gestures toward other geographies in a bid to display dominion. We recall here that even the ancient gods were perceived to perform a similar deictic role in the cityscape: the bronze statue of Athena whose hand was interpreted as egging on the Crusaders was destroyed by an enraged Constantinopolitan mob because of that offending gesture. The windvane with its own deictic statue presiding at the top, thus, fits well into this category of monumental imagery.

If we imagine the windvane to have been constructed on the lines of the Tower of the Winds, albeit with four sides (as per Constantine of Rhodes) and a pyramidal roof (as per Choniates), then we might also fruitfully analyse the nature and disposition of its images. These would have adorned its nether parts and would have been in pointed contrast (in terms of numbers and narratives) to the lone figure gracing its top. The scenes of singing birds, skipping lambs, swimming fish, and piping and herding men must have unfolded on the body of the monument. However, it is important to note that neither Choniates nor Constantine delineate these scenes as being bound in any particular narrative order, sequence, or hierarchy. Since Constantine specifically mentions the erotes as "making fun of those below," they might have been positioned at a higher plane, or a frieze defining the top of the monument. What is described are not the same as the single figures adorning the frieze of the Tower of the Winds, but rather scenes with unfolding actions. It is possible that these were not glimpsed in their entirety from any single position on the ground, but that they required a mobile viewer circumambulating the monument. In contrast the female figure on top was probably visible in its entirety, if not in detail, since its very role was to indicate the direction of wind. Finally, our sources suggest that the bucolic scenes were

29 Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 10–11.

packed with multiple gestures and directions. In contrast, the female figure must have indicated one critical point, and direction, on the compass. It is not a stretch to imagine that the antitheses defining the female figure and the bucolic scenes I have etched above were clear to a Constantinopolitan audience. As Henry Maguire argues, antithetical thinking was an ingrained habit for the educated viewer, reader and listener who was expected to forge connections between seemingly disparate episodes, motifs, and themes.[30]

The female figure and the narrative scenes on the windvane could also have been interpreted in a *causal* relationship. In other words, the episodes of fruitful bounty with the vines and pomegranates, of men herding, piping, and fishing, and so forth, might have been regarded as the consequences of winds to come, or currently in play. Favourable, soft winds such as Zephyrus could be envisioned as enabling and shaping the bucolic ambience. On the other hand, a stern wind, or a damp one such as Typhoes, could wreck it. However, in a typically Byzantine manoeuvre redolent of the subtle wit and sophistication of its art and literature, the bucolic scenes on the windvane remain forever because they are artificially wrought, no matter the kind of wind or weather in place. Icy Boreas may blow; it makes no difference, for the scenes prevail in their abundance. In such a case, however, viewers would be forced to note the harsh disjunction between the depicted scenes and the weather implied therein, and the actual weather conditions. The resulting discrepancy between the sign and what it actually indicates renders the imagery as an ideal, and therefore, contingent. Unlike a sacred icon (where the image of the holy person was regarded as a key to the holy prototype, or subject), the bucolic scenes furnish no such direct or definitive key where the weather is concerned.

Could the reverse of my original question also be applicable? That is, could the images on the windvane have been read in their turn as the source, and cause, of the kinds of winds and weather enveloping Constantinople? In other words, could the windvane imagery be perceived to have attracted a certain kind of weather? The activities depicted are rooted in nature, with the humans described as being in interface with the natural world and many other species. Each of the actions depicted could and would certainly have been recognized for the consequences they had for their immediate environments, even in an age not as gripped by the signs of climate change as is ours. More to the point, the actions of the animals depicted in tandem with

30 Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*.

the humans could plausibly have been interpreted to reflect, anticipate, and even coax certain weather patterns.

We find precisely these kinds of preoccupations in the *Geoponika*, a compilation of horticultural and agricultural knowledge and lore synthesized under Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in the tenth century CE.[31] The first few chapters are dedicated to portents of the weather, and in each case these are signalled by changes in the colour and position of the sun, the moon, the behaviour of clouds, the appearance of rainbows, and other such phenomena. Importantly, the responses of animals to these phenomena are recorded as significant. When flocks caper about with excessive friskiness, and cattle look toward the south and lick their feet, and dogs dig the ground, such behaviours apparently portend tempests to come, as do birds flying towards the sea and cranes swiftly winging their way.[32] This is just one instance among several others in the *Geoponika* of animals and animal behaviour signalling a particular weather type.

Birds occupy a special position in this sign system. The role and status of birdsong is far better studied in the medieval west than in Byzantium,[33] but it was of no small significance in the eastern Roman empire. Recall that according to some scholars, Varro's ancient aviary contained a windvane (and other features) specifically intended for an avian audience who, when free to fly outside their confines, might have been augurs themselves of the weather.[34] In alignment with this perception, in the *Geoponika* individual voices of birds and their modulations are said to be accurate indicators of the climes. The owl's incessant nightly cry, the crows' cawing at dawn, and the ravens' chorus when akin to rejoicing, all point to fair weather. In contrast, when the raven washes its head and shrieks loudly at night, the barn fowls clamour, crows and jackdaws appear in flocks calling loudly, and swallows twitter around pools and fish-ponds, then rains are nigh.[35] Choniates' suggestive comment about "every musical bird…giving its springtime song" on the windvane attains a deeper significance in the light of the *Geoponika*'s collected wisdom, and its mention of bird sounds and avian behaviour in predicting the weather. The very soundscape of the depicted birds on the device might have been interpreted to evoke, and invoke, a corresponding

31 Dalby, trans. and ed., *Geoponika.*

32 Dalby, trans. and ed., *Geoponika*, 58.

33 See the definitive work by Leach, *Sung Birds*.

34 Green, "Free as a Bird," 443.

35 Dalby, trans. and ed., *Geoponika*, 57.

weather pattern—in this case, climes akin to spring. At the same time, we must imagine real birds sometimes perching on the windvane and singing their songs, perhaps along with, or in contradiction to, the visualized springtime birds. The soundscape evoked by the imagery and the actual soundscape surrounding the monument might have complemented, or competed with, each other in regard to the weather they portended.

Constantinople contained other devices that also worked with and against natural processes. The monumental sculpture of an eagle attacking a snake that once stood in the Hippodrome doubled as a sundial and was believed to ward off poisonous snakes from the capital.[36] Along with its time-keeping function, this ensemble was also an apotropaic talisman, keeping the city safe from serpentine contagion. It was heavily invested with a complex soundscape in Choniates' description: the sighs and screeches and other vocal emanations he read into it as part of his ekphrastic response along with the sounds of the winds and birds in the case of the windvane, which would have been real phenomena at certain moments.[37] Sound was clearly regarded as an integral part of the proper reception of these objects. In light of the eagle–snake ensemble and its apotropaic role, the talismanic dimension of the bucolic images on the windvane comes to the forefront. That is, the latter was probably perceived to enable the manipulation of the elements, just as the eagle–snake sculpture was believed to "work within a broader network of non-human forces and entities" and to have played a role in manipulating a particular species and its behaviour vis-à-vis the city.[38]

One final but important point is the broader relationship between sound, or specifically music, and nature writ large. The myths of the famed musicians of antiquity, such as Orpheus and Thamyris, were well known in Byzantium and were sometimes visually evoked in depictions of the Old Testament warrior and king David playing the *psalterion* (see Chapter 3). The power of Orpheus—or David as a musician (since he plied his musical skills while shepherding his flocks)—lay in the ability of their musicianship to unleash storms or conversely, arrest animals in their track, coax tears from stones, and soothe the torments of kings. One could claim that sound in these instances was specifically regarded as an agent of ecological change, if we define ecology in its fundamental sense as the relations sustained by

36 See Madden, "The Serpent Column of Delphi," 111–46, and Stephenson, *The Serpent Column*.

37 Chatterjee, *Between the Pagan Past and the Christian Present*, 120–26.

38 Griebeler, "The Serpent Column and the Talismanic Ecologies of Byzantine Constantinople," 86–105.

humans and non-humans to, and with, their surroundings. By this token, the sounds mentioned by Constantine and Choniates could be read as integral elements of both the bucolic mode itself, and of the windvane's perceived interface with the weather.

Fountains and Nilometers

Structures analogous to the windvane in terms of function, imagery, and soundscapes are fountains and Nilometers. These objects can serve to flesh out the context of the former, given our scarcity of sources about it. Although not as understudied as the windvane, fountains and Nilometers still require deeper analysis in terms of their impact on their surrounding spaces.

Fountain complexes from the Roman empire and in late antiquity were not simply functional sources of water and refreshment, but also grand architectural and mechanical devices deployed in civic display and competition. They were poetic structures that inspired the literary and visual imagination.[39] Fountains were often (but not always) public and monumental in expression,[40] and according to some of our sources, were sometimes decorated with bucolic images. Byzantine literature helps us to understand their imaginative and actual resonance.

Take the fountain described in the twelfth-century romance, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, written by Eumathios Makrembolites, as one prime example. This object is said to have displayed a milking goatherd, a shepherd's bowl, and different species of birds, goats, sheep, and a hare, possibly in relief, although the text is not overt on this matter.[41] The device is said to consist of a many-hued column in a well (thus approximating the quality of the height of the windvane) with a basin, on top of which stood a golden eagle that spouted water from its beak (much like the bronze female figure that interacted with the winds on our monument). "The basin received the water; the eagle stretched out its wings as if it wanted to bathe."[42] Makrembolites here invests the bird with motion even as the element of water moves from and along it. Note that the eagle is posited as the very source of the water. Similarly, the female figure on the windvane might have been regarded as the

39 I cite here two studies: Dorl-Klingenschmid, *Prunkbrunnen in kleinasiatischen Städten*, and Longfellow, *Roman Imperialism and Civic Patronage*.

40 For an overview of the transformations wrought in late antique fountains, see Jacobs and Richard, "'We Surpass the Beautiful Waters of Other Cities,'" 3–71.

41 Jeffreys, trans., "Eumathios Makrembolites, Hysmine and Hysminias," 179–80.

42 Jeffreys, trans., "Eumathios Makrembolites, Hysmine and Hysminias," 180.

source of the winds she indicated, and as aligned with them by dint of her pointing in their direction.

The elaborate description of the fictive fountain continues with a host of birds including a swallow, a peacock, a dove, and a cockerel all apparently crafted by Hephaistos and Daedalus. Makrembolites informs us that the water pouring out of their beaks endowed the birds with song, and that "The leaves of the trees, stirred by the zephyr, whispered: hearing this you would have said that the birds were singing sweetly."[43] This is a striking description of the fountain as a sonic device in its own right, constituted of the blended sounds of water, wind, and birdsong. Indeed, it is unclear whether the water *is* the birdsong as it pours from the birds' beaks, or whether we are intended to imagine the individual voices of the avian species depicted, in tandem with the sound of the water and the wind-stirred leaves. But this sort of uncertainty is precisely the point: the elements and the animal species work together to produce a compelling soundscape which is an undeniable component of the reception of this fountain by an elite, informed viewer and/or reader. Moreover, Terése Nilsson has argued that the birds on the fountain may have been associated with Eros via an ancient topos, thus positing the love god as the prime cause behind the narrative whose theme is erotic love.[44] In an analogous vein, the birds shown on the Constantinopolitan windvane and the merry erotes together might have constituted the *raison d'etre* and the very cause for a certain kind of weather.

Nilometers are yet another instrument type sometimes depicted with images showing bucolic elements. Generally featured within a category referred to as Nilotic imagery, Nilometers display the motif of abundance through floral and vegetal depictions, schools of fish, and flocks of birds, as a sign of the fecundity and fertility enabled by the annual flooding of the Nile.[45] The Nilometer itself was a device made to measure the rising levels of the eponymous river.[46] In the words of Strabo in the *Geography*, it was essentially "a well on the bank of the Nile constructed with close-fitting stones, in which are marks showing the greatest, least, and mean rises of the Nile; for the water in the well rises and lowers with the river. Accordingly, there

43 Jeffreys, trans., "Eumathios Makrembolites, Hysmine and Hysminias," 180.

44 Nilsson, "Ancient Water in Fictional Fountains," 288.

45 Recent literature on Nilotic imagery includes Barrett, *Domesticating Empire*; Barrett, "Recontextualizing Nilotic Scenes," 293–32; Hachlili, "Iconographic Elements of Nilotic Scenes," 97–142; and Versluys, *Aegyptica Romana*.

46 See Bonneau, "Nilometer," 1794–95.

are marks on the wall of the well, measures of the complete rises…So when watchers inspect these, they give out word to the rest of the people, so that they may know; for long beforehand they know from such signs and the days what the future rise will be, and reveal it beforehand."[47]

Several Egyptian temples in the Mediterranean evince water fixtures in which water periodically overflowed the temple basins and/or canals, thus replicating the action of the Nile on a smaller scale.[48] It is this sort of spillage that is fundamental to any reading of Nilotic images. Strabo's description lays out the processes involved in prognostication with the Nilometer. These involve subsets of "watchers" designated to inspect the water levels against the marks, and then to give notice to the general populace about them. A regular pattern of such observations of the marks, and of other signs, enabled the watchers to predict the rise in the levels of the river. The process, therefore, consisted of observation, informed speculation and prediction, and dispersal of the "signs." Perhaps a similar process also occurred vis-à-vis the Constantinopolitan windvane with its own set of observers, signs, and interpreters/predictors to understand and report on the weather.

In images, the Nilometer appears as a tall, column-like structure. It is often shown in the midst of, or in proximity to, animals, plants, mythological figures, and sometimes humans and other beings such as putti. The floor mosaic at Tabgha, for instance, shows the Nilometer soaring up amidst blooming plants and flowers, as though the instrument were itself a sign of efflorescence (Figure 18). A bird perches atop it, exposing its role as a support for avian (and possibly other) creatures.

We might imagine a similar soundscape around this instrument as the one imagined around fountains and the windvane. Some depictions show the personification of the Nile carrying a sistrum, a rattle-like instrument consisting of rods that move back and forth in a frame when shaken.[49] That a musical instrument is regarded as being an integral part of the river at a pivotal moment of its depiction—that is, in the period when it is expected to rise—is an important point. In this respect, the Nilotic depictions approximate images of Orpheus and David who are also shown carrying musical instruments whilst placed within nature. Thus, the Nile deity, like its mythical and biblical counterparts, reflects the integral role of sound within an

47 Strabo, *Geography* XVII.I.48). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

48 Wild, *Water in the Cultic Worship of Isis and Sarapis*, and Siard, "L'Hydreion du Sarapeion C de Delos," 414–47.

49 For more on the sistrum, see James McKinnon and Robert Anderson, "Sistrum" *Grove Music Online*, oxfordmusiconline.com.

Figure 18. Floor detail, fifth century CE. Mosaic, Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, Tabgha, Israel. Courtesy of www.HolyLandPhotos.org.

Figure 19. Floor detail, fifth century CE. Mosaic, hall of the House of the Nile Mosaic, Sepphoris, Israel. Courtesy of www.HolyLandPhotos.org.

Figure 20. Floor detail, fifth century CE. Mosaic, hall of the House of the Nile Mosaic, Sepphoris, Israel. Courtesy of www.HolyLandPhotos.org.

ecological framework involving the elements (in this case, the waters of the Nile), along with birds, plants, fish, and other human and non-human species.

One richly detailed example of Nilotic imagery that depicts the components also mentioned by Choniates re: the windvane, is the renowned mosaic at Sepphoris (Figure 19).[50] This was located in a public building dated from the fifth century CE in that town's urban centre. Mosaics originally covered the entire space of the building, but the most prominent room contained a sumptuously decorated floor depicting the festival of the flooding of the

50 See Bonneau, "Les fêtes de la crue du Nil," 49–65; Weiss and Talgam, "The Nile Festival Building and its Mosaics," 55–90; and Weiss, "The Mosaics of the Nile Festival Building," 7–23.

Nile. The image is divided into two tiers with the wavy waters of the Nile as the marker of separation between them. This depiction seems to draw upon longstanding perceptions of the river as a wandering, animate line.[51] The Nilometer towers at the centre of the upper tier and is shown as a column placed on top of an arch covered by the waters. One figure (a putto?) bends over whilst another stands on its back in order to chisel the depths of the level measured thus far on to the instrument (Figure 20). A pun is embedded into this imagery since one putto was believed to stand for one unit measure of the Nilometer. It is also a fundamentally processual image as it displays one moment within a broader scheme involving the transformation of the water level, and the human/putto investment in observing and marking that transformation at that specific moment. This also comprises the only clearly functional scene in the upper tier; one that relays a discrete activity—measurement. The previous marks are visible on the instrument, again indicating a temporal period over which the waters rise and have been observed and marked.

The rest of the picture field teems with different species of birds, fish, fowl, plants, and at least one ostensible man, nestled within the waters. Above that wavering but nonetheless orderly space, figures resembling putti carry a wreath and a plant to the imposing figure at the top right who reclines on a hippopotamus, his arm outstretched. The reclining figure is believed to be a personification of the river Nile (Figure 19). He carries a vessel from which liquid, presumably the Nile waters, flow out to the tier below. The counterpart to the Nile is the figure reclining in similar fashion on the top left of the image. One arm of this figure rests on a basket whilst the other bears aloft a cornucopia spilling over with fruit. This may be read as a personification of Egypt (the accompanying caption is abraded but seems to suggest this), replete with vegetation owing to the bounties of the Nile. A causal and cumulative logic may be said to operate here: she is the earth that overflows with fruit owing to the river that overflows its banks. On the other hand, the figure may also be read as Euthenia, the female consort of the Nile, who personifies the abundance that the river enables. The productive tension enabled by the possibilities of this figure being either Egypt and/or Euthenia are investigated further below. But for now, we must ask how the upper tier relates to the lower.

If one is familiar with the processes entailed in the anticipated flooding of the Nile (delineated by Strabo above), then a sequence is discernible. Even

51 See the comments of Merrills, *Roman Geographies of the Nile*, 198–233.

as the Nilometer at the centre is marked by the putto (and at its highest level at that), the Nile flows across its banks. This phenomenon is depicted in a neatly gathered swathe of blue wavering lines falling out of the vessel at the far right, immediately below the Nile personification. This watery swathe winds its way as a double skein across the lower tier past birds, plants, a cheetah devouring a hapless beast, all the way to a lion biting into the neck of a buffalo amidst regularly spaced, leafy flowering plants. Meanwhile, above the predator and its prey, messengers speed toward Alexandria's city gate (identified by an inscription) to alert the populace to the imminent, or ongoing flooding. A monumental column is placed to the right of centre with a statue on top, pointing toward the city. This statue is yet another example of the network of prognosticating and deictic sculpted beings that towered over late antique cityscapes, such as Constantinople, as discussed earlier. The mark "IZ" next to it is the same as the measure marked by the putto on the Nilometer, thus conveying both the direction and the measure that should be announced to the citizens of Alexandria.

However, even if the vectors of putto and human activity are relatively clear, the relationship of the surrounding imagery vis-à-vis the Nile as both personification/deity and as river, is not. Since the Nile is shown here as the statuesque figure *and* the water body gradually rising and spilling over, is the entire surface of the image to be read as water, despite the fact that the iconographic conventions for that element are restricted only to one portion of the upper tier? Such a perception—of the Nile waters taking over the land—is certainly reflected in period sources. In the fourth century CE in a homily Basil of Caesarea singled out the Nile from all other rivers because "it is not of the character of a river when, like a sea, it inundates Egypt," (*Hexaemeron* 3.6.)—a remark that Veronica Della Dora characterized as designating the Nile as "not-quite-river." [52] In the same vein in the eighth century CE, Andrew of Crete remarked on the excess abundance of the Nilotic waters—a point that Henry Maguire has located within a Byzantine discourse on the pagan and untrustworthy nature of this river on the banks of which idolaters supposedly dwelt.[53] Andrew of Crete remarks that

> The river's waters, like a sea, are encircling the land, and irrigate the whole country…For this river, rising regularly in its annual floods, expands like an ocean, and makes the land watery and causes the earth, which a little while

52 See the comments of Della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium*, 216–18.

53 Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*, 60.

> before was green with an abundance of produce, to be given over now to heavily laden ships of burden. It permits the ploughs to work between the sails [of the boats], and ordains that the aquatic and the terrestrial creatures should herd together, whether herbivorous or carnivorous.[54]

It is precisely this sort of mélange of earth and water, plants and flowers, carnivores and herbivores, that we find in the mosaic as well. The Nile takes on oceanic dimensions, blurring not just terrestrial and riverine boundaries, but distinct subsets of water as well. Accordingly, the distinctions between figure and ground in the mosaic are also effaced. Moreover, when we recall that this image was laid out on a floor, the very act of the human body walking across that surface might be said to have evoked the gradual rise, swell and fall of the waters; as the body advances, so does it approach, or move away from, the Nilometer, on which the highest level is being marked. And so does the water level ascend and/or spill over in tune with the general logic governing the image and the motion of the human body traversing it.

Conversely, could we also read the surface as ground cleared by the Nile for the putti, the human, the fish, fowl, plants, and not least, the Nilometer? Since the flooding historically occurred over a period of months between July and November, and entailed changes in natural phenomena (including changes in the colour of the water, the influx of certain species of fish, the flooding of swamps, etc.), the imagery in the upper tier might have been interpreted as such signs. And if the personification at the top left is Egypt, displaying abundance, or Egypt being transformed into Euthemia as a result of the floods, then are we witnessing the ongoing and current flooding of the Nile, even as our eyes rove over the image? And since the swathe of water winds its way to the lower tier, is this a visual indication of the *aftermath* of the flooding when abundance is further highlighted by predators getting their fill of food and floral plants multiplying across the floor? The image seems to suggest such a temporal progression even as it furnishes no unequivocal markers to demarcate the "before," "during," and "after" phases of the flooding.

Objects on a relatively smaller scale, in more intimate settings, can also manifest a similarly nuanced interplay between the surface and ground, and a potential source of bounty and its causative agents where the Nile is concerned. A textile at the Met depicts many elements of a typical Nilotic scene, but without the Nilometer (Figure 21). Despite the absence of that instrument, we find here not just a depiction of the usual bounties enabled by the flood (the fish, birds, and plants); we also find a pictorial commentary on the

54 See the passage quoted in Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*, 60.

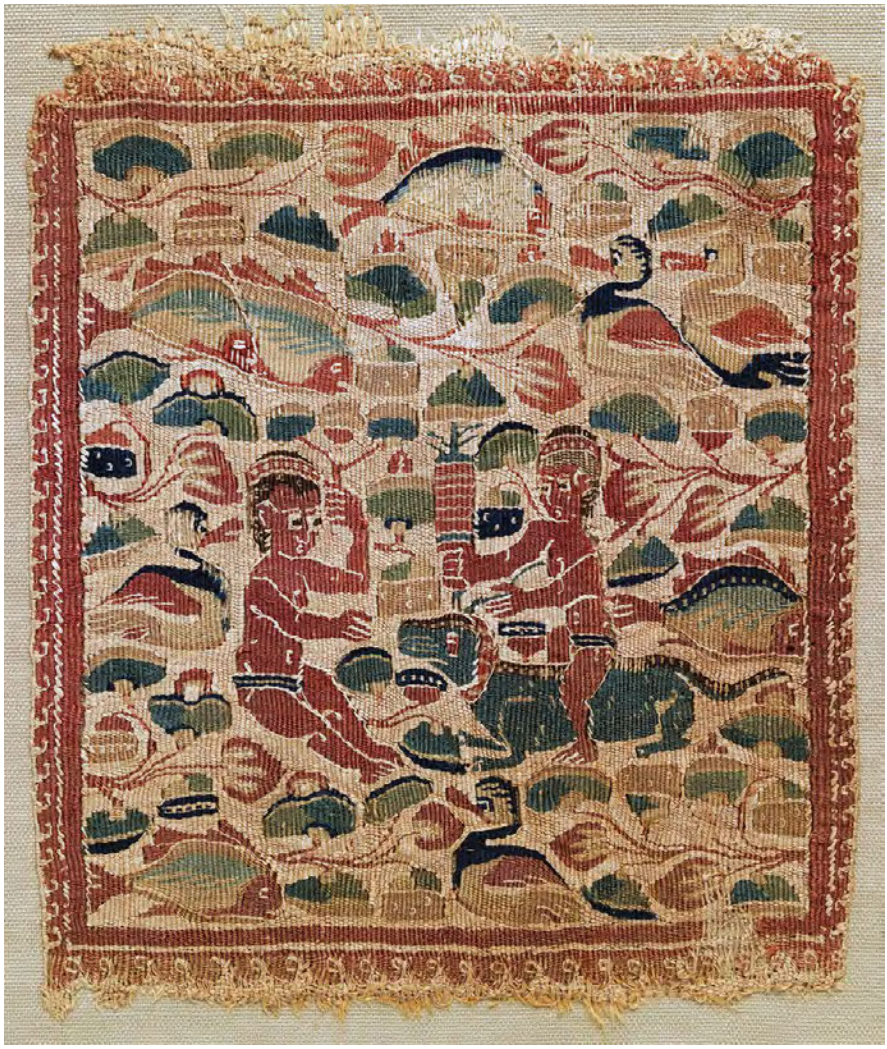

Figure 21. Nilotic scene, fourth–fifth century CE. Linen and wool, 17.5 × 14 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Open Access Initiative.

spillage and entwinement of otherwise discrete elements. For instance, the pair of fish in the third row at the top left are twinned, and the thread defining the border between the body and fin of the fish on the right extends itself to become a tendril of a plant, which then further abuts the breast of a bird. This is imagery composed of lines that exceed their own boundaries and jut up against other elements, much as the river waters are described as doing with the land and seas.

Nilometers and fountains are not decontextualized from their larger surroundings, particularly in terms of the elements they deploy and interface with. Descriptions of fountains invariably locate them within a garden space where along with trees, flowers, and birds, we also find mention of the nature of the water in and around the fountains, and the presence of winds. In the fourteenth century CE, Theodore Meliteniotes talks about a pool of water in a garden ringed by sculpted animals with water pouring into, or emanating from, their mouths, and the limpidity of the water being such as to furnish a veritable mirror for the trees, fruits, plants, shrubs, and flowers, "and whenever perchance the wind blew, it was possible to see the pool swelling with low waves, gently agitated because of the volume of the water."[55] The water and wind act together to transform the visual impact of the fountain and its surroundings. Similarly, actual Nilometers were certainly transformed over the period of the rising Nile, when water swarmed around the monument. The changing colour of the water over the months, and the additional flora and fauna it brought by way of fish, fowl, and marine plants, should be regarded as indispensable parts of this structure during that particular time. Thus, monuments such as fountains and Nilometers were necessarily transformed—and viewed as such—across a seasonal spectrum owing to the changes that affected the elements constitutive of them, be those water or wind.

Winds in Byzantium

Both Choniates and Constantine of Rhodes invest the bucolic setting on the windvane with particular soundscapes. If Choniates endows it with the melody of springtime birds, then Constantine of Rhodes furnishes it with the vocal registers of the winds themselves. Indeed, Constantine alludes to the bronze female figure not as a visual sign, but as a *sonic* indicator, be the wind a sharp blast or a hard tone, as he puts it. This comment illustrates the fundamental entwinement of the windvane with its airy surroundings and an array of winds that could range from the tame to the raucous. "Air" and wind in Byzantium are somewhat studied,[56] but not in their *material* manifestations in the context of our monument. This section briefly examines

55 Dolezal and Mavroudi, "Theodore Hyrtakenos' *Description of the Garden of St. Anna*," 155.

56 See Lidov, ed., *Air and Heavens in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*.

the sonic and pictorial associations of air, winds, and breeze that bucolic imagery was often perceived to sustain.

Constantine of Rhodes was drawing on an ancient discourse when he remarked on the winds' voices, since these were sometimes conceptualized as sonic beings in antiquity. This particular strain filters into perceptions of winds in Byzantium as well. Once again, Strabo's *Geography* proves useful: he informs us of the prevailing debates regarding the number of winds, with some arguing for two principal winds and others positing many more. Strabo claims that Homer—a staple in Byzantine curricula—differentiated between the quality of the winds based on how they sounded. So, according to Poseidonius,

> when Homer speaks of the boisterous Zephyrus, he means what we call Argestes; that Homer's "clear-blowing Zephyrus" is what we call Zephyrus, and that Homer's "Argestes Notus" is our Leuconotos; for Leuconotos causes very few clouds, while Notus proper is somewhat cloudy: "Even as when Zephyrus divides the clouds of Argestes Notus, smiting with deep storm." Homer here means the "boisterous Zephyrus" which usually scatters the thin clouds assembled by Leuconotos (*Geography*, I.II.21).

The above passage is remarkable for the range of implied and manifested sounds linked to windy identities and meteorological actions. The wind Zephyrus, when deemed boisterous by Homer, indicates not himself (that is, Zephyrus), but the wind Argestes. But when Zephyrus' voice blows clearly, we may be assured it is he himself. Furthermore, when Zephyrus is boisterous, he blows apart the clouds gathered together by Leuconotos, a fellow wind, again indicating the consequences of sonic behaviour on the surrounding elements. The calibration of windy vocals is also useful to determining direction, since one of the fundamental roles of the winds was to indicate the cardinal points of the compass. This is the core of Aristotle's writings on wind which, in turn, formed the foundation for Byzantine ruminations on the subject.[57] A wind rose, or diagram outlining the directions of the winds, was understood to be indispensable to textual commentaries on this phenomenon.[58] Strabo's extrapolations, in his defence of Homer's meteorological knowledge, also inform us that the voice of a particular wind, or winds, determines the changing intricacies of the local skyscape (as Zephyrus, in his boisterous avatar, disperses the clouds).

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57 Lackner, "Die aristotelische Meteorologie," 639–43. See also Valente, "The Doctrine of Winds," 231–47.

58 Valente, "The Doctrine of Winds," 243.

Winds also appear in the biblical books in many moods, right from "a gentle exhalation which surrounded God and manifested his presence…[to] a sign and witness to his power, majesty, and mercy…and an instrument of his anger."[59] In the New Testament, Christ's taming and rebuke of the winds during a storm as described in Matthew and Mark, served to demonstrate his power as equalling that of God in the Old Testament. In the Book of Revelations, the winds are located at the four corners of the earth where four angels "[hold] back the four winds so that no wind should blow on sea or land or on any tree."[60] Here they are literally imprisoned by the angels in the farthest crannies of the earth, alluding to their tensility which allows them to inhabit both vast and minute spaces. Such a quality is also evoked in the *Odyssey* where the winds are compressed into a bag tied with string which Aeolus—their master—gives to Odysseus (*Odyssey*, 10.23–55).

A truism: wind is not easily visualized.[61] Indeed, to claim to "see" wind is to claim to see its effects in the form of rustling grass, or bending trees, and such. Winds could be, and were conventionalized, as for instance on the frieze of the Athenian Tower where they are depicted as humanoid. However, the presence of wind was also apprehended and registered in terms of space both in written records of images and of actual landscapes or gardens in Byzantium. One could argue that wind—or at any rate, a gentle breeze—is a staple of the bucolic setting.

Consider the *Geoponika*'s discussion of the means of creating a pleasure garden. It advises, "If you want a garden you must choose a suitable location. It should be among the farm buildings if there is room; if not, then close to them, not only so that those within have the pleasure of seeing the garden, but also so the air about it, drawing on what rises from the plants, will make the property healthy."[62] The passage discusses the ideal location of a garden, among which criteria are not only the proximity of farm buildings, but also the quality of "the air about it." Air, here, is no abstract phenomenon but an essential constituent governing the aesthetic and sensual utility of the space being described. By the same token, an entire chapter devoted to the olive contains a section on the kind of air suitable for this fruit ("hot and dry"), before going on to delineate the effects of winds on them, and on fruit trees in general:

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59 See the discussion of the winds in the Bible in Corbin, *A History of the Wind*, trans. Peniston, 65.

60 Corbin, *A History of the Wind*, 66.

61 See the study by Nova, *The Book of the Wind*.

62 Dalby, trans. and ed., *Geoponika*, 200.

> it is to be noted that the winds have effect not only on plants but on everything; strong and violent winds are in opposition to all plants; temperate and mild winds favour all plants, but particularly olives. You will find especially flourishing those olive plantations that the breath of the wind is able to enter, the spaces between them being broad so that the wind can blow through easily…they welcome gentle winds, which do not go to waste but penetrate each tree alike, nourishing them and awakening the growth of the plant.[63]

Just as in the account of the pleasure garden, the passage on olive trees does not simply inform us of the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of winds; rather, it posits wind as a space-filling component. The areas between the olive plants are not regarded as gaps or blanks, but as containers for the entry and action of beneficent winds. And these do not merely blow in and out, but "penetrate" each tree, thus taking up residence in them in order that they be nourished. The winds here are indispensable to the forms of the trees, even if we do not detect their shapes as clearly or visibly as the vegetation with which they are entwined.

A similar approach to the apprehension of wind is found in contemporary descriptions of images. Choricius' elaborate ekphrasis on the church of St. Sergius at Gaza introduces an idyllic scene in the bucolic mode right after he furnishes an account of the religious imagery in the space which, he says, depicts the Theotokos, her son, and an imperial figure. Surrounding these conventional Orthodox portrayals, the lateral apses are said to be redolent of

> ever-burgeoning trees full of extraordinary enchantment: these are luxurious and shady vines, and the zephyr, as it sways the clumps of grapes, murmurs sweetly and peacefully among the branches…The artist has rightly rejected the birds of the poets, the nightingale and the cicada, so that not even the memory of these fabled birds should intrude upon the sacred place; in their stead he has artistically executed a swarm of other birds and, [in particular,] a flock of partridges. He would, perhaps, have rendered even their musical sounds, had not this hindered the hearing of divine things.[64]

Choricius' account includes all the elements we find on the windvane (as per Choniates), including a variety of birdsong particular to certain species excluding one (the nightingale). It also reads wind *into* the image by means of the swaying grapes and its imagined sound ("sweet murmur"). Most interestingly, as in the *Geoponika*, here too we find the perception of wind in what viewers would normally see as empty space—"among the branches"—thus

63 Dalby, trans. and ed., *Geoponika*, 185.

64 See the excerpt in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 62.

rendering our normative ideas about "background" or "space" or even "absence" in an image as, in fact, the contrary; instead it is a container for an elemental, if invisible force, be it gentle or rough or something else in between.

We recall that a similar phenomenon obtains in the depiction of the flood waters in the Sepphoris mosaic discussed earlier; "figure" and "ground" relations were potentially obscured because of the imagined and imminent spilling over of the iconography of water. Quite apart from filling in spaces, wind also had the disconcerting potential to transform public images and monuments entirely. One thinks of George Pachymeres' remarks about one such violent wind having caused the fall of the feathers adorning the helmet of the equestrian rider statue atop the column of Justinian. The statue was literally re-sculpted and altered by the action of that gusty wind.[65]

In his ekphrasis of the church of St. Stephen at Gaza, Choricius performs yet another move bringing together the sonic within the bucolic, but this time evoking the presence of actual, as opposed to perceptual, winds in "a space reserved for the bishop's salutation, where, as Homer would have said, are 'shrill winds blowing', Boreas and Zephyr, vines and clear water and all kinds of plants; where the good priest, with voice flowing sweeter than Nestor's (according to Homer), greets the entrants with open heart and smiling countenance."[66] The actual presence of winds—or breezes—is also invoked by Procopios in his description of an area near the Golden Horn where the Emperor Justinian apparently founded a market, and where those promenading can "rejoice in the view of the sea and revel alike in the breezes wafted from the water and in those that descend from the hills which tower over the land."[67]

The winds were invoked as integral components of architectural definition. In his ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia, Paul the Silentiary describes four piers in that church, above which are bent arches of enormous size. Paul tells us, "one turns towards the wings of Zephyr, another to Boreas, another to Notus, another rises upright toward fiery Eurus."[68] Here, each of the four major cardinal points is invoked by the winds and their names. Furthermore, these are advanced as winged beings, each with its own characteristics. The arches described are posited as signposts, turning to a particular wind as if

65 Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 113.

66 Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 69.

67 Procopios, *On Buildings*, bk. 1:8; ed. and trans. Dewing and Downey.

68 See the excerpt in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 82–83.

in homage to it. Further on, Paul conjures "the murmuring south wind and the rainless north." The sounds here are inseparable from the directional vectors of the elements and are woven into the multilayered sonic texture of Hagia Sophia itself.

Finally, we see the winds visualized on an unlikely object: a piece of dough shaped into a cake depicting a wind diagram, according to an ekphrasis by Christopher of Mytilene.[69] This fantastic cake is said to be replete with the signs of the zodiac and the four seasons.[70] Whether it actually existed or not is a moot point; what does concern us is the fact that a description of it exists, and that it serves to remind us of the many media, spaces, and contexts in which an element such as the wind could be imagined to function. As per Mytilene's ekphrasis, the eggs on the cake denote the constellations and zodiac signs. These are distinguished according to type and size: duck eggs delineate the Pleiades, and hen eggs delineate the planets, whereas "the larger eggs" may be said to depict bigger entities such as Orion. Amidst this plethora of ova, those signifying the winds are said to be the eggs positioned at the cardinal points. Then Christopher proceeds to tell us that Zephyros blows from the west, Apeliotes from the east, Notos from the south, and the Arctic wind from a self-explanatory direction. The four extremities at the edge of the cake capping the four eggs (the winds) are posited as the four seasons, thus bringing the entire confection in line with the cosmos and its arrangement. In it, the winds are the same object-type (eggs) as the constellations and planets; yet they are differentiated from the latter by their position and directional attributes. They fill space and are imagined as structural elements, indispensable to the composition of the cake, and to the cosmos imagined as that confection.

Winds—or breezes—should be visualized as a part of bucolic scenes, animating their blank spaces, wafting in and about the foliage, and infusing the depictions with their own particular sonic personalities to mingle with the soundscapes of the trees, birds, shepherds and other beings visualized. Drawing from the ekphrases of Choricius above, and the general evocation of winds in a variety of spaces in Byzantium, we might picture them as components of the scenes on our windvane. These clearly had "real" manifestations as they blew around that structure. But they might also have been appreciated as a pictorial element embedded into the images adorning the

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69 "with dough the zodiac cycle, in a circle; to his cousin"; Christopher of Mytilene, *The Poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous*, ed. and trans. Bernard and Livanos, 73–79.

70 Magdalino, "Cosmological Confectionary and Equal Opportunity," 1–6.

windvane, wafting through the trees and all about the milking shepherds and mischief-making erotes, unseen but nonetheless present.

Skyscape

In closing this chapter, I wish to linger on one neglected aspect of the potential reception of the windvane: the skyscape. The sky forms a natural backdrop to it, just as the Nile waters form a fluid and changing background, middle ground and foreground to actual Nilometers. It is obviously difficult to pinpoint with precision the nature of the skies of Constantinople on any particular day. Nonetheless, the immensity and changing shades of the firmament must have been a component of the visual reception of the towering structures in the city. Sources corroborate this point. Paul the Silentiary certainly has it in mind when he compares the curve of Hagia Sophia's dome to "the firmament which rests on air" because the dome has no sharp pinnacles and swells gently as it rises.[71] The upward thrust of the dome is perceived to be in concert with the firmament which it emulates.

Nowhere do we find a stronger appreciation of the sky as an interface for tall monuments than in Constantine of Rhodes' account of the seven wonders of Constantinople. We come full circle in evoking his words once more in this conclusion, this time in the context of the columns that graced the city. These, Constantine tells us, are "higher than the clouds."[72] The column bearing the equestrian statue of Justinian shows him "stretching out his hand to the sky…he seems to touch the chariots of the moon."[73] The porphyry column topped by the statue of Constantine is said to carry its burden much as Atlas does "the arc of heaven," and its splendour "equals the stars."[74] Even the vault of the Senate building is said to "rise up into the sky"[75] and the statue of Athena on a column is said to be "stretching out her hand to the sky."[76] In each instance, the column—and by extension, the objects it bears—are read in relation to the moon, the stars, and the sky.

In reading these descriptions, we should consider Roland Barthes' articulation of open-air performances which enable a "spectator's immersion

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71 See the excerpt in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 82–83.

72 Constantine of Rhodes, *On Constantinople*, trans. James and ed. Vassis, 21.

73 Constantine of Rhodes, *On Constantinople*, trans. James and ed. Vassis, 21.

74 Constantine of Rhodes, *On Constantinople*, trans. James and ed. Vassis, 23.

75 Constantine of Rhodes, *On Constantinople*, trans. James and ed. Vassis, 25.

76 Constantine of Rhodes, *On Constantinople*, trans. James and ed. Vassis, 29.

in the complex polyphony of the open-air (shifting sun, rising wind, flying birds, noises of the city)."[77] Barthes delineates performances in the open as being marked with a certain fragility because they are, by nature, singular and irreplaceable owing to the contingencies that such an ambience necessarily entails.[78] Each of the structures examined in this chapter—fountains, Nilometer, and the windvane—function in precisely such an ambience (even if the Nilometer is more accurately a riverine rather than an open-air monument).

As far as the windvane is concerned, its relationship with the winds and the sky (and the other things in the firmament, such as stars, and creatures such as birds) was fundamental to its very identity and role. Indeed, it is possible that the images on it were not always as clearly visible as those other elements; the birds perching on it and the immensity of the changing skies and their colours might have been far more striking to viewers than the depicted birds, humans, creatures and their activities etched on the structure. In fact, the windvane is the scientific measure and expression of the *tension* between those depicted creatures, their activities, spaces and seasonal specificity, and the actual urban space of Constantinople, the activities performed therein, and the seasonal changes evinced in the capital over time. Accordingly, the bucolic mode in this context also acts as the mediator between the imagined scenes laid out on our monument, and the actual landscape the latter inhabited. Finally, even as the windvane signalled the winds and the weather (and thereby was one means of asserting some degree of control over the latter), it simultaneously alluded to the contingencies that weather entailed for the humans and nonhumans who once inhabited Constantinople.

77 Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Howard, 79.

78 See Barthes' formulation applied to the phenomenon of Greek drama in Meineck, *Theatrocracy*, 52–78. I am grateful to Margaret Mullett for directing me to this source.

Figure 22. David playing the *psalterion*. Paris Psalter, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MS gr. 139, fol. 1v. Courtesy of the BnF.

Chapter 3

THE EMPEROR AND THE IDYLL

THE OPENING FOLIO of the Paris Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France [BnF], MS gr. 139, or Parisinus graecus MS 139) displays a lush pastoral vista (Figure 22). A stream flows toward the edge of the folio, its fluid curve abruptly interrupted by the rich frame as though to hem it in. A youth labelled Mt. Bethlehem (or rather, with the words "Mt. Bethlehem" inscribed on the rocky ledge below him) stretches in the immediate foreground. A dog looks off to the right and sheep graze. Black and white goats gather in the immediate foreground along the stream and its bank, with some beasts seemingly unconscious of what passes behind them. There, in the near centre of the visual field, a man leans languorously with an instrument and a monumental figure beside him. Melody (or rather, a figure identified as such by the inscription next to her) rests a hand on his back in a gesture of surprising intimacy. Surprising, because a posture of such relaxed proximity is rare in Byzantine art where kings are concerned. The man is David, identified by his abbreviated name etched on the rock upon which he is seated. He is destined to rule the Israelites and is a prototype of the ideal ruler for generations of Byzantine emperors.[1]

Since the psalter is a deluxe manuscript made during the so-called "Macedonian Renaissance,"[2] and commissioned by one of the greatest patrons of Byzantine art—Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (reigned 945–959)—the choice of the David cycle as the opening suite of images makes sense.[3] But what is Melody's role in this scene? Why is she allowed so prominent and proximate a place in relation to the Ur-king? What do the animals

1 See Maguire, "Images of the Court." For the Macedonian dynasty under discussion here, see Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 192–200; Magdalino, "Basil I, Leo VI, and the Feast of Elijah," 193–96; Magdalino and Nelson eds., "Introduction," 22–23; and Kalavrezou, Trahoulia, and Sabar, "Critique of the Emperor," 199.

2 Some studies on art in the Macedonian Renaissance are Weitzmann, "The Classical Mode," and Maguire, "Epigrams, Art, and the 'Macedonian Renaissance,'" 105–15, with n1 for more bibliography on this phenomenon.

3 The major study on the Paris Psalter remains Buchthal, *The Miniatures of the Paris Psalter*. A recent study is Wander, "The Paris Psalter," 90–103. For a bibliography on the manuscript, see Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium*, 70–71.

Figure 23. David between Wisdom and Prophecy. Paris Psalter, Paris, BnF, MS gr. 139, fol. 7v. Courtesy of the BnF.

contribute to the impact of the image, apart from constituting a typical bucolic scene? Who is the figure peeping out from behind the column? And from a broader perspective, what is the role of the bucolic in this image and the relationship between an emperor and the represented idyll?

This chapter's immediate aim is to answer the above questions regarding this sumptuous image. The larger goal is to delve into the imperatives for depicting the *first* avatar of a biblical—and thereby, ideal Byzantine—sovereign (David) in a bucolic context and setting, and why the culminating image of David as emperor (Figure 23) differs so vastly from the prefatory

Figure 24. Adam and the animals, ca. 400 CE. Ivory.
Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello. © Art Resource.

one (Figure 22). Where the previous chapters located the significance of the bucolic in relation to Orthodoxy and weather-watching in late antiquity, this one explores its dynamics in relation to imperial power in the Middle Byzantine era, both in terms of its appearance in the psalter's opening image as the source of that power, and through the theme's occurrence in a few other manuscripts commissioned during Constantine VII's reign (see also the Epilogue). Although images of David as a musician certainly exist in the Byzantine repertoire prior to the psalter, no other extant composition depicts him in quite such a posture, nor so elaborate a setting. Indeed, the

image constitutes not just a literal expression of the conventions governing the bucolic; it is also structured compositionally so as to conjure a world apart, an "occasion for escape and reverie,"[4] as captured in David's pose and his gaze, the direction of which is indeterminate in relation to the directness of normative images of Byzantine emperors (even if David, in this image, has not yet assumed the imperial state). One is reminded here of Glenn Peers' reading of a somewhat similar image, of Adam among the animals on one part of an ivory diptych now in the Bargello, Florence, where Adam looks out into an indefinite space with a dreamy look, but where the animals, in contrast, are "restless and roiled" (Figure 24).[5] The intimacy of the world of humans and other beings as conjured up in the Paris Psalter folio is perhaps all the more emphatic for its display in a manuscript intended for close contemplation. It is my argument that this folio constitutes the most powerful visual expression of the bucolic in the tenth century CE, and that such a setting is intentionally posited as the primary source and facilitator of imperium.

The leitmotif of voice reappears as an integral factor in the deployment of the bucolic, with the qualification that in this chapter, it is a specifically imperial attribute, referring to the literal sounds issuing from the (any) emperor's vocal organs or through the agents at his disposal, be they other human beings, letters, decrees or proclamations.[6] As Mel Evans puts it in a study of Tudor royalty, "the realization of power…relies on its creation and actualization in discourse, spoken and written, through which it is perceived as legitimate and authoritative. Power and language are thus closely connected, not just in terms of what is said, but *how* something is said."[7] Thus "voice," as I use it here, also refers to the discourses shaped in speech or writing in an oral culture which, in turn, shape the destiny of an empire.[8] My designation of the imperial voice refers to a constant value, prized and refined over generations of emperors, but used in varying modes by the individuals at hand (and appraised by contemporary critics such as Michael Psellos). Constantine VII's voice, as we shall see, assumes

4 Bergmann, "Exploring the Grove," 21.

5 Peers, "Adam's Anthropocene," 161–71.

6 "Voice" in medieval culture is intertwined with and inseparable from "text" or "writing." See Lawton, *Voice in Later Medieval English Literature*, 2–3.

7 Evans, *Royal Voices*, 2.

8 For a gendered perspective on royal voices and the power of the acoustic, see Layher, *Queenship and Voice*.

a distinctively pedagogical tenor when it appears in treatises and letters attributed to him.

The intersection of the bucolic, the vocal, and the imperial is vividly apparent in the suite of images comprising the prefatory folio of the Paris Psalter. This suite begins with David the shepherd and psalmist (as discussed above), and culminates in the vision of David as a ruler of Byzantium. The reader or viewer leaves through a narrative originating with a seated shepherd making music in nature via his instrument to a standing emperor presented *en face*, holding an open book, in a comparatively minimal setting; from the expression of music and voice (via the *psalterion*) on the opening folio, to scripted and verbalized text when, after a series of images, we finally encounter David the emperor holding an open book with one specific psalm (Psalm 71) inscribed on it (Figure 23). This last image, combined with the words of Psalm 71, was persuasively read by Hugo Buchthal as a reference to Constantine VII addressing his successor, Romanos II.[9] Additionally, I argue that the transition from the first folio to the last is a telling commentary on the procedures implicit (and sometimes, explicit) in becoming God's divine representative on earth. These procedures entail a narrative movement originating from an image which is emphatically bucolic in order to culminate in an image which is decidedly imperial. In the process, music and voice are also enshrined in the final instance as the written words of the psalms.

My observations signal a departure from the existing scholarship on the imperial image writ large. At the same time, they are in alignment with recent arguments regarding the role of the emperor in the Byzantine political landscape. Anthony Kaldellis makes a strong case for the empire being akin to a republic with each emperor posited as a mediator and custodian of its spaces, rather than its absolute ruler.[10] Equally important is Kaldellis's claim that the emperor required the consent and broad support of various groups in order to maintain the *politeia*. This network of consensus and support—"election ratified by universal consensus"[11]—rather than self-identification with Orthodoxy or as God's appointee, determined the emperor's position and success. In concrete visual terms, the emperor had to be acclaimed by his people at *every* instance of his public appearance, and

9 Buchthal, "The Exaltation of David," reprinted with postscript in Buchthal, *Art of the Mediterranean World 100 to 1400*, 190.

10 Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 43.

11 Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 95.

not just at the start of his reign when such acclamations were customary. Kaldellis says, "Most of the time things went well, producing what historians call 'ceremony.' At other times, the result was 'history.'"[12]

Where imperial *images* are concerned, the field has produced excellent studies on the subject, but these (and generally the field of premodern art history) concentrate on this image at its literal level—that is, as pictures of the emperor with various accessories attesting to that state.[13] We see mostly "ceremony," in Kaldellis's deployment of the term, with the dominant line of interpretation concentrating on the literal mechanics of the depictions—that is, as pictures of the emperor with the equipment unequivocally attesting to his office. Few direct (or even indirect) visual cues signal the status of the emperor as anything but absolute.[14]

Where the opening folio of the Paris Psalter is concerned, the line of argument hitherto laid out invokes the image's classical and biblical resonances with the legendary musicians of yore, Orpheus and Thamyris, and David's—and by extension, the Byzantine emperor's—mastery over the natural domain through their music-making. Furthermore, the entire image has been read as an imperial panegyric, a paean of praise to the emperor.[15] This is certainly one important interpretation and sustains associations with voice as per my argument, since panegyrics were usually meant to be declaimed.

However, little notice has been paid to the fundamental dynamics *between* the beings displayed in the Paris Psalter scene, other than their obvious identities as prophet-king, personifications, animals, etc. Nonetheless, it is surely significant that hardly any beings on the prefatory folio, other than David, are categorically human. The fact that the animals are *not* uniformly shown in attitudes of submission and that, in some cases, they seem to pay minimal attention, is telling.[16] An image that shows David playing the *psalterion* in, and to, nature, with the view of demonstrating his

12 Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 106.

13 Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin*, and Walker, *The Emperor and the World*.

14 One extremely unusual set of images that directly speak to the contingencies of the imperial position, amounting to a critique of individual emperors, is to be found in the manuscript known as the Madrid Skyltizes. See Boeck, *Imagining the Byzantine Past*. See also the comments on the undermining of the imperial image in the Hippodrome in Chatterjee, *Between the Pagan Past and Christian Present*, 58–67.

15 Maguire, "Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art," 217–21.

16 Brian Madigan makes a similar point regarding an image of Orpheus and the animals, as discussed in a later section. See Madigan, "An Orpheus among the Animals at Dumbarton Oaks," 405–16.

mastery neglects to show all components of said nature as being appropriately in attendance. Here we should also recall the Bargello ivory which, despite its ostensible depiction of Adam naming, and thereby asserting his dominance over, the animals, instead pictorially invests those beasts with an energy that is anything but submissive.[17] Thus, the animals on the ivory and on our psalter, in accordance with recent tenets in zoopoetics, actively shape—and also seem to reject—the regimes of attention usually required by imperial authority.[18]

Even as the animals refute the appropriate kind of attentiveness to the future king in the Paris folio, they furnish visual templates for the other characters and are not, by any means, mere accessories to the scene. The triad of sheep, goats and dog in the foreground are reconstituted by the triad of David, Melody and the tree sheltering them. David loosely echoes the dog's (rather more erect) posture, whilst the figure peeping from behind the column repeats that of the sheep positioned in front of it (Figure 22). Thus, the animals urge a reconsideration of the role of non-human species (including the many personifications included in the psalter) in moulding a vision of imperium. This vision does not conform to normative images of that state, but provides a starting point for it.

Finally, encompassing all the above observations, this folio accords with Bettina Bergmann's remarks about the persistent challenge posed by a pastoral landscape to a viewer since the latter is usually invested with internal conflicts; the consequence of this is that the act of viewing, according to Bergmann, is rendered conflict-ridden as well.[19] These conflicts may range from the usual and obvious polarities of nature and artifice that inform the bucolic, to the very compositional structures informing a bucolic scene: those pictorial features that "invite occasions" for escape and reverie (see the Introduction).[20] In our image, the areas of "conflict" may be designated as those which do not align with normative conceptions of Byzantine imperial art: the flickering foci of visual attention displayed by the animals, the intriguing sharing of the central space both by David and Melody, and the off-centre direction of David's gaze reinforced by Melody's straightforward engagement of the viewer. These "conflicts" are gradually and intentionally resolved across the pictorial arc of

17 Peers, "Adam's Anthropocene." See also Cox Miller's comments in *In the Eye of the Animal*, 4–5.

18 On zoopoetics, see Driscoll and Hoffmann, "Introduction: What is Zoopoetics?" 1–13.

19 Bergmann, "Exploring the Grove," 20–46.

20 Bergmann, "Exploring the Grove," 21.

this suite of images, to present an emperor whose posture, gaze, and action accord with those of his peers in the broader repertoire of Byzantine art. In doing so, the visual narrative initially acknowledges the element of contingency underlying the Byzantine imperial office; a contingency which seems to fly in the face of our usual ideas of the emperor's position, but which was an ever-present factor, as Kaldellis has shown. The final image eliminates any hint of contingency. It is composed in accordance with other Byzantine imperial images, but in defiance of the *actual* conditions of that state.

The Psalmic Voice

The Greek verb *kosmein*, usually taken to mean "to arrange in order" or "to adorn," also refers to the act of separating mingled flocks by goatherds.[21] This meaning acquired specifically religious undertones in the early Christian era with Jesus Christ figured as the good shepherd tending to his sheep, which, in turn, are figured as Christ's apostles or followers.[22] The integral element guiding the "sheep" is Christ's instruction conveyed through his voice. This instruction is further transmitted through the apostles, or a bishop, to a congregation, and thence to the wider world. The voice is a major component binding the bishop to his flock and vice-versa (see Chapter 1).

Where the psalms are concerned, however, we find an even greater emphasis on the role of the human voice in salvific instruction. Basil the Great underscores the ubiquitousness, indeed naturalness, of the human voice in engaging in song. This is why God's instruction was packaged in musical form (according to Basil) and easily sung and transmitted in the home, or even in the marketplace. Basil also underlines choral singing as a powerful means of crafting social bonds and for reconciling enemies (*Homily 1: On the Psalms*). Voices joined together in hymn could shape a powerful experience of community and "soundscapes of salvation."[23] In the Syriac church, for instance, women's choirs fulfilled a primary instructional mission via their sung hymns, a role that was often denied to women in the Orthodox church.[24] All of which is to say that a fundamental constituent of the Christian *oikoumene* is the contagious voice, charismatic enough to carry from its source outward to a larger collective.

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21 Della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium*, 63.

22 See Chapter 1.

23 Münz-Manor and Arentzen, "Soundscapes of Salvation," 36–55.

24 Harvey, "Singing Women's Stories in Syriac Tradition," 171–89.

The book of Psalms contains more statements in the voice of the first person than any other. Relatedly, the "I" of the Psalms was interpreted by medieval exegetes as diverse personae, such as the just Christian, the repentant sinner, martyr, prophet, or even Christ himself.[25] Psalm composition and utterance are activities intrinsically dependent on vocalization and the poetics of voice.[26] This vocal component is enshrined as a potent instrument for organizing the world in submission to the all-powerful.[27]

The Paris Psalter, in particular, invokes issues of vocality since the opening folio could be interpreted as the expression of music and the composition of the psalms and the culminating folio of this suite displays text, but also the text or psalm voiced and/or sung or perhaps even read in silence.[28] Melody, or pure sound detached from words, still obtains even in this culminating folio owing to the fact that the text is a psalm. Such a possibility is implied again in Basil's homily mentioned above where he refers to the quality of the melody which, by its sweetness, can enable the singer or listener to benefit from the psalm's words without directly perceiving the import of the latter.[29] Basil distinguishes between the words and the melody even as he imbricates the two in the formation of the Christian self. Moreover, Gregory of Nyssa's treatise on the psalms remarks that melody is not a simple, unchanging voice, but rather a blending of the separate strands of the universe into a harmonious whole.[30] Melody, therefore, is the means of uniting individuated vocal and other kinds of sonic elements.

Early Christian commentators often used musical images to express the harmonious integration of different parts of the cosmos.[31] Eusebius compared the cosmos to a lyre made of strings of different pitch, "some for the high notes, some for the low, some loose, some taut, some in between," yet all well-tuned in a perfect melody, like the distinct regions of the earth.

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25 Sears, "The Iconography of Auditory Perception," 29. See also Origen, *Homilies on the Psalms*, trans. Trigg, 13.

26 See the comments of Furey, "Impersonating Devotion," 12.

27 Voice, imbricated in studies of sound and song, has more sustained treatment in the western medieval rather than the Byzantine context. See Leach, *Sung Birds*, and Lears, *World of Echo*.

28 For a full exploration of orality and vocality, see Zumthor, "The Vocalization of the Text," 273–82.

29 Basil the Great, *Homilies on the Psalms*, in *Letters and Select Works*, ed. Schaff.

30 Gregory of Nyssa, *Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, trans. Heine, 28.

31 See Della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium*, 61–68.

For Gregory of Nazianzus, the most melodious music is to be found in the voices of nature (*Homily* 2.24). Gregory compares creation to a beautifully made lute. He asks, "For how could this Universe have come into being or been put together, unless God had called it into existence, and held it together? For everyone who sees a beautifully made lute, and considers the skill with which it has been fitted together and arranged, or who hears its melody would think of none but the lute maker, or the lute player, and would recur to him in mind, though he might not know him by sight" (*Homily* 2.4).[32] Here, not only does Gregory yoke the very concept of creation and its arrangement to a musical instrument, he also allows the sense of sound to overtake that of sight since the creator/lute player's countenance is not of import so much as his music. Indeed, Gregory states that one may not even know the lute-player by sight despite hearing his melody, thereby asserting the consciousness of things that may not be immediately—or at all—visible to a listener.

The opening image of the Paris Psalter might encompass Gregory's notion of the act of creation as one of its reference points, with David and Melody literally attracting and summoning up various components of the world through music-making, much as nature gradually gathered around Orpheus when and as he played (Figure 22). The entire image, by virtue of being the very first we encounter in the Davidic narrative, might be regarded as processual, coming into being, with components as yet unseen but soon to make themselves visible as creation proceeds. This reading accords well with the relatively faint outlines of the architecture comprising the cityscape in the background, awash in blue, in contrast to the subsequent folios in which architectural details stand out rather more sharply and the shades of blue recede. Right by the architectural structure, we find etched the outlines of what may be hills or rocky outcrops which in turn give way to tall green cypresses on the right. The darker and lighter shades of blue comprising the hazy backdrop reappear in the foreground, shading the stream, and tying together sky/mist and water. A dark shade of blue also characterizes Melody's robe stretched tightly around her legs. The hue assumes its strongest outlines when featured on a figure that appears to be human, but is in fact a personification, thereby underlining the ambiguity of some of the characters assembled on the folio and Melody's critical role in this pictorial space.

32 See the text and comments in Della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred in Byzantium*, 68.

The enigmatic figure peeping from behind the column has often been read in the scholarship as the nymph Echo.[33] If we scan the image from foreground to background, then Echo (if such is indeed her identity) would be the figure placed furthest in depth on the folio, and the only one whose body is not shown in its entirety. The column with the cloth around it (possibly a votive dedication) and the cauldron atop (might this allude to ancient cauldrons also dedicated as votives to the sanctuaries of ancient gods and goddesses?) would seem to substitute for that body. This column might allude to similar objects bearing vessels, curtains, cloths, and/or vases dedicated by worshippers that we find delineated in Roman wall-paintings. Such structures usually designate a sacred grove in the pre-Christian dispensation and are located in landscapes categorized as idyllic-sacral.[34] The category has been critiqued and deconstructed by Jaś Elsner.[35] For our purposes, Elsner's argument entails an appreciation of scenes such as these as a "rich invitation to narrative with implicit questions like which figure…is active? How do the animals relate to the people? How does all the fauna relate to the flora and the buildings?…In 'sacro-idyllic' painting monument and landscape are experienced by people and animals within the picture, whose own experiences viewers vicariously and perhaps voyeuristically assimilate or comment on…looking into a world separate from them."[36] This is a concise encapsulation of the many themes and questions that animate any bucolic scene; they also distil the attitude of the putative Echo who seems to be looking voyeuristically from the background behind the column into the middle- and foreground of the folio.

The columnar structure at the top right is perhaps an allusion to the columns and other such structures often found in Roman wall paintings of groves and similar landscapes. Adjacent to this columnar structure is an object that is not clearly identifiable. However, its contours and perspectival position most closely resemble a lectern such as we find accompanying the figures of the evangelists at work in illuminated gospel manuscripts. In these cases, the empty or half-empty manuscript folios still being written on by the evangelist, usually allude to the material process of the gospel book taking shape and coming into being over time; a process the viewer/reader

33 See the comments and bibliography in Wander, "The Paris Psalter," 94.

34 Carroll, "'The Sacred Places of the Immortal Ones,'" 2–20.

35 Elsner, "Space–Object–Landscape," 133–84.

36 Elsner, "Space–Object–Landscape," 163. This complements Bergmann's observation about the pastoral being a represented space that enables escape and reverie.

is invited to follow to its end by leafing through the subsequent folios. So too could the lectern-like structure in our psalter refer to the shaping of the manuscript as a material and textual product, following upon the vocal composition of the psalms by David on the opening folio.

Echo, or the half-hidden figure, is also implicated in this processual narrative. Without an inscription, the figure could assume any number of identities, and it is possible that such open-endedness was intentional, given that some of the other figures are labelled. Could this open-ended gesture also suggest the possibility of elusive figures, half-seen and little-understood, that inhabit even a well-ordered world such as the one a Byzantine emperor might rule over? Such a thematic—of universal and individual vocal strains still coming into formation, filled with non-human species along with human counterparts—resonates well with this image as the logical initiator of the suite. The *locus amoenus* represented is not just a space generative of music and the psalms (via Melody and David), but can also allude generally to narrative potential via the voice. We find precisely such a space described in the contemporaneous tenth-century hagiography of St. Theoktiste of Lesbos in which the narrator describes meeting an ascetic on the island of Paros, who bids him to sit among some fallen blocks and columns in a thick green grassy spot with a gushing freshwater spring; a place "filled with quiet and suitable for godly tales."[37] Vocal expression, be it in the form of songs or stories, seems to be a natural feature of such settings. In the Paris Psalter, the soundscape is especially resonant on the opening folio since, in the succeeding folios, most of the surrounding characters and settings are gradually shorn off until nearly none of the non-human species (nor their imagined sounds) are to be seen anymore. We find, finally, the sort of well-ordered sonic world where each figure is identified and positioned so as to convey its role and status in the pictorial scheme, and in which it is the emperor who transmits an unequivocal message via the psalm on the open book (Figure 23).

A look at this trajectory of images and David's position in it reveals the modes in which his (and the viewer's) psalmic personae are developed visually. The first folio displays a person who is shepherd, musician, and a future king. As one leaves past it, these personae give way to others: David as warrior, as a rival to Saul, and as Byzantine emperor. In each of these, David moves, fights, stands erect, and gradually shifts to the very centre of the space in the folio, the other beings making way for him to assume that position. Thus, over time the depictions restore the normative hierarchies of

37 "Life of Theoktiste" in *Holy Women of Byzantium*, ed. Talbot, 106.

scale and position structuring Byzantine art so that the culminating folio is a perfect exemplar of an imperial image in this tradition. And even as the vocal component recedes in some of the folios, we find it emphatically restored in the final folio as a fitting bookend to the first.

The role of Melody is significant here, not just in relation to the psalms, but also because of her imposing position in the opening folio. As already mentioned, David intriguingly eludes the viewer's gaze owing to his pose and tilted head. The only being who looks directly out of the image is the statuesque Melody; an erect, casually commanding figure. She sits in contact with David, her body supporting his as the backrest of a throne might. Yet Melody detracts from any suggestion of submission for even as her body almost merges with that of David, she retains her autonomy. Among all the attributes, or personifications, we encounter in the following folios, Melody is the one whose physical presence is closest to David. By being the very first attribute, and through her unusual proximity to the protagonist, one might well argue that Melody is advanced as integral to the formation of a ruler in the making. She might also be read as a figure that exceeds her own form, much like the personification of the Nile could be read as the deity, but also as the Nile waters flooding over and filling the entire surface of the image (see previous chapter). By dint of indicating music, Melody too could be perceived as occupying a far more expansive and diffused space than the literal area to which her figure is circumscribed.

Also note that David and Melody perform their oral and aural roles under the aegis of a tree, and that vegetation reappears on the final folio with David as emperor, which is decidedly odd in an imperial image. But if we recall that the very first psalm likens a blessed person to a tree "planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither" (Psalm 1:3), and if we further consider that in the earliest Christian gospel (Mark 8:24) "trees…provide a visual baseline for humanity in the eyes of a newly sighted man,"[38] then the trio of David, Melody, and tree (man, personification, and plant) presented here as an interspecies conglomerate would seem to be an intentional move. (Recall here too that psalter illustrations often present the literal pictorial transcriptions of the words of the psalms.) In this ensemble, the vocal labours of the human and the personification aspire toward the condition of the plant for all humankind as a blessed and fruitful state ("Blessed is the one…that person is like the tree planted by streams of water"). We may also find here an intentional

38 Arentzen, Burrus, and Peers, *Byzantine Tree Life*, 4–5.

Figure 25. David defending his flock. Paris Psalter, Paris, BnF, MS gr. 139, fol. 2v. Courtesy of the BnF.

throwback to the classical tradition: Socrates and Phaedrus rest under a plane tree to discourse on the subject of love, with the tree's shade and the idyllic ambience specifically invoked by Socrates as an inspiration to think and speak.[39] The ecology outlined here inspires the desire for vocal expression which is carried outwards to the viewer to emulate, elaborate upon, and perpetuate, much as song/voice and the psalms are expected to do (see earlier section).

39 Arentzen, Burrus, and Peers, *Byzantine Tree Life*, 21–23; Cotton, "Gardener of Souls," 242–54; Schmidt, "From the Moly Plant to the Gardens of Adonis," 173; and Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*.

Figure 26. David being anointed. Paris Psalter, Paris, BnF, MS gr. 139, fol. 3v. Courtesy of the BnF.

The second folio of the suite shows David abandoning his languorous seated pose as he stands to spring into action against the lion attacking his flock (Figure 25). David occupies the near-centre of the image with a personification of Strength (*Ischus*) right behind him. Strength stretches out an arm and touches the prophet-king and endows him with her attribute. The blue hazy horizon is now replaced by a sharp, craggy backdrop. Yet another Echo-like figure occurs here on the top right, this time showing itself from behind the rocks. Is it the same being, or someone different? Once again this area of the folio allows for an open-ended quality carried over from the first one. This image forcefully pinpoints the fragility of the bucolic setting outlined in the previous folio, so easily shattered with a flick of the hand as one turns

Figure 27. David fighting Goliath. Paris Psalter,
Paris, BnF, MS gr. 139, fol. 4v. Courtesy of the BnF.

the page and confronts the impending threat of the lion. The contingency of the idyll is vividly realized as one moves forward from it.

A word about the *psalterion* which lies flung to the ground on the left as David leaps to his flock's defence. The word *psalterion* does double-duty by signifying both the instrument and the psalter, the very book in which we see the images laid out.[40] Given the Byzantine elites' (and possibly also non-elites') propensity for enjoying puns, it is unlikely that this homonym

40 I am grateful to Kristoffel Demoen for this insight.

would have gone unnoticed. The purple wrap, signifying David's royal stature to come, is also discarded and forms a support for the *psalterion*. Even as David's person anticipates royalty, the tangible attributes of that state are shown in the form of the instrument and the cloth on which it rests. The *psalterion* assumes the status of a royal attribute in its coupling with, and occupation of, the cloth. It reappears in the final folio in David's hand, this time in the form of a psalter book (*psalterion*), resonant with the music and words the instrument (*psalterion*) enabled in the first folio. The *psalterion* thus is the literal and figural link between the first and the final image in this cycle.

By the third folio, David is wrapped once again in the purple as he is anointed by Samuel, his father and brothers in attendance with the personification of Meekness pointing toward him (Figure 26). Meekness towers over the other figures, but is at a bodily remove from David, unlike Melody and Strength. The next depiction, of David fighting Goliath, is a dynamic scene of battle with the prophet-king visualized twice: once in the background with the figure labelled Force as he hurls his weapon at Goliath, and then in the middle ground at the centre as he decapitates the giant (Figure 27).

The fifth folio removes David to the far right, behind King Saul, as one of the daughters of Israel dances in the foreground. The inscription contains the words, "Saul hath slain a thousand, and David ten thousand," (1 Kings 18:7), thus marking Saul's jealousy of David even as it indicates David's superiority (Figure 28). The next two folios decisively return David to the centre of the picture field with the sixth showing David's coronation (Figure 29). An unlabelled figure holds the crown over his head as he stands with sceptre in hand, facing the viewer frontally. The background now rejects the hues evident in the previous folios and is of a uniform gold. Then comes the closing image where the prophet-king stands with the clarity and regal insistence of a Byzantine emperor, clad in the red boots signifying that state, holding the psalter as book rather than as instrument, as he did in the first folio, and freed of seemingly extraneous elements except for two select figures, Wisdom and Prophecy, intended to reinforce his authority (Figure 23). Now the background is of a fitting and tangible golden hue, appropriate to an imperial figure. This is in stark contrast to the opening folio with its shades of blue and the indistinct background merging nature and architecture.

Given the opulence of the manuscript, its evident expense, and the selection of figures and colours in it, there can be no doubt that each composition was carefully planned, and that a specific sequence of visual effects was staked out. This sequence comprises a range of characters, even whilst retaining David as the main protagonist. It is also clear at a glance that the prefatory folio is the richest in terms of the sheer categories of characters

Figure 28. David with Saul. Paris Psalter,
Paris, BnF, MS gr. 139, fol. 5v. Courtesy of the BnF.

and elements it displays, if not in numbers. These include animals, personifications, plants, a river, a landscape, and the cityscape in the distance. This is a vision of the bucolic as a rich and expansive, enveloping space, much as we saw on objects such as the lamp and sarcophagi in Chapter 1. The bucolic setting on this folio works in antithesis to the settings laid out in the subsequent folios, which progressively emphasize the urban via architectural details. Such a gradual "cleaning up" of the bucolic is strikingly evident in the final image, where David and the personifications occupy only pedestals with vegetation as a backdrop, and flowers punctuating the foreground.

Figure 29. The coronation of David. Paris Psalter, Paris, BnF, MS gr. 139, fol. 6v. Courtesy of the BnF.

The cast of characters is also reduced in comparison to the first folio. Finally, the psalmic voice buttresses this series on both ends, being depicted as music in the first folio and inscribed as text (and potentially also music) in the closing one.

The Bucolic Mode and Attention

Musical images with motifs akin to our Paris Psalter folio exist in the Byzantine repertoire, with lyre- or harp-playing figures usually perceived to be Apollo or Achilles, if they are not explicitly identified as David. The Apollo/Achilles reading depends on the context, though often this is too amorphous to be pinned down with any certainty. The musician in Achilles is just one facet of a personality that combines harmony and belligerence, contingent on the circumstances at play. Later in the tenth century, we find objects that juxtapose music and war, lyre and sword, in relatively tight pictorial compositions, as seen in the silver inkpot currently in Padua. Like the figure of Achilles, these objects testify to the acknowledgement of seemingly antithetical themes in coexistence. They allude to a spectrum of possibilities between the extremes of war and peace, picturized as obedience by the sword in the one case, and submission to music in the other.[41]

An overarching interpretation of such images hinges on the polarities of civilization and its opposite, and the imperative of maintaining the former against the pernicious effects of the latter. By extension, scholarship assumes this is a perfect subject for imperial consideration. Take for instance, the Great Palace mosaics of Constantinople, several of which depict scenes of pastoral life (Figure 30).

Along with these, we also find images relating to the rural life and the hunt (which are distinct from bucolic compositions as defined in this book). Sarah Bassett characterizes the mosaics as "a series of easily readable, readily understandable images…The effect was the unambiguous articulation of subject matter and with it ease of visual comprehension."[42] Despite recognizing the discontinuous nature of mosaics laid out on a pavement, Bassett reads these ultimately as unified by their consistent visual style, and as transmitting a statement of imperial order imposed by the elimination of the harmful elements inimical to the pastoral idylls laid out.[43] The problem with this reading is that it takes style as the dominant guarantor of a clear narrative intention. In fact, while the subject matter of individual episodes in the mosaics may be comprehensible, in their arrangements and in their very pictorial relations to each other, they remain profoundly unclear, in part because of the seeming lack of visual attention the characters (human and non-human) bestow on each other.

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41 Chatterjee, "The Gifts of the Gorgon," 211–21.

42 Bassett, "The Great Palace Mosaic," 97.

43 Bassett, "The Great Palace Mosaic," 89–100.

Figure 30. Floor detail, fourth–sixth century CE. Mosaic,
The Great Palace Mosaic Museum, Istanbul. © Alamy Stock Photo.

James Trilling, in contrast to Bassett, advances several persuasive implications regarding the impossibility of viewing the entire program in one instance; the lack of an in-built orientation by which to follow the pictorial sequence; and the thematic resonances between Virgil's *Georgics* and the mosaics, which, whilst offering glimpses of the paradisiacal state, also posit graphic reminders of the contingencies preying on said paradise (figured in one case via the image of a lamb carried away by a wolf despite the presence of a shepherd).[44] Trilling further observes that in several cases, the palace mosaic imagery "suggests neither a central focus nor a spatial progression capable of enforcing a symbolic order on its imagery…there is no visual indication that the artist intended to show a decisive resolution."[45]

44 Trilling, "The Soul of the Empire," 32, 68–69.

45 Trilling, "The Soul of the Empire," 59.

Figure 31. Shepherd and figures, plate, fifth or sixth century CE. Silver. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum. © Alamy Stock Photo.

Although Trilling also settles on an imperial propagandistic reading of the mosaics, his insights are pertinent both to a consideration of how certain kinds of images might have been viewed, and the imperial resonance of those that decline to depict the literal bodies of emperor/s. Indeed, the point about the lack of a "decisive resolution" militates against some of our most cherished assumptions about Byzantine and premodern art in general, since these are usually interpreted in the light of concrete statements regarding God, empire, and piety. The bucolic mode, however, visually presents precisely the sort of equivocal relations Trilling observes in the palace mosaics. (See more on this theme in the Introduction.)

A good example of such relations is the silver plate currently at the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Figure 31).[46] Dated to the fifth or sixth century CE, it displays a seated shepherd with a dog, two rams, and plants at different phases of bloom. The conjunction "with" in the preceding sentence masks the difficulty inherent in determining the precise relationship between the depicted man and the beasts, for while the shepherd's staff denotes the former as master and nurturer of the latter, their postures signal a moment in their relationship when such a designation is not easily apparent. The dog occupies the space between the man's legs, its body twisting emphatically toward him. One leg is raised in a gesture not unlike the raised fingers of humans denoting speech in Byzantine art. This canine

46 Chatterjee, *Between the Pagan Past and Christian Present*, 189–90.

seems to be engaged in a dialogue with the shepherd, or at the very least to respond to him bodily. The rams, on the other hand, are more detached. The seated animal turns its head toward the man, but is its attention drawn by the human being or the bifoliate plants sprouting between them? The standing ram chews on a leaf of the tree whose branches flourish in the upper surface of the plate. Those branches reach out toward the shepherd as if to court his attention, unlike the stiffly erect, stunted plants below. And what of the shepherd himself? Does he admire the tree or respond to it? Does he converse with or sing to the dog or the rams? Does he simply look on the scene or somewhere beyond it? In an earlier work, I had suggested that the image opens up many possibilities in terms of sound; it could evoke voice, song, poetry, a command, or the sounds of the animals, or—I suggest now—even silence.[47] The hint of possible interactions, or the lack of them, complicate this soundscape on several levels.

The above point inevitably problematizes any simple reading of the image as depicting a shepherd in a landscape with animals. To dismiss the plants as mere setting is to disregard their insistent height (the tree) and centrality (the plants and the tree), both of which are the routine signifiers of importance in Byzantine art. By the same token, we cannot but give the animals their due, constituting as they do the entire right surface. To read them as merely creatures submissive to the shepherd would hardly do justice to the variations of their poses and vibrancy of their bodies. Though exceeding the plants and animals in height even when seated, this shepherd is not construed as a commanding figure. For one, the attention of each animal wavers, even if each ultimately faces the shepherd. For another, the very twists in the bodies of the dog and the seated ram signal a situation, or a moment, when those beasts are in tension with their ostensible visual focus. The regimes of attention depicted here are multiple and sometimes in conflict, detracting from an exclusive focal point that may underpin the power relations at play. Attention to the supposedly dominant human is not guaranteed by, or perhaps even a condition of, this image.

One might well ask at this point what, if any, examples exist of attentive animals in Byzantine art? For that matter, how is attention visualized even among the human species in this tradition? The imperial domain offers good ground to explore this question, positing as it does an individual supreme above all others and, therefore, designed to command maximum attention. The emperor is almost always frontally positioned and central, and towers over all others.

47 Chatterjee, *Between the Pagan Past and the Christian Present*, 190.

Figure 32. Greek gospels, twelfth century. Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks, MS 5, fol. 14. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC.

Figure 33. Orpheus and the animals, fourth century CE. Marble, table stand. Athens, Byzantine and Christian Museum. © Alamy Stock Photo.

Frontality and centrality are key factors in ensuring that he receives his due by arresting the audience's gaze, even if that gaze then moves on to other areas of the visual field. The principle is similar to that of images of Christ Pantokrator placed above critical thresholds such as at Hosios Loukas and the Chora monastery; these images tower above the viewer and address them directly with frontal gaze and a text from the Gospel.

What place do animals have in this economy of visual attention? We might begin with a somewhat common motif, namely birds and other beasts depicted atop canon tables in Byzantine *tetraevangelia* (four gospels). Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks, MS 5 is a good example: across the seven-odd folios on which the tables are spread out, we find birds and sheep/rams (in two cases), flanking an object, usually a fountain, sometimes a cross. These animals are positioned such that their attention to the central object is unmistakable; their gazes and stances are directed toward it (Figure 32). In the two cases where they face away, the regularity of their bodies and gazes on each side signals a corresponding concentration outward. These are clearly not animals engaged in whimsical, playful modes; they are placed and depicted in relation to their surroundings such that their attention to the object is registered by the viewer.

A category of images useful to gauging the matter of animals paying attention, or otherwise, is in the Orpheus and Davidic tradition which depicts an unusually skilled musician attracting an audience comprising distinct species.[48] The object believed to have been a table stand, now located in Athens, and dated to the fourth century CE (Figure 33), shows the musician

48 For a comprehensive study of Orpheus in the medieval era, see Boardman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*.

Figure 34. Orpheus and the animals, fourth-seventh century CE. Polychrome wool and linen, 15.1 × 15.0 cm. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC.

(whether read as Orpheus or David) facing slightly towards the viewer's right and surrounded by real and mythical animals in a tightly laced network. Right below the musician's feet is a panel depicting carved beasts, some of whom are engaged in battle (not shown in the image published here). The stand on which the carving rests shows a lion attacking a deer-like creature, its mouth bearing down on the latter's throat. Once again, we find the polarities of aggression and peaceable coexistence as reflected in the Great Palace mosaics mentioned earlier. However, peaceful coexistence in this case also signifies rapt attention, with almost each creature positioned to look towards the musician. The very few who do not look at Orpheus, stare out at the viewer. It is he, and his music, that hold the beasts at bay from each other and coax them into the compressed mesh around him.

The examples above indicate the variations in gaze and posture that a musical scene of this type entails: in the case of the table stand, attention is signified by creatures uniformly positioned toward the musician, apart from a very few not disposed thus. Brian Madigan points to the implications of similar states of wavering attention in his study of a textile fragment from Dumbarton Oaks (Figure 34).[49] This *segmentum* is deeply abraded on the left. But we get a glimpse of a musician with his instrument surrounded by

49 Madigan, "An Orpheus among the Animals at Dumbarton Oaks," 405–16.

Figure 35. Orpheus and the animals, sixth–seventh century CE. Wool and linen. Princeton, Princeton Art Museum, New Jersey. © Art Resource.

various creatures, including a giraffe, on the right. The composition is bound within a roundel, right outside which reptilian beasts occupy the spandrels by the thinly outlined rectangular border. These reptiles face inward as if to turn the viewer's attention toward the events within the roundel.

Madigan persuasively argues that the centaur on this textile (and the figure of the god Pan playing his syrinx on other similar textiles) serve to signal the limits of Orpheus' power, the latter's failure in retrieving Eurydice, and his impending destruction at the hands of the Furies. Such a reading takes us from the usual thematization of the musician's magnetism to a proleptic message indicating instead his failure. Orpheus' musical powers are shown to be useless regarding the very person he wishes to attract most (namely, Eurydice). For the purposes of my argument, Madigan's point hinges on the very possibility of the ambivalent attention of non-human figures such as Pan. On the Dumbarton Oaks *segmentum*, the presence of the centaur introduces a competing instrument into the music-making milieu and seems to gesture away from the centre (hands and legs prancing in the opposite direction from Orpheus), perhaps to the approach of another, more persuasive master (in this case, Dionysios and his rowdy entourage).[50]

50 Madigan, "An Orpheus among the Animals at Dumbarton Oaks," 405–16.

Another textile fragment very similar in style and content, currently at the Princeton Art Museum, seems to replicate the Dumbarton Oaks composition but with different animals and, more intriguingly, a different figure in command (Figure 35). Instead of Orpheus (identified in the Dumbarton Oaks fragment through his clothes, especially the Phrygian hat), this figure seems to be half-naked and might even be female. To be sure, any strict identification of the musicians on either of the fragments is impeded by the lack of identifying inscriptions. Nonetheless, it is telling that difference was intended and underlined. This difference attests to the flexibility deemed intrinsic to the musician and the range of personae the latter could assume.

The examples examined above proffer nodes of potential and actual inattention in the visual field via the animals' gazes and postures, and the figure of the centaur. Yet, in their overall structures the musical scenes present the same principles of frontality, centrality, and larger scale with subordinate humans and non-human figures, as we find in imperial and Pantokrator imagery. In comparison, the prefatory folio of the Paris Psalter depicts a relative looseness of relations between the ensemble of David and Melody on the one hand, and the animals in the audience on the other. The sheep, goats, and dog are positioned in equivocal attitudes in relation to David. Even the goat and sheep turned toward the musician do not engage in overt actions with him. The beasts' seeming self-possession, however, does not mean they cannot appreciate the import of the melody and/or Melody, since sound does not require *en face* interaction. Indeed, the unsettling irony of this image is that its most commanding figure—the one who stares us directly in the face—does not require visibility in order to register its presence. In consonance with this observation, we find in the sources directly attributed to Constantine VII, an acoustic consideration which is *as* important as visibility: that is, paternal and imperial instruction through the emperor's voice. This configuration of the imperial voice makes it the medium whereby the various contingencies of rule may be addressed and, perhaps, mitigated.

The Porphyrogennetos' Voice

The most compelling evidence of the commitment to voice and instruction is contained in the proem to the *De administrando imperio*. This document was a manual on domestic and foreign policy specially compiled by Constantine VII for his son, Romanos II, and one of the major achievements of the former's reign. It begins thus, "A wise son makes glad a father, and an

affectionate father takes delight in a prudent son. For the Lord gives wit/sense to speak in season, and adds an ear to hear…Now listen to me."[51]

The verb *akouein* (to listen) repeated in the very first lines of the proem, forges the ideal relations required to maintain the continuity and longevity of rule, positing the heir to the throne as a listener. The kinship between father and son is here contingent on the latter assuming the position of one who listens to his predecessor; the father/emperor as one who passes on advice worthy of being heard. The proem goes on to delineate the contents of the entire document: the differentiation of nations, and how to conciliate or attack them. Right after this précis, Constantine VII states, "For so shall they quake before you as one mighty in wisdom…your lips shall be bridled, and as darts shall your words wound them to death."[52] Words become veritable weapons; an appropriate stance for an emperor who, unlike his combative grandfather, the emperor Basil I, never once accompanied his troops into battle, nor wrote a military treatise like his father Leo VI did, and who had to spend much of his reign sharing the throne with a co-emperor.

The first chapter that follows the proem, and deals with the Romans' required attitude to the Pechenegs, opens with the exhortation:

> Hear, now, my son, those things of which I think you should not be ignorant…and if in setting out my speech I have followed the plain and beaten track of speech…and simple prose, do not wonder at that, my son. For I have not made a display of fine writing…but rather have been eager, by means of everyday and conversational narrative to teach you those things of which I think you should not be ignorant.[53]

This apology for the simple narrative composed in accordance with the patterns of oral speech is yet another instance of the significance accorded to the imperial/paternal voice in shaping policy and fortifying rule across generations.

And so it continues. When we come to the belligerent Bulgarians (Chapter 12), once again the son is urged "to fix your mind's eye upon my words and learn those things which I command you, and you will be able in due season as from ancestral treasures to bring forth the wealth of wisdom, and

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51 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, trans. Jenkins, 45.

52 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, trans. Jenkins, 47.

53 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, trans. Jenkins, 49.

to display the abundance of wit."[54] Only by listening to—indeed, visualizing—the father's words can the successor cultivate his own voice, itself an imperial treasure polished and passed down over generations from one's ancestors. Appropriately, what follows in the chapter are difficult situations requiring the negotiation of imperial regalia with enemy nations, all of which, as per Constantine VII's advice, may be successfully managed with persuasive stories conveyed by speech via the emperor and/or his agents.

In the context of the bucolic genre in which animals of a few restricted species feature, a passage in Chapter 12 draws parallels between nations or races, and animals. "For just as each animal mates with its own tribe, so it is right that each nation also should marry and cohabit not with those of other race and tongue (*alloglosson*) but of the same tribe and speech (*homophonon*)."[55] Notice the emphasis on a common speech, or voice, as *phone* may refer to either, as a category for sorting out ethnicities and also zoological species. Voice enables speech which in turn develops into language, or tongue (*glossa*). Bloodlines are sustained by animals mating within their own tribe. By the same token, as per Constantine VII, voice not only transmits a treasury of instruction; it holds entire communities together in the semblance of a nation, or race, be it human or non-human. In this respect, the imperial voice assumes—or attempts to assume—a kinship with the psalmic voice which, we recall, has the potential to form bonds across Christendom.

Prerona Prasad shows that even apart from the *De administrando imperio*, all the major treatises compiled by or under the patronage of Constantine VII are undergirded by the conviction of the importance of instruction from father to son, or emperor to successor.[56] The *Vita Basilii* (Life of Basil), the official biography of his grandfather, specifically notes that the lack of a palace upbringing was no impediment to Basil as a ruler, for his father had instructed him in all excellent and praiseworthy things. The monumental compilation of past and possibly current ceremonial practices in the *De cerimoniis* demonstrates the same concern. The preface to the third treatise on military expeditions as laid out in the Leipzig manuscript, contains a declaration about the impossibility of being an emperor on the basis of natural abilities alone. Rather, it is contingent on *instruction* by one's predecessor

54 Constantine Poprhyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, trans. Jenkins, 67.

55 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Moravcsik, trans. Jenkins, 75.

56 Prasad, "Splendour, Vigour, and Legitimacy," 235–47.

(or father) in the noble precepts constituting imperial rule. Prasad contends that in Constantine VII's scheme, both bloodline and intellectual transmission were the most valuable predictors of worthy rule.[57] I would extend this argument by stating that the former (bloodline), under Constantine VII, was squarely contingent on the latter (intellectual transmission) with an emphasis on *vocal* transmission and reception.

Even in the centuries after Constantine VII's particular interventions in this arena, voice continues to garner no small significance in the making and breaking of emperors. The polymath, Michael Psellos, consistently lists the vocal (and by extension rhetorical) qualities of individual emperors along with their physical attributes.[58] The peculiar powers of the imperial voice also find mention in verse. In one long poem, John Mauropous talks about the momentous effect that hearing the word *basileus* had on him, and then proceeds to mention the equally momentous effects that an imperial countenance and voice can have on a viewer and listener. He mentions one incident when the emperor glanced his way and spoke to him, which combination (view and voice) apparently transformed him forever.[59] In another poem, Mauropous characterizes a dead emperor as being primarily "without voice".[60] Moreover, in an interesting transfer of power (and, therefore, blame), several period historians attribute the outbreak of iconoclasm, or the destruction of holy images in the empire, to the influence of the words of the master of the imperial choir (*protopsaltes*) on the arch iconoclast, Emperor Leo V.[61] The one who trains and conducts voices is thus held to account as the primary agent for one of the most divisive events in Byzantine history.

The opening folio of the Paris Psalter, with its strong presentation of Melody and music-making and by virtue of the psalms it contains, reflects the principle of voice, music, and speech at a literal level. By positioning this as the first episode in a narrative that culminates in the imperial image,

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57 Prasad, "Splendour, Vigour, and Legitimacy," 235–47.

58 Michael Psellus, *Chronographia, Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, trans Sewter.

59 John Mauropous, Poem 54 "When he made his first acquaintance with the ruling family," in *The Poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous*, ed. and trans. Bernard and Livanos, 427–31.

60 John Mauropous, Poem 81 "Funeral verses on the grave of the emperor," *The Poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous*, ed. and trans. Bernard and Livanos, 473.

61 Engberg, "The Emperor Leo V, his Choir Master, and the Byzantine Old Testament Lectionary," 83–86.

the suite of images makes a pictorial argument for voice, music, and speech also as foundational for imperium (Figure 22). Indeed, the seemingly inattentive attitudes of many of the creatures testifies to the difficulty of cultivating a voice that is both imperial and commanding. However, the figure behind the column stands testimony to music's far-reaching powers which can still command or conjure up figures that may prefer to have remained hidden. Read thus, the autonomy of Melody makes sense. David is *her* instrument, even as the *psalterion* is his medium. Melody—and thereby, sound—clearly dominates here without it having been transcribed to text. Or, to put it another way, Melody's productions via David are significant enough to need such transcription in due course, when he attains the state of emperor. Voice, too, shall attain a different state—that of script—by the end of this suite of images.

Accordingly, when we encounter David once again on the last folio of the suite, the setting is emptied of all extraneous figures and accessories (Figure 23). Curiously, vegetation still sprouts in the background which, to my knowledge, is extremely unusual in imperial imagery. The green leafy backdrop hints at the tree, and the bucolic ambience, that opened the manuscript, thus maintaining a link with that initial image. This ambience is pushed behind to clear space for the emperor, but still imposes its presence by inhabiting the same area as the normative gold background. Thus, the bucolic continues to set the scene for the imperial voice to function and perform. That voice is now squarely directed to and focused on Psalm 71 in the open psalter. The personification of Prophecy stretches out a hand and points to the text in the open book with impressive assurance and superiority (her hand is on top whilst David's is at the bottom). Melody is now clearly inscribed as speech on that book. Both the opening and closing images, organized around music as sound and later, as speech and text, are bookends to the other activities that propel David the shepherd to imperial status.

Personifications and Voice

The personifications in the psalter's imagery need some further discussion, particularly in light of their vividness, their impact on vocal participation and modulation across the folios, and in their introduction of an entirely new category—or species—into the manuscript. As Walter Burkett shows, personification is a complex phenomenon that unfolds at linguistic, poetic, religious, speculative or other levels, and can enable a productive intermingling

or confusion between them.[62] In our psalter, the visual personifications introduce layers of complexity by probing the limits of the pictorial representation of humans and non-humans alike. All the personifications are depicted as human figures, but they are clearly not of this particular species; they simultaneously encompass and go beyond it. More specifically, personifications connote both human characteristics and voice.[63] Their very names introduce an additional vector of reading into the folio, inscribed as these are sometimes (but not always) on a different axis from that identifying the human figure (e.g., Melody is inscribed vertically whereas David's name is horizontal). The act of naming these figures invokes the range of powers and possibilities associated with bestowing appellations.

Speaking names enables a variety of verbal—and thereby, visual—connections that may not otherwise be apparent. Naming is also sometimes a means of mastering complexity and imposing order.[64] But alternatively, the personifications' names and visual depictions may furnish the launching pad for related ideas and discourses, and even poetical elaborations not immediately visible on the surface.[65] The personifications' very presence introduces a complementary—and sometimes competitive—tenor as they assert themselves in the same visual field where the human figure (David or whomever) is assumed to be the main focus. They can work either to contain the narrative in a tight clarity or to enable its extension in a host of verbal-pictorial connections.

In the Paris Psalter the personifications' consistent autonomy is striking. The imposing body of Power/Ability (*dynamis*) in the David cycle, or the well-known figures of Night (*nyx*) and Dawn (*orthros*) on folio 435v as they accompany the prophet Isaiah are not beings to be ignored (Figure 36). In the David cycle, specifically, the personifications bespeak the close association with the shepherd boy and his steady march toward kingship, even as they assert their own sovereign status. This is also very much the case when David becomes the emperor, as discussed above in the case of Wisdom and Prophecy. The distinction between the would-be king, and the ideal qualities required to assume that state, is aligned with a key component of

62 Burkett, "Hesiod in Context," 3.

63 Furey, "Impersonating Devotion," 13.

64 Murray, "The Muses," 151–52, 159.

65 Ruth Leader discusses late antique mosaics of abstract values and paideia, or the cultural education rooted in classical education in Leader, "Name Labels on Late Antique Mosaics," 48–50. See also Magdalino, "Cultural Change?," 32.

Figure 36. The prayer of Isaiah. Paris Psalter,
Paris, BnF, MS gr. 139, fol. 435v. Courtesy of the BnF.

Constantine VII's vision, which stated that natural abilities were *not* enough to qualify one for the throne, no matter how impressive these were. (Recall that this precept is explicitly declared in the preface to the third treatise on military expeditions discussed above.)[66] To put it another way, things like Strength, Ability, Wisdom, and Melody (which, to emphasize again, stands

66 Prasad, "Splendour, Vigour, and Legitimacy," 235–47.

first in the line of personifications pictured) are all extrinsic. Their discretion and independence suggest that even if they happen to be innate to the imperial person, they still demand a degree of careful cultivation and control by him.

Where the personifications do not accompany figures with imperial import, they still hold the potential to displace attention from the ostensible main figure. Folio 435v is a good example; it depicts the prayer of Isaiah with the words "Out of the night my spirit awakes early for thee, O God" on the facing folio (Figure 36). Stephen Wander points out that the text of the canticle in the psalter omits the first words "where our soul seeks you," thus literally showing Isaiah turning away from midnight-blue Night to the rosy little figure of Dawn who runs up to greet the prophet.[67] An alternate reading, however, could take into account the gestures and poses of the figures and the parallel narratives these craft alongside Isaiah's prayer. Night's foot protrudes slightly from the frame, as though she were about to step out of the visual field. Yet she remains firmly embedded in it, a patch of darkness swirling aloft a starred blue cape. If this is a figure in transition to Dawn, and the awakening of Isaiah's spirit, it is still very much present and a reminder of the temporal and physical stages of Isaiah's prayer. It is also a reminder of other psalms and books of the Bible which exhort not a turning away from Night, but a constant meditation on God's law through its temporal expanse and through the day. As for Dawn, the cheerful little figure is shown in motion, still stepping (perhaps running?) and gesturing toward the prophet who does not regard him. Yet, a direct line connects Night's and Dawn's countenances. Perhaps Dawn addresses its majestic counterpart, cutting across Isaiah? Could the dialogue between Isaiah and God reflect a simultaneous dialogue that occurs between Night and Dawn? These are necessarily speculative points (since various other interactions might be drawn between the figures and their surroundings). But they underscore the flexibility inherent to imagery that includes personifications and the fertile ways these might have been harnessed by the reader and viewer in their reception of the folio.

67 Wander, "The Paris Psalter," 92–93.

The Message in the Landscape

The bucolic dimension of the Paris Psalter was clearly not an isolated phenomenon in the visual repertoire of the epoch. The contemporaneous Leo Bible, a deluxe manuscript dated to the tenth century CE, depicts on one of its opening folios (2v) an unusual image of Moses seated in a landscape in front of a group of animals and writing in an open codex (Figure 37). This is part of a Creation cycle shown in three registers with the serpent's temptation of man delineated at the bottom, and an abraded middle frieze teeming with fishes. The marine animals seem more distracted than their terrestrial counterparts who stand firm and face Moses. But as with the inattentive creatures on the Paris folio, even in the Leo Bible one beast turns its head in the opposite direction whilst another gazes directly out of the frame at the viewer. The epigram on the borders of the image proclaims:

> He who timelessly supports the clay, the substratum of the earth, and sustains the heaven like a curtain from above, within time places the sea in the midst, and forms in a fitting way a speaking animal. After that, as Moses writes, the snake there, out of envy, creeps up to speak to the image of God.

David Olster places this image in the context of elite classical education and the relations between man and language as painstakingly worked out after the upheaval of iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries CE.[68] This is certainly evident from the allusion to the "speaking animal." Equally pertinent and not coincidental, I would argue, is the sustained image of *speech* as it comes to define man, here cast as the image of God. Speech also signifies the serpent's perfidy through his address to Adam. The image deemed best to serve the varying powers and effects of speech, is cast here in a version of the bucolic mode with Moses as a type of herdsman, albeit one who inscribes his words instead of—or along with—speaking them aloud.

The prefatory folio of the Paris Psalter, whilst being far more verdant and laden with many characters, is similar to the Leo Bible folio in positioning a human vis-à-vis non-humans with a sonic component mediating the relations among them. These images, appearing on folios positioned at or near the beginning of their respective manuscripts, constitute a statement about the bucolic mode as an essential condition for leadership. Simultaneously, they posit the bucolic setting as intrinsic to the formation and transmission of language and vocal forms (music, speech, text). Whereas the image from

68 Olster, "Byzantine Hermeneutics After Iconoclasm," 438.

Figure 37. Moses and his flock; the serpent in Eden. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. gr. 1, fol. 2v. By permission Zereis Facsimiles.

the Leo Bible performs a commentary on the shaping of language after a theological and political crisis, the opening folio of the Paris Psalter elaborates on the contingencies inherent to that fundamental component of Byzantine imperium: the emperor's voice and its reach.

Figure 38. Shepherds in the countryside. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS supplément gr. 247, fol. 47v. Courtesy of the BnF.

Figure 39. Shepherds in the countryside. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS supplément gr. 247, fol. 48r. Courtesy of the BnF.

EPILOGUE

IT IS FITTING to end this book with an image of a shepherd exiting the picture field. Folios 47v and 48r of the illustrated copy of Nicander's *Theriaka* show precisely such a scenario (Figures 38–39). The *Theriaka* is a treatise dating from the second century CE that proffers antidotes against the bites and stings of poisonous animals. The manuscript is now located in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) and therefore known as the Paris Nicander (Paris, BnF, MS suppl. gr. 247).[1] It was made in the tenth century CE, probably during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, and it resonates well with the bucolic tenor already evident in some of that epoch's key works and with the emperor's personal interest in recovering aspects of the classical past (see Chapter 3).

The treatise begins by claiming to advance remedies to "the toiling ploughman, the herdsman, and the woodcutter, whenever in the forest or at the plough," on which occasions, presumably, they are most vulnerable to the injuries inflicted by venomous creatures. What follows is an excursus of those injuries and elaborate recipes for their prevention or cure. As Floris Overduin notes, the work is unusual in deploying a consciously literary language and verse to present technical knowledge, thus generating a poetic text on an incongruous subject.[2] Might this odd choice of literary mode for such a topic (essentially a catalogue of snakes and other similar beings) nonetheless be considered as bucolic? If so, it would merit that label by emphatically reversing the mode's normative criteria and by dragging its otherwise obliquely rendered flip side to the forefront: the herdsman's world (and the ploughman's and woodcutter's) as being beset by dangers rather than rendered as an idyll. And by intentionally using verse and incorporating dimensions of mythology, aetiology, and even etymology into his material, Nicander certainly inscribes his work into the bucolic lineage in at least two ways: first, by adopting a distinct literary voice and tenor for a subject that does not usually attract such a voice, and secondly, by writing about

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1 See Lazaris, "Scientific, Medical and Technical Manuscripts," 100–103, for a detailed discussion of the manuscript layout and details.

2 See the thorough study by Overduin, *Nicander of Colophon's Theriaca*.

the ecologies inhabited by shepherds and a host of other beings—albeit in conflict, not harmony, with them.

Pictorially, however, across folios 47v and 48r we find little hint of the agon delineated in Nicander's poem between man and beast (Figures 38–39). Instead, we are shown a pleasing vista of sky and ground with loosely grouped, tall grasses, reeds, and plants, some seeming to sway in a breeze. A beautiful pale blue wash covers the upper reaches of both folios, but with parts of the parchment's surface visible nonetheless. This is not a diffusive or many-shaded blue of the kind we saw in the opening folio of the Paris Psalter in the previous chapter. Both folios in the Nicander MS have firmly etched groundlines. On 47v three people trudge across the parchment. The figure on the left (probably a woman?) carries a bag over her shoulder and points to the figure in front of her. This centrally placed being, also identified as a woman, kneels with arms outstretched towards the man on the right of the triad. This person is forcefully angled toward the physical edge of the folio, even as his head turns back toward the companions behind him. Dressed as a shepherd, he occupies the greater part of the folio's surface with his right leg pushing into the space of the figure who kneels at the centre. The horizontal support of the stick he holds grazes the spine of the manuscript as though he were straining against that limit. This shepherd is clearly the most active and dominant figure in the trio. Meanwhile, unfolding on the folio across (48r) is a vista replete with more vegetation in the form of trees, both dark and wispy, and clumps of grass. Amidst these, a shepherd strides off toward the right with a crook in hand. Although he has been identified as Pan Nomios, the god of the shepherds in a sacred grove, his identity is, strictly speaking, unknown, given the lack of inscriptions.[3] What is clear, however, is the fact that he alone, among the humans (or the other beings who are superficially human), is shown erect in stance and striding confidently—as opposed to kneeling, or straining his body and head in two opposite directions, as his counterparts on the previous folio do.[4] Could this insouciance be an effect of the venomous creatures having been banished from the scene? Note that a lone viper winds its way from right to left on the previous folio, above the heads of the three figures. The closing folio thus might well depict a shepherd relieved and replete with confidence, now that the surrounding landscape is free of the perils occasioned by those reptiles and their kind.

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3 Weitzman, *Age of Spirituality*: "Codex of the Theriaka and Alexipharmaka of Nicander," 248–49.

4 Weitzman, *Age of Spirituality*: "Codex of the Theriaka and Alexipharmaka of Nicander," 249, states that this figure stands in a dancing pose.

Although I used the adverb "meanwhile" to describe folio 48r, suggesting that the shepherd's unhesitating stride occurs at the same time as the curious poses of the figures on 47v, this synchronic relation is far from obvious. The straining shepherd on folio 47v certainly seems to point attention to 48r, but the latter image could just as plausibly be the aftermath of the previous folio. The period viewer would have appreciated the ambiguity in this pictorial rendition of Nicander's narrative since it is built into the very mode at hand. Per the author's directives, bucolic landscapes could be emptied of lurking threats by recourse to the methods suggested (and the lone snake seems to reflect this by scuttling off in the opposite direction). However, as Nicander would have well known, the very value of his work resides in its capacity for application (it was, after all, copied in an illustrated manuscript in the tenth century well after its original date of composition)—and bucolic ecologies can never be entirely "cleansed" of the spiders, reptiles, and vipers that dwell in them. True to the visual dimensions of the mode, the bucolic tenor of the final image—and the hints of it on folio 47v—deny any absolute conclusion to the narrative. Our happy shepherd may be walking his way into more dangers against which he needs Nicander's fortifying advice, for all one knows!

With this image—open-ended, ostensibly idyllic, and without any definite resolution—we may close this short excursus into the bucolic mode in Byzantium. The shepherd's journey outward is—one hopes—an invitation to build on the ideas delineated here, and to lead to further contemplations of the bucolic and its myriad possibilities in the Byzantine world.

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