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DPhil, Trinity 2015

Nature and Narratives; landscapes, plants and animals in Palaiologan vernacular literature

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This thesis attempts to identify the role of nature within Palaiologan entertainment literature. This requires an in-depth study of beast literature and other contemporary works in which nature plays a prominent role, as well as the discussion of other Palaiologan material, and earlier texts concerning nature. Outside influences on this development, such as the Western *Reynard* cycle and Oriental texts, are also considered.

The need for such a study is made clear from a brief consideration of the relevant secondary literature on the topic. Nature has been a key theme in recent studies of Western medieval literature, and has made a major contribution to a more sensitive and sophisticated reading of this material. The approaches taken vary, but the methodology of analysing the connections between text, author/audience and the natural world can generally be termed ecocriticism, and animal studies. Such an approach, with its focus on the connections made between the natural world and human ideas, has led to studies on representations of animals, hunting, the forest and the monstrous within the Western romances, beast epics and fable. However, despite the enormous recent advances in Byzantine literary studies, it is not an approach that has been much applied to Byzantine literature. Nature in the form of the garden in Byzantium has received some excellent studies, and Henry Maguire's recent book *Nectar and Illusion* has extended the understanding of nature in Byzantine art. However, other than a handful of studies on specific texts such as the *Physiologus*, previous studies of animals and landscapes in Byzantium have focused on the *realia*. This includes the role of animals in agriculture, trade, ceremony, diplomacy, as entertainment in the hippodrome, and of course,

as food. Some of these studies have limited their parameters even further to focus on one specific animal.

This thesis hopes to make a contribution to this gap in our knowledge by considering the role of nature as a literary motif in different genres and for different aims, including religious imagery, pseudoscientific study, satire and didactic purposes. The texts on which this thesis focuses include a selection of the Palaiologan romances, namely the *Achilleid*, *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi* and *Livistros and Rodamni*, *The Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, and *An Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds.* These texts seem to be different from earlier works in which nature is prominent, utilising such material in an innovative way. The study of these texts provides us with information both on the Byzantine view of the natural world and on the use of literature during a particularly troubled period of Byzantine history. My main questions therefore are how nature is portrayed in these texts and what can this tell us about the society that produced them. Key in the discussion of the landscapes, plants and animals in these texts is the idea of the wild versus the domestic and the concept of human agency in the definition of the natural world. While they can be viewed as using a coherent literary *topos*, each of these texts presents nature from a different perspective or with a distinct aim. This thesis argues that the unusual plot turns are suggestive of a different Byzantine view of their place in the world at this time, while the use of elements from Western and Persian-Arabic material points to a more open cultural exchange.

This thesis is not an exhaustive study and is limited not only by the selection of text but also in terms of what it discusses. It is not concerned with *realia* in any direct sense, although such features will be considered where appropriate. While some comparisons are drawn with Latin, Western vernacular, Persian and Arabic material, no attempt is made to argue for detailed traces of awareness between texts, rather the comparison is focused more

on shared ideas of the natural world and its literary uses, as well as the independent application of these ideas.

The material is studied text by text, building a picture of how the representations of nature developed, if not exactly chronologically, then in style and complexity of image. While it is almost impossible to accurately date these texts, it is possible to build them on to each other to show the different uses of animals within them. Not only does this draw out the themes present in each text, it presents something of a flow of imagery, use and meaning. This method allows for greater comparison between texts, and with external material from the East and the West.

By beginning with earlier Byzantine texts and iconography, the Aesopic tradition, and early Christian sources such as the *Physiologus*, one of the most ubiquitous of medieval texts concerned with animals, we have a blueprint for the use of animals and landscapes in Byzantine literature.

The Palaiologan romances form the basis of a flora- and landscape- based discussion. The chapter considers the similarities and differences of the presentation of the natural world in these romances as opposed to those of the Komnenian period, on which they clearly draw, or the contemporary Western works, particularly in their connection with gender and artifice. Further consideration is given in this chapter to contemporary depictions of the environment in other sources including artistic representations, drawing on works like the hexemeral tradition and the *Symbolic Garden* mentioned in the previous chapter.

The *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey* is then considered from religious and political perspectives, highlighting the humorous aspects, and trying to gain some understanding of what the text is doing and the milieu from which it developed.

The satirical *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds* is discussed in similar terms, with reference to some connected Palaiologan texts such as the *Book of Birds*. The *Tale* is longer

than the *Synaxarion* and more complex in structure, but also more focused on the human world so that a social angle is also added to the discussion.

The conclusions drawn are that these vernacular texts give the natural world a prominent place, using landscapes, plants and animals in various ways to express different ideas, or to stress particular aspects of the stories. The animals and landscapes provide hints of the plot to the audience, which the authors sometimes then subvert. The authors draw on earlier Greek material, but parallels with literature from other cultures show similarities which imply a shared medieval perspective on nature with local differences.

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This thesis identifies the role of nature within Palaiologan entertainment literature. The texts on which this thesis focuses include a selection of the Palaiologan novels, namely the *Achilleid*, *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi* and *Livistros and Rodamni*, as well as two other, more satirical works, *The Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, and *An Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds.* These texts seem to be different from earlier works in which nature is prominent, utilising such material in an innovative way. The study of these texts provides us with information both on the Byzantine view of the natural world and on the use of literature during a particularly troubled period of Byzantine history. My main questions therefore are how nature is portrayed in these texts and what can this tell us about the society that produced them. The study of these vernacular texts indicates that the natural world is given a prominent place in the literature of the period, using landscapes, plants and animals in diverse ways to express assorted ideas, or to stress particular aspects of the stories. The animals and landscapes provide hints of the plot to the audience, which the authors sometimes then subvert. The authors draw on earlier Greek material, but parallels with literature from other cultures show similarities which imply a shared medieval perspective on nature with local differences.

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Abbreviations

Primary Sources

Achilleid *The Byzantine Achilleid. The Naples Version* (eds.) P.A. Agapitos, K. Hult, and O.L. Smith (Vienna, 1999)

ETQ *An Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds: Translation and Commentary,* (eds.) Nick Nicholas and George Baloglou, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003)

Kallimachos *Le Roman de Callimaque et de Chrysorrhoé* (ed.) M. Pichard (Paris, 1956)

Livistros *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου και Ροδάμνης. Κριτική έκδοση της διασκευής α* (ed.) P.A. Agapitos (Athens, 2006)

PG *Patrologia Graeca* ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1857-66)

Synaxarion U. Moennig, 'Das Συναξάριον τοῦ τιμημένου Γαδάρου: Analyse, Ausgabe, Wörterverzeichnis', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 102 (2009) pp. 109-166. The edition of the text is found on pp. 138-166.

Velthandros *Historia extraordinaria de Beltandro y Crisanza,* ed. J. Egea (Serie Bilingüe de Textos Griegos Medievales, 1., Granada, 1998) pp. 57-137

Secondary Sources

BMGS *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*

DOP *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*

ODB *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (eds.) A.P. Kazhdan, A.-M.M. Talbot, A. Cutler, T.E. Gregory and N.P. Ševčenko (Oxford, 1991)

OED *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1989-1997)

1. Introduction

The study of the natural world has spread far beyond the academic boundaries of science and is proving a worthwhile area of study for a broad range of subjects within the humanities. For the purposes of this thesis, the natural world, or nature, refers to the physical environment and the animals within it, and is defined by Byzantine hexaemeral literature, a genre which will be discussed in the following chapter, which takes as its subject matter the biblical creation of the world. As such, nature is here defined as the tangible landscapes, plants, animals and birds which the Byzantines considered to have been created by God, and which humanity can affect. Humans, though part of this definition of nature, are considered here through their perception of nature, and their representations of themselves when connected with non-human nature. In addition to the physical landscapes of the romances, their dream garden spaces, which straddle the border between reality and the fantastic, can be included in this view of nature. They are very similar to the real gardens, and clearly spaces of divine creation, especially as they are always connected with Eros, the central figure of divinity in the texts. This definition excludes the weather and the firmament. Though the physical rivers and other landscape features may at times be presented as affected by the elements, and the firmament is part of hexaemeral literature, it is nevertheless the definite, created, corporeal topographies which remain the focus.

The aim of this thesis is to examine how the Byzantines, within the period studied here, appear to have interacted with and thought about nature, particularly in terms of how they utilised it for literary and, by extension, cultural purposes. I have limited my choice of texts to those written in the Palaiologan period in the Byzantine Greek vernacular, and to ones which appear to have a particular interest in nature, though not always directly in the relationship between humans and their environment. This is in part

because of the prevalence of nature in these texts, and in part due to the inventiveness of the works themselves, all of which draw on earlier and foreign material, but in ways which are new as well as familiar. Some recent studies of Byzantine literature have taken an ecocritical approach, but largely in short articles, which this discussion is intended to broaden to cover a wider range of material, encompassing different authors, audiences and aims.[1]

The texts will each be put into context within the individual chapters but the broader context of the period can usefully be outlined here. The Palaiologan period, covering the years 1261 to 1453, is often characterised as one of decadence and decay. This idea encompasses the political and economic deterioration than can be perceived in what remained of the empire during the period, combined with the range of artistic and literary material produced at the time.[2]

For much of the period, the empire was made up of little more than Constantinople and its hinterland, and the Peloponnese. Territory that had once been Byzantine was now in the hands of Latin lords and later the Ottomans, to whom Byzantium became a vassal state by the middle of the fourteenth century. Politically, the situation encouraged further internal fragmentation. Civil wars were a debilitating feature of the fourteenth century. The internal problems meant that some ostensibly Byzantine areas also functioned independently. The city of Thessalonica was at times only nominally under imperial control, the population making their own deals and alliances

[1] See for example A. Goldwyn's recent article 'Towards a Byzantine ecocriticism: witches and nature control in the Medieval Greek romance', *BMGS* 39:1 (2015) pp. 66-84.

[2] D. Nicol's *The Last Centuries of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1993) is still the main account of the period, though focused primarily on a narrative of events focusing on Constantinople. Nevra Necipoglou's *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins: politics and society in the late empire* (Cambridge, 2009) provides a useful counter-balance, providing detailed political and economic information for Thessalonica and other regions as well as Constantinople. J. Shepard (ed.) *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c.500–1492* (Cambridge, 2008) also covers the relations with the Latin and Balkan states in greater detail. More recent studies include J. Harris, C. Holmes and E. Russell (eds.) *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150* (Oxford, 2012) which contains number of useful articles presenting the period with more detailed reference to other players such as the Mamluks, and the crusader states.

with the Ottoman Turks or the Venetians as they saw fit. The city also served as a refuge and base for members of the imperial family rebelling against Constantinople, or simply out of favour with the emperor. Several other areas became despotates, often ruled by troublesome sons and grandsons who were removed from the capital. Religious conflicts were another divisive feature of the period. Politically charged conversions or even unions with the church in Rome were formed and broken in the hopes of western aid against the Ottomans. Internally, the church was often divided, particularly in relation to hesychasm, a mystical variation on the Orthodox faith, concerned primarily with silent prayer and contemplation, which split the church in the mid-fourteenth century. From a more material perspective, the economy in Byzantine lands could fluctuate widely, and the gulf between the rich and poor was often extreme. Political and religious strife, combined with trade embargoes enforced by foreign blockades, poor weather and disease, hugely weakened the remains of the empire and its people. Evidence for the period beyond what may be termed entertainment literature includes a range of chronicles, accounts of sieges and religious debates, autobiographies and letters.[3]

For the texts which I will examine it is useful to define what I mean by Byzantine, beyond the basic outline above. As indicated, by the fourteenth century, much of what had once been Byzantine was in Western, or Latin, hands, or under the control of the Ottomans. The court at Trebizond was still Byzantine but not under the control of the court at Constantinople, and cities like Thessalonica went in and out of different hands. Therefore, these texts, although probably written in Constantinople, could arguably have been written in any one of the still largely Greek-speaking lands once belonging to the Byzantine Empire. Here the term Byzantine thus refers more to a people with a shared culture and ideology, rather than to a geographic area, or even a united political unit.

[3] J. Harris, 'Political History (1204-1453)', in J. Harris (ed.) *Palgrave Advances in Byzantine History* (Basingstoke, 2005) pp. 58-61.

The decadent aspect of the period is characterised by the conspicuous expenditure of limited resources on luxury items, namely the arts and literature, leading to what has been termed 'the Palaiologan renaissance'.[4] While I do not necessarily agree with this term, it is certainly striking how much material evidence we have from a period of such strife, especially when compared to levels of evidence from other periods. The perceived return to interest in classical works has previously led to a negative attitude towards the literature of the period. Agapitos summarises the negative attitude of Rohde and other nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars, highlighting the belief that 'Byzantine learned literature is incredibly sterile, and the need for Western influence is absolutely necessary to give some inspiration to the dormant Greeks', alongside the equation of the term vernacular with 'popular' literature.[5] These ideas, along with the more positive view of the Palaiologan romances as at least somewhat original, if not 'satisfactory', Agapitos terms the "Rohde axiom".[6] This thesis will follow more recent scholarship in taking a positive approach to Palaiologan literature, though it will nevertheless discuss ancient and external influences throughout.

The terms 'learned' or 'high' to describe the Atticising Greek which attempts to remain close to the Greek used in Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE are in regular use in Byzantine scholarship. The terms 'popular' and 'vernacular' also still appear regularly, and the common labels for the style or language level of literature on which this research focuses. This type of linguistic element is usually found after the

[4] E. Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance (1261-c. 1360)* (Leiden, 2000); S. Runciman, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1970) and H.C. Evans (ed.) *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)* (New York, 2004).
[5] P.A. Agapitos, *Narrative Structure in the Byzantine Vernacular Romances: A Textual and Literary Study of Kallimachos, Belthandros and Libistros* (München, 1991) pp. 5-6. For Rohde's original comments on the Palaiologan Romances see E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (Leipzig, 1914) pp. 567-572.
[6] Agapitos, *Narrative Structure*, p. 6.

twelfth century, though it is evident earlier.[7] The term 'popular' will be avoided here as it holds connotations of a lower class movement, which does not seem to be consistent with the evidence we have. Rather, something more like Ševčenko's stance that '(w)e should be ready to make less differentiation between the environments which produced the two types of literature – the popular and the learned – in Byzantium, and be willing to think either of two strata within the same milieu, or, in some cases, of the same milieu at different stages of the progressive collapse of the Greek elite under political and economic stresses' will be utilised.[8] This, however, suggests a degradation, rather than a change, in the literature and maintains the unhelpful terms 'learned' and 'popular'. It is not the case that the written vernacular was exactly equivalent to the spoken word, though far closer to it even than *koine*. Each text will instead be approached from the premise that those writing in the vernacular were also those writing in the more formal, classicising style.[9] The difference between styles is not as clear cut as might be supposed. Whether the text is a highly classicising piece or a more light-hearted work written in more modern language, the forms and techniques used in prose and verse, and the ideas presented, usually come from a shared tradition. It is extremely likely that an author could and would work in both a more classical and a more colloquial form of Greek to add something to the text and as an appropriate means of expressing particular ideas or stories.[10] It should also be noted that the different levels of written language are not unified in themselves. 'Learned' Greek varied just as much in style and form as any other written language. I will continue to use the term 'vernacular' to refer to texts written in a

[7] G.C. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and its Speakers*, 2nd edition (Chichester, 2010) pp. 325 – 333 for use of the vernacular prior to the twelfth century. For a general survey of linguistic registers see R. Browning, *Medieval and Modern Greek*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, 1983).
[8] I. Ševčenko, *Society and intellectual life in late Byzantium* (London, 1981) section I, p. 78.
[9] For the diglossia perspective on Byzantine Greek see Horrocks *Greek* pp. 151-166.
[10] See the discussions in D. Holton, T. Lendari, U. Moennig and P. Vejleskov (eds.) *Copyists, Collectors, Redactors and Editors: Manuscripts and Editions of Late Byzantine and Early Modern Greek Literature. Papers Given at a Conference Held at the Danish Institute at Athens, 23–26 May 2002, in Honour of Hans Eideneier and Arnold van Gemert* (Heraklion, 2005).

more modern form of Greek as it remains a convenient term, widespread in secondary works on Greek literature. The development of the vernacular is not the main concern of this thesis, and will not be discussed in detail, though the ability to be flexible with style which it seems to have encouraged will be. The developments in the use of 'vernacular' register have long been discussed as being an adaption of oral poetry, and clearly such works do draw on the oral tradition.[11] I also agree with recent work on the topic which suggests that the rise of vernacular literature is likely linked to the political and cultural aims of the Latin lords within Greek-speaking regions during this period.[12] That said, I would not agree that this development led to the copying of genres and styles directly from Western material, as will become clear throughout this study. The terms imitation and originality are equally problematic in themselves and particularly when used in a modern sense to approach medieval literature, so as far as possible they will be avoided.

Nature as a feature of the Byzantine world is still a fairly new, though definitely developing, area of research. Some excellent studies have focused on particular aspects of the natural world as recorded by the Byzantines, such as T.E Gregory's article entitled 'Narratives of the Byzantine Landscape', Henry Maguire's *Nectar and Illusion*, and Anne McCabe's edition and commentary on the *Hippiatrica*, among others.[13] There has also been a considerable amount of work done on the Byzantine garden, with the Dumbarton Oaks volume, *Byzantine Garden Culture*, recently being supplemented by a series of articles edited by Helena Bodin and Ragnar Hedlund.[14] Much of the work undertaken with regard to the natural world in Byzantium looks in passing at particular

[11] For example, E. and M. Jeffreys, 'The Oral Background of Byzantine Popular Poetry', *Oral Tradition* 1 (1986) pp. 504-547.
[12] E. Jeffreys, 'Byzantine romances: Eastern or Western?' in M.S. Brownlee and D.H. Gondicas (eds.) *Renaissance encounters: Greek East and Latin West* (Leiden, 2013) pp. 221-237.
[13] T.E. Gregory, 'Narratives of the Byzantine Landscape' in J. Burke, *et al* (eds.) *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott* (Melbourne, 2006) pp. 481-496; H. Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*; A. McCabe, *A Byzantine encyclopaedia of horse medicine: the sources, compilation, and transmission of the Hippiatrica* (Oxford, 2007).
[14] A. Littlewood, H. Maguire, and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.) *Byzantine Garden Culture* (Washington DC, 2002); H. Bodin and R. Hedlund (eds.) *Byzantine Gardens and Beyond* (Uppsala, 2013).

examples of *realia*, of literature, or of nature, such as the role of animals and landscapes in agriculture, trade, ceremony and diplomacy, artistic depictions of nature in churches, or literary display through *ekphrastic* passages. There has yet to be a broader study of how the Byzantines themselves thought about the natural world, or of how they presented and used it across literary genres, though the extensive study of the garden has brought us increased our understanding of that landscape as a literary *topos* at least.

As there is a limited bibliography on nature in the Byzantine world, it is worth looking at studies from on the Classical period and the medieval West, to ascertain what approaches have been most productive within those areas.

There are a variety of studies of classical perceptions of the natural world available, ranging from those such as McInerney's *Cattle of the Sun*, that trace the role of specific animals in ancient society from pre-history through the classical period, including their literary appearances, to works focused on the role of animals and landscapes in specific texts or genres.[15] Most often, the secondary literature is formulated chronologically, to trace different themes or textual influences. Certain major themes that arise can be useful in considering animals in Byzantine literature, while others offer a clear differentiation between pre- and post-Christian ideas on nature. For example, research that looks at animals from pre-history through to the classical period often highlights the role of animals as food and for sacrifice. The role of animals as sacrifices and the association of particular animals with specific places and deities, while interesting, have only limited value in the study of later Byzantine, and therefore Christian, literature. The centrality of non-humans in daily life as a source of food, however, remains relevant to this day, as do many of the arguments found in classical

[15] J. McInerney, *The Cattle of the Sun: Cows and Culture in the World of the Ancient Greeks* (Princeton, 2010); See for example V.E. Pagán, *Rome and the Literature of Gardens* (London, 2006) and K.S. Rothwell, Jr., *Nature, culture and the origins of Greek comedy: a study of animal choruses* (Cambridge, 2007).

philosophy and other literature on this topic, for example, is it right to eat animals? The Byzantines focus on this question from a religious point of view, citing the demarcation of certain animals as unclean in Deuteronomy, and the Church's prohibitions on 'strangled' meats or those not properly bled, including animals killed by wild beasts or those found already dead.[16] In general, the Byzantines seemed to have enjoyed eating most foods, and were not too concerned with the diets of others, though eating habits are questioned in religious polemics from time to time.[17] The arguments surrounding the eating of meat in the classical period did influence later ideas on animals and their treatment nevertheless, and not solely from a practical point of view. Many of the classical arguments regarding whether or not animals should be eaten centred on whether animals were intelligent. Heath tackles this concept in detail, highlighting the connection between reason and speech, and the disassociation of both from the 'Other', a concept which included animals as non-human.[18] The lack of speech is used as a central defining feature of the difference between humans and non-humans or animals. In Aristotle we find a differentiation between φωνή and λόγος, animals being able to make sound to indicate pain or pleasure but unable to express 'the useful and the harmful, and therefore also the just and the unjust', and thus to communicate effectively.[19] The fact that animals cannot communicate allows an author to use them as he wishes within any given form of literature, projecting their ideas about the non-human onto them, and using them as mouthpieces for concepts and criticisms. Comparison with an animal or dressing-up as

[16] T.M. Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists: Errors of the Latins* (Illinois, 2000) p. 146
[17] On the range of meats eaten in Byzantium see A. Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium* (Totnes, 2003); on the generally inclusive attitude to food see B. Crostini, 'What was kosher in Byzantium?' in L. Brubaker and K. Linardou (eds.) *Eat, Drink and Be Merry (Luke 12:19): Food and Wine in Byzantium: papers delivered at the 37th annual spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, in honour of Professor A.A.M. Bryer, at the University of Birmingham, 29-31 March 2003* (Aldershot, 2007) pp.165-173; for examples of polemical discussions on food, see Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists* pp. 145-159.
[18] J. Heath, *The Talking Greeks: Speech, Animals, and the Other in Homer, Aeschylus, and Plato* (Cambridge, 2005) pp. 17-24.
[19] Ibid., p. 10 quoting from Aristotle's' *Politics* 1253a 9-19.

one, as discussed by Rothwell, can be derogatory, particularly if a human is referred to as a θήρ or θηρία.[20] Such comparison can also be humorous, or even positive, with men taking on the strength or virility of animals. The numerous similes in Homer are a useful example, simply as there are so many of them.[21] In fables, comedy and even occasionally epics, it is possible to find animals communicating with humans in some way, sometimes in a sort of golden age before a clear division between the human and non-human. In the case of epic, animals are sometimes given the power of speech by a god or goddess and are not normally capable of speech. A particularly famous example appears in the *Iliad.* Achilles rebukes his horses for allowing his companion Patroclus to be slain and Hera gives one of the horses, Xanthus, the power of speech in order that Achilles be made aware that a god killed Patroclus and would likewise kill him.[22] In some literature, such as the *Frogs* by Aristophanes, animal noises are mimicked to create animal speech. However, most of the animals who speak use perfectly good Greek. Descriptions of characters as animals tell the audience what to think of them and often foreshadow the plot, as argued by Thumiger in relation to tragedy.[23] Individual animals are used to highlight particular concepts, the fox as a comment on justice, for example, as well as being a figure of mischief.[24] It is this concept that animals can be used as symbols, in order to comment on the world and communicate particular ideas, that comes across most prominently in Byzantine literature.

As far as landscape is concerned, less has been published. However, the classical period benefits from studies on landscape, religion, and gender by Cole, landscape in art

[20] Rothwell, Jr., *Nature, Culture and the Origins of Greek Comedy* p. 21.
[21] See P. Vivante, *Homer* (New Haven, 1985). Vivante has summarised Homer's use of animals for simile, mainly during battle, attributing strength and speed to the combatants. However, he also acknowledges that Homer imagined animals acting from similar emotions to humans, whether in protecting their young or defending their home.
[22] *Iliad* 17.590
[23] C. Thumiger, 'ἀνάγκης ζεύγματ' ἐμπεπτώκαμεν: Greek Tragedy between Human and Animal', *Leeds International Classical Studies*, 7:3 (2008).
[24] D. Steiner, 'Framing the Fox: Callimachus' second iamb and its predecessors', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 130 (2010) pp. 97−107.

by Hedreen and, more recently, a broader cultural study edited by Gilhuly and Worman.[25] While the ritual aspect of landscape, and its specific connections with individual deities, is not particularly relevant for this study, with the exception of Eros and the garden, the use of nature in literature from the classical period will be seen to be of importance in relation to the Byzantine novels.

A large amount of scholarship on nature in Western medieval literature, such as works by McCulloch, Lytton Sells and Steiris, considers the influence of ancient literature on later texts.[26] Some of this is certainly useful but the reception of classical images and ideas is not the main concern of this thesis. There are any number of articles on the bestiary tradition and the *Physiologus* and a great number of monographs. Particularly useful among recent scholarship is an article by Dora Faraci, which discusses the conflict in scholarship of considering the *Physiologus* and the Bestiary as purely religious or scientific.[27] Also significant is Baxter's *Bestiaries and their users in the Middle Ages*, which attempts to reorganise the Bestiary on the basis of its apparent audience.[28]

For a broader analysis of the role of animals in the medieval west, particularly in literature, there are a number of excellent studies. The delineation of the boundary between human and non-human forms the central preoccupation of Salisbury's study on animals in the medieval period, covering the discussion of animals by the early church

[25] S.G. Cole, *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space: The Ancient Greek Experience* (Berkeley, Calif., 2004); P. Piehler, *The visionary landscape: a study in medieval allegory* (London, 1971); G.M. Hedreen, *Capturing Troy: the narrative functions of landscape in archaic and early classical Greek art* (Ann Arbor, 2001); K. Gilhuly and N. Worman (eds.) *Space, place, and landscape in ancient Greek literature and culture*, (Cambridge, 2014).
[26] F. McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill, 1960); A. Lytton Sells, *Animal Poetry in French and English Literature and the Greek Tradition* (London, 1957) and G. Steiris, 'Isidore of Seville and Al-Farabi on Animals: Ontology and Ethics' in E.D. Protopapadakis (ed.) *Animal Ethics: past and present perspectives* (Berlin, 2012) pp. 103-101
[27] D. Faraci, 'Pour une etude plus large de la reception medievale des bestiaries' in B. van den Abeele (ed.) *Bestiaires médiévaux: Nouvelles perspectives sur les manuscrits et les traditions textuelles: communications présentées au XVe Colloque de la Société Internationale Renardienne (Louvain-la-Neuve, 19-22.8.2003)* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2005) pp. 111-125.
[28] R. Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1998).

fathers, their use as food, bestiality, literary and philosophical thought about them.[29] Her concern is largely with the *realia* of day-to-day existence. She considers the role of animals in literature more from the perspective of how popular genres reflect ideas on the distinction between the human and the animal, particularly in terms of the hybrid that is common to the West, though harder to find in Byzantium outside of classically-influenced art. Ziolkowski has undertaken an extensive survey of animals in Latin poetry. He looks at a range of material, including beast epic, fable and flytings, in roughly chronologically order by genre. Continuing on from the ancient idea of using animals for satire he posits that the subversive criticism found in beast literature specifically used that genre as it was safer than putting words in the mouths of men, especially as 'the targets of such mockery will refuse to make themselves ridiculous by acknowledging that any resemblance exists'.[30] While this work, as its reviewer suggests, is not entirely a detailed account for specialists, and is occasionally strained in its structure, it is by far the most comparable to the proposed study of those examined so far.[31] Also particularly useful is Mann's *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain*.[32] Mann looks at the history of beast literature in the form of fable, epic, bestiary, and at Oriental material, before asking in general terms how animals function in literature. Taking a number of texts, she then traces the changes in use and meaning of animals in fable and beast epic from the twelfth to late-fifteenth/early-sixteenth century in England. This approach of allowing the material to build in complexity through time highlights the development and use of material in a way that suggest a distinct importance for the time period covered, while allowing in-depth study of each text. Boehrer's research also covers an initial history of animals in literature before looking specifically at early modern western

[29] J. E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (London, 2011).
[30] J.M. Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals: Medieval Latin Beast Poetry, 750-1150* (Philadelphia, 1993) p. 7.
[31] Review of Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals* by P.F. Schaffner in *The Medieval Review* online (94.04.10).
[32] J. Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford, 2009).

material.[33] He takes the material animal by animal, giving more of a snapshot of the stereotypes for parrots, cats and horses among others. Studies which focus on landscapes as a general theme include Richard Hoffman's *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe*, which covers concepts of creation, cultural perceptions of the world, ownership, agency, climate and disease.[34] The urban landscape, townships and their associated lands, is discussed for medieval England by Gardiner and Rippon, highlighting the practical, day-to-day, aspects of human relations with the environment they live in.[35] Alfred Siewers, in contrast, discusses the connection between the known landscape and the otherworld, and the means by which medieval Irish ideas of the one were used to understand and reflect upon the other, creating a 'geography of desire' that links 'the bodily and the textual'.[36]

Modern animal theory, controversial as it sometimes is, is affecting historical interpretations. While medieval people did not generally imbue animals with human emotions in the same way we often do, some aspects of modern ideas, such as the growing awareness of where our food and other goods, including leather and wool, come from, can be relevant. In a recent article, Sarah Kay has begun to examine the tactile relationship of animal skins in book form with their readers and the text inside.[37] Evolutionary biology as a means of literary criticism is another recent development, though not directly connected with animal theory. Key in this new line of research is *The Literary Animal*, a collection of essays by scientists and literature specialists.[38] While this is not a method I wish to apply to my material, certain of the ideas raised, the universality

[33] B.T. Boehrer, *Animal Characters: Non-human Beings in Early Modern Literature* (Philadelphia, 2010).
[34] R.C. Hoffman, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2014).
[35] M.F. Gardiner and S. Rippon (eds.) *Medieval Landscapes* (Macclesfield, 2007).
[36] A.K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (Basingstoke, 2009) p. 33.
[37] S. Kay, 'Legible skins: Animals and the ethics of medieval reading' *Postmedieval* 2:1 (2011) pp. 13-32.
[38] J. Gottschall and D.S. Wilson (eds.) *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative* (Evanston, 2005).

of human experience, the way people interact with a text, and the questions of what literature is for and about, are both interesting and important.

Many, if not all, of the studies mentioned above which consider the environment arguably fall within the sphere of one theory, commonly termed ecocriticism. Ecocriticism as a theory first appeared in the late 1960s and 1970s, drawing on environmental protest literature such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. However, it became far more common in the 1990s and has since been applied to a wider and wider range of cultural expression, from text, to art, to film and beyond. Fundamentally, ecocriticism as a modern literary theory seeks to respond to the environmental crises of our times, and to change the way we think about and engage with the world around us, to 'introduce environmental criteria into general cultural debate'.[39] As a theory, ecocriticism often addresses political questions, but it is becoming more popular amongst academics from many different fields, who are now applying aspects of it to many different cultures and historical periods.

The theory itself is hard to define, in part because of its relevance to such diverse fields. Cheryll Glotfelty has succinctly described the ecocritical approach at its most basic as 'the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment'.[40] An idea which is still frequently raised in ecocritical discussion is that ecocriticism resists definition, and will remain eclectic in its approach and outlook, not least because the theory itself has gone through a number of adjustments and developed several subfields.[41] Rebecca M. Douglas, in her article on medieval English literature, has stressed that the key idea behind ecocriticism is interconnectedness, people and texts and

[39] R. Kerridge, 'Ecocritical Approaches to Literary Form and Genre' in G. Garrard (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford, 2014) p. 361.
[40] C. Glotfelty and H. Fromm (eds.) *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens, 1996) p. xviii.
[41] An overview of some of these subfields, including deep ecology, ecomarxism, ecofeminism, and animal studies can be found in G. Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 2nd edition (London, 2012).

the natural world.[42] More recent publications have tended to focus on one of the sub-fields of ecocriticism, utilising the looseness of the definitions put forward in 'first-wave ecocriticism', to develop less general and more socially specific forms of ecocriticism, as well as applying it more directly to other theoretical approaches.[43] *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* offers a broad perspective on these types of approaches in articles covering the application of ecocritical theory to historic literature, political, ecological and literary theories and to languages and cultures beyond the Anglophone world.[44] In the introduction to her book *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature* Gillian Rudd states that ecocriticism,

> cannot be a school that seeks to create and maintain a single, uniform outlook. Central to ecological thinking in general is a recognition of the importance of diversity – of species, of environments and even of approach.[45]

My own use of ecocriticism will largely utilise the more general idea of ecocriticism as 'the study of the relationship of the human to the non-human, throughout human cultural history' in combination with two sub-fields; ecofeminism and animal studies. [46] Ecofeminism see the anthropocentric relationship with nature as being androcentric.[47] It is interested in the gendering of nature and the perceived oppression of both women and the environment by a male-dominated society. Ecofeminism deals with the imagery of the earth as nurturer and mother, as a symbol of beauty and fertility, and as something which is controlled, used and harmed, regardless of the more positive

[42] , R.M. Douglas, 'Ecocriticism and Middle English Literature', *Studies in Medievalism* 10 (1998) pp. 136–63.
[43] See for example the discussion of gender, race and sexuality in modern literature form a range of cultures in G.C. Gaard, S.C. Estok and S. Oppermann (eds.) *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* (London, 2013) and the application of ecocriticism to Marxist theory, postcolonialism, deconstructionism and a number of other theories in S. Rosendale (ed.) *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory, and the Environment* (Iowa City, IA, 2002).
[44] G. Garrard (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford, 2014).
[45] G. Rudd, *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature* (Manchester, 2007) pp. 3-4.
[46] Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p. 5.
[47] Ibid. p. 26.

imagery. In part, ecofeminism seeks to nuance discussion of the relationship between humanity and nature, to take into account the fact that, by virtue of gender, as well as race, social class, religion and other features, certain sections of society have perceived and dealt with nature in different ways. Ecofeminism, does not only deal with the feminine experience of nature though, but balances it with a critique of the masculine experience and attempts to reach an objective presentation. Medieval texts can be hard to study from such a strictly modern socio-political viewpoint, but the concept of gendered nature is as valid for the medieval world as it is today, and the associations and experiences remain recognisable.

Ecocriticism is arguably often more concerned with landscape directly, and its inhabitants indirectly. Both ecocriticism and animal studies however are concerned with the human in connection with the non-human, our similarities and differences, and our use and abuse of the living things around us. Animal studies, often described as the animal turn, examine the connections between humans and non-humans, and their social, political and environmental implications. In modern times it has often been applied in consideration of animal rights, though it is equally used in discussions of our historical and cultural relationships with other creatures. Perhaps even more culturally specific than ecofeminism, animal studies addresses the likenesses or differences between humans and animals perceived and presented at different points, spreading into the ethical questions of treatment, language, community and uniqueness.[48]

Ecocriticism, when applied to past societies, can still be political. In relation to theological writings in particular, but also in relation to a perceived 'golden age' and classical philosophy, the ecocritical approach has been used to show how anthropocentric our world view is, and how Judeo-Christian this can seem, as well as undermining this

[48] Important studies include J. Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I am* ed. M-L Mallet, trans. D. Wills (New York, 2008); E., Fudge, *Animal* (London, 2002); A. Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: animality and vulnerability in literature and film* (New York, 2011); Salisbury, *The Beast Within*.

accusation, by showing that Patristic writers saw nature as being of the Creator, something to be admired and learnt from, praised, though not worshipped, and with value of its own. Classical ideas about vegetarianism and rationality also appear in theological discussions, and have been used in discussions on animal testing among other topics.

It is also possible though, at least partially, to remove the modern political element. As it can be difficult to apply concepts of feminism to classical and medieval works, so too is it difficult to always find a link between past ideas about, and attitudes towards, the natural world, and today's environmental crisis. Glotfelty and Fromm in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, in addition to their helpful definition of ecocriticism cited above, state that it simply 'takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies'.[49] This can be expanded to say that ecocriticism can be the study of the interconnectedness between the natural world, humans and the texts they produce, without necessarily needing to apply a historic understanding to the modern world. This does not just mean mining pre-industrial literature for previous ideals of nature, or for the ideal relationship with nature. Nor need it be limited to listing the ways in which nature is depicted. Rather, it can be a way of understanding how a particular culture thought about the world around them, the associations they made beyond immediate observation or need, in short how they connected themselves to the natural and then how they expressed this in their writing. As Rebecca Douglas put it, ecocriticism can simply be 'reading with attention to treatments of nature, land and place, informed by a desire to understand past and present connections between literature and human activities regarding the earth'.[50]

However, as Hugh Grady states, 'whether the past is constructed as Other or as our own, it is always defined by its relation to ourselves and our self-understanding'.[51] It

[49] Glotfelty and Fromm, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, p. xix.
[50]Douglass, 'Ecocriticism and Middle English Literature', p. 138.
[51] H. Grady, '*Hamlet* and the present: Notes on the moving aesthetic 'now'' in H. Grady and T. Hawkes (eds.) *Presentist Shakespeare* (Abingdon, 2007) p. 143.

is important to bear in mind the lens through which we see this literature, both in attempting to see the natural world from a Byzantine perspective, and noting aspects of Byzantine literature as relevant to the modern perspective. Such 'self-understanding' is not the central aim of this thesis, and I do not intend to use Byzantine literature to present a message relevant to modern political discourse. Instead, what I am intending here is called 'thematic ecocriticism' an attempt to lay groundwork for 'conceptual connections', in order to further ecocritical approaches to Byzantine literature, and see how ecocriticism can be relevant within the subject.[52] For my research then, ecocriticism is about looking at how authors depict nature in their works, the associations they highlight, and in particular how they connect people to landscapes.

In order to effectively highlight the representations of nature within the texts surveyed, this study will begin with a review of how nature could be represented in earlier Byzantine works, from a number of different genres. Each text, or group of texts, which will then form the main body of this thesis, will be discussed in terms of the authors' approaches to nature and literature in combination with their context, from an ecocritical standpoint.

[52] S.C. Estok, *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare; Reading Ecophobia* (New York, 2011) pp. 119 and 124.

2. Ways of Looking at the Natural World in Byzantium

While I consider the Palaiologan romances and beast literature to have been very much a product of that age, these works were obviously affected by earlier material. Nature was depicted in a diverse assortment of literature, and interpreted in many different ways, prior to the Palaiologan period. As such, there are a number of texts and ideas that may have influenced the authors of the Palaiologan works, ranging from classical texts, both literary and scientific, to early Christian material and educational pieces. As mentioned in my introduction to this thesis, studies on the pre-historic and Classical views of nature discuss the practical aspects of food, economics and sacrifice, as well as the more literary feature of comparison with animals to praise or deride.[53] Texts that focus on the *realia* of nature, as well as those more focused on the literary, discuss philosophical ideas on rationality and the difference between humans and non-humans, sometimes mentioning a perceived golden age when the two could communicate.[54] Regarding the natural world in more general terms we find herbals, medical texts, and encyclopaedic material such as the works of Dioscorides, Galen and Pliny, as well as texts which show a literary and spiritual connection between physical landscapes and the gods or other mythical beings. Much of the early Christian material carried over ideas from the Classical works, some trying to refute them in order to show the superiority of Christian learning, others simply because they were drawing on the familiar, possibly to increase the popularity of their work or to use relatable examples in their discourse.[55] It is obvious therefore that the amount of literature available relating to the natural world covers a vast range of themes, genres and styles. It is not possible to cover all such texts here. Instead, the material will

[53] Heath, *The Talking Greeks*; Rothwell, Jr., *Nature Culture and the Origins of Greek Comedy*; McInerney, *The Cattle of the Sun*.
[54] Heath, *The Talking Greeks*, p. 12.
[55] F.E. Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature: A Study of the Greek and Latin Commentaries on Genesis* (Chicago, 1912); J.H. Wheatcroft, 'Classical Ideology in the medieval Bestiary' in D. Hassig (ed.) *The Mark of the Beast: the medieval bestiary in art, life, and literature* (New York,1999) p. 142.

be discussed in ecocritical terms, focusing on how the texts viewed, and represented, the natural world, presenting ideas and styles that would likely have been familiar to educated Byzantines. Three key, interconnected ways of looking at the natural world will provide the lens through which the literary material will be viewed. These three categories are somewhat arbitrary but they serve to present the most obvious, and to an extent the most literary, ways in which the Byzantines thought about the world around them. They are also the main categories put forward for the study of medieval attitudes to nature, covering nature's role as created by God, the medieval study of the natural world as being almost scientific, as well as allegorical and a source of universal lessons. Firstly, I will consider doctrinal works on creation, particularly those of the Cappadocian fathers, which rejected the purely allegorical view of creation in favour of a more naturalistic perspective, while still seeing nature as a symbol, or reflection, of the divine. Second will be the allegorical approach to nature, by which I mean the understanding of nature purely as something which hides a truth that can only be reached through interpretation. For this I will focus on the *Physiologus* as well as a later work, the *Symbolic Garden.* Finally, I will discuss the Aesopic tradition in Byzantium in terms of its view of animals in particular as objects to be anthropomorphised for didactic purposes. None of these approaches to nature as a literary concept are definitive, and there is inevitably some overlap, but it was the very layers of overlapping interpretation that could be most significant to a Byzantine audience. The more direct influence of specific authors or texts on individual Palaiologan works will be considered in the chapters which follow, in relation to the texts that used them.

Theological/patristic

Modern scholars often state that the natural world was seen by the medieval mind as a handbook of symbols or emblems to be interpreted.[56] This allegorical view of the world understood nature less for itself than as a veil hiding a deeper truth, usually religious. While it is clear that nature was often allegorised, this was not the only way in which Creation was represented, nor the only means through which nature was believed able to instruct on God and Scripture. For many patristic writers, the use of allegory to interpret Scripture was somewhat controversial. Origen had been a major exponent on the allegorical interpretation of the world. For him 'everything in Scripture has a spiritual meaning but not necessarily a literal one'.[57] His work was heavily censored on account of this, even during his own lifetime.[58] That is not to say that his work did not remain influential, but that later authors were aware of the dangers of being misunderstood in their use of allegory. Nature as described in Genesis had, therefore, to be presented in a literal way, to stress the actuality of the Scriptures, so that it reflected, rather than allegorised the glory of God. Thus, although biblical exegesis still used allegory, Creation became valued for its material nature, rather than as a metaphor. But Creation was still the product of the Creator, a fact stressed particularly in hexaemeral literature, material concerned specifically with the creation of the universe in six days as recounted in Genesis. Hexaemeral literature can itself be seen to fall into two types; one concerned more with the philosophical or theological aspects, the other more interested in the wonder of creation and meditation on its deeper meanings.[59] While it is the latter of these two concerns which is of interest for this study, it should be remembered that hexaemeral

[56] See for example L. White, Jr., 'Natural Science and Naturalistic Art in the Middle Ages', *The American Historical Review*, 52:3, (1947) pp. 421-435; Baxter, *Bestiaries and their Users.*
[57] L. Zhang, *Allegoresis Reading Canonical Literature East and West* (Ithaca, 2005).
[58] P.C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings; Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Michigan, 2008) p. 95.
[59] P.M. Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety* (Oxford, 2012) p. 109.

accounts of nature often include both aspects. In order to outline this non-allegorical perspective on creation I will focus on four authors; the three Cappadocian Fathers, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, as well as the seventh-century poet, George of Pisidia.

Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea, was born in 329/300 into a reasonably wealthy family in Cappadocia. One of ten children, with a rhetor for a father, Basil's education was wide-ranging, and took place under tutors in Constantinople and Athens.[60] Basil was baptised around 360, and became bishop of Caesarea in 370, taking care of the physical and spiritual needs of his flock thereafter.[61] His homilies on the *Hexaemeron*, apparently preached around A.D. 378, form the earliest Christian work dedicated solely to the six days of creation, and were highly influential. In these homilies Basil draws on earlier writers including Philo and Origen, as well as the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, to develop his views on God and Creation.[62] The homilies also reflect his knowledge of cosmogony, botany, astronomy and natural history. From the perspective of this thesis, the most important of the homilies Basil preached on the Hexaemeron are numbers five, seven, eight and nine, all of which are concerned with some aspect of the animal and vegetal world.

The homilies are deeply concerned with both the nature of God and with nature itself. Indeed, Basil specifically uses nature in order to understand and glorify God, taking the Genesis narrative at face value and employing 'Scripture in the literal words to reach the spiritual':[63]

[60] P. Whitworth, *Three Wise Men from the East: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Struggle for Orthodoxy* Durham, 2015) pp. 14 and 21.
[61] Ibid., pp. 61-63.
[62] Robbins, *Hexaemeral Literature*, p.42. I will discuss the first nine homilies here. There are two further homilies attributed to Basil which continue on the theme of Genesis but discuss mankind particularly. As their authorship is debated, and they are not directly relevant to our discussion, I will not go into them here.
[63] Ibid., p. 117.

> Let us glorify the supreme Artificer for all that was wisely and skilfully made; by the beauty of visible things let us raise ourselves to Him who is above all beauty; by the grandeur of bodies, sensible and limited in their nature, let us conceive of the infinite Being whose immensity and omnipotence surpass all the efforts of the imagination. Because, although we ignore the nature of created things, the objects which on all sides attract our notice are so marvellous, that the most penetrating mind cannot attain to the knowledge of the least of the phenomena of the world, either to give a suitable explanation of it or to render due praise to the Creator.[64]

Where elsewhere Basil does use allegory to interpret Scripture, in his work on Genesis he is clear in his presentation of Creation, preferring to use analogy to show his parishioners the wonder of the world itself rather than to allegorically embellish it.[65] His preoccupation is first to show the simplicity and richness of the biblical creation of the world in contrast to the contradictions of the philosophers; and second to use the text to inspire his listeners with a love of their Creator, their faith and to educate them regarding their duty and Christian life.[66] Basil utilises nature, and animals in particular, to fulfil these aims by using various anecdotes drawn from the natural world. Many of Basil's tales of nature are found in earlier works such as Aristotle's *Historia Animalium*, including the spurious book 9 of this work which appears to have been by another author.[67] It is likely that at least some of this information was taken by Basil from the *Physiologus*, a text I will discuss in detail below, rather than directly from the classical sources.[68] Basil's homilies, like the *Physiologus*, would become a source of such

[64] St Basil the Great, *Letters and Select Works: The Treatise de Spiritu Sancto. The Nine Homilies of the Hexæmeron and the Letters of Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Cæsaria,* trans. Rev. B. Jackson, *A select library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, vol. 8, eds. P. Schaff and H. Wace (New York, 1895) p. 58, *PG* 29 *Hexaemeron* 1.11; Basil of Caesarea, *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, ed. S. Giet (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968) pp. 134-137.
[65] Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy* pp. 127-128.
[66] *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, ed. S. Giet p. 18.
[67] For example some of the information on the elephant mentioned in Homily 9, section 5 is found in Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* viii. 12 and ix. 72, cited in St. Basil, *Letters and Select Works*, p. 105 For the disputed authorship of book 9 see O. Regenbogen, 'Theophrastos,' *PWSup* 7 (1940) p. 1424; U. Dierauer, *Tier und Mensch im Denken der Antike* (Amsterdam: Griiner, 1977) p. 107. For a different opinion see Aristotle *History of Animals. Books VII-X* (ed.) D.M. Balme (Cambridge, MA, 1991) pp. 10-13.
[68] Robbins, *Hexaemeral Literature*, p. 51.

anecdotes for future authors.[69] These anecdotes are quite naturalistic, but, however empirical his observations are, he nevertheless stresses in his first homily that his discussion of Creation is not concerned with science.[70] Basil does not wish to argue on how God created, it is enough to say that he did, and to see in Creation a divine order.

For Basil, animals 'have one and the same soul of which the common characteristic is absence of reason. But each animal is distinguished by peculiar qualities'.[71] He describes their natural attributes, their instincts, praising Creation, and thus the Creator, in what each animal or plant possesses, and likens them to man as examples of behaviour:

> Children love your parents, and you, "parents provoke not your children to wrath." Does not nature say the same? Paul teaches us nothing new; he only tightens the links of nature. If the lioness loves her cubs, if the she wolf fights to defend her little ones, what shall man say who is unfaithful to the precept and violates nature herself; or the son who insults the old age of his father; or the father whose second marriage has made him forget his first children? [72]

Basil even goes so far as indicating specific psychological features as the main, stereotypical trait for each animal: 'The ox is steady, the ass is lazy, the horse has strong passions, the wolf cannot be tamed, the fox is deceitful, the stag timid, the ant industrious, the dog grateful and faithful in his friendships.'[73] However, these traits are observable, natural features of the individual animals. Basil does not go as far as Origen who claimed that when God gave Adam dominion over the beasts of the sea, air and earth, 'these beasts were, in fact, interior dispositions or desires'.[74] Instead, Basil

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Bouteneff, *Beginnings* p. 133; St. Basil *Letters and select works* Homily 1, pp. 52-58, *PG* 29:3-28.
[71] St. Basil *Letters and select works* Homily 9 section 3, p. 103; *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, ed. S. Giet pp. 788-489.
[72] Ibid., Homily 9 section 4, p. 104; *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, ed. S. Giet pp. 498-499.
[73] Ibid., Homily 9 section 3, p. 103; *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, ed. S. Giet pp. 488-489.
[74] B. Leverle, 'Monks and Other Animals' in D.B. Martin and P. Cox Miller (eds.) *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, (Durham and London, 2005) pp. 150-171 citing Origen, *Homilia in Genesim* I.16 [SC 7bis.69].

maintains a realistic, non-allegorical, ideology, and does not allow nature to exist solely to be subservient to mankind.

The belief that nothing evil can come from God leads Basil, and other Byzantine authors, to state that all danger for mankind from plants and animals was simply such caused by man's sin and that nothing was created without a reason.[75] Nature can only be good because God, who created it, is good, and it is therefore the perfect guide for the Christian life.

In part, Basil's non-allegorical presentation of nature as a material guide towards the spiritual life is probably due to his audience. Those present to hear his sermons would have included artisans, labourers, women and children, in short, the uneducated members of the population, as well as the more erudite.[76] Such a diverse audience demands the use of clear language, even if Basil still shows his own education throughout. His audience were not interested in, nor necessarily able to grasp, the controversy of allegorical exegesis. Like Origen, Basil believed the Bible contained different layers of truth and that these layers were all relevant, but that different audiences would find it easier to perceive different levels. A simple discussion of Creation was both accessible and appropriate for the audience of his *Hexaemeron.* Gregory of Nyssa tells us 'all were captivated by his words, were easily persuaded, led by visible creation and guided to know the Creator of all things', so it seems Basil was ultimately successful in his aims.[77]

Basil viewed Creation as a source of examples on how to live a Christian life, and as a display of the power and wonder of God. He adjusted his portrayal of the world to suit his audience but primarily he understood it as a divinely-ordered wonder designed to teach. For him, sometimes grass was simply grass, and any plant or animal was worth

[75] Robbins, *Hexaemeral Literature*, p. 5; St. Basil *Letters and select works*, Homily 5, sections 4 and 6, pp. 77-78; *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, ed. S. Giet pp. 292-295 and 300-307.
[76] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Hexaemeron* (*PG* 44:66) cited in Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, p. 130.
[77] Ibid., (*PG* 44:65)

knowing in and of itself, aside from any possible allegorical interpretation. He nevertheless stresses the theology of nature, so as not to permit the worship of nature, rather than of its creator.[78] His homilies on the *Hexaemeron* are therefore both naturalistic and exegetical in character, and primarily doxological.

Gregory of Nyssa, younger brother of Basil the Great, did not write a *Hexaemeron*, and does not refer to the Genesis narrative in any great detail, preferring to refer to it occasionally and to praise his brother's work instead. Indeed, Gregory seems to have been largely tutored by Basil, thus gaining a similarly classical education, though with perhaps a greater interest in philosophy.[79] His *On the Making of Man* essentially adds to the work of Basil, clarifying some of his points and adding more detail regarding the creation of man.[80] His other work which relates to the Hexaemeron is his *Apology for the Hexaemeron*, in which he discusses the cosmos, as well as his brother's work, although directing his *Apology* to a very different, smaller and more erudite audience than Basil's.[81]

Like Basil, Gregory aimed to 'combine rational knowledge with biblical exegesis'.[82] In his *Apology* St Gregory shares Basil's view of creation as a means of knowing the Creator, 'evoking God's "will, wisdom and power" (τὸ θέλημα, τὴν σοφίαν, τὴν δύναμιν) as the vantage point for the consideration of everything that is'.[83] Gregory's works, however, do not completely follow Basil's straightforward approach. Recent

[78] Blowers *Drama of the Divine Economy*, p. 128.
[79] Whitworth *Three Wise Men*, p. 68.
[80] Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic treatises*: *Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen, Sometime Archbishop of Constantinople*, trans. C.G. Browne and J.E. Swallow *A select library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, vol. 7, eds. P. Schaff and H. Wace (Edinburgh, 1894: reprint Peabody, Mass., 1995); Gregory of Nyssa, *La Création de l'homme*, trans. J. Laplacewith notes by J. Daniélou (Sources Chrétiennes: Paris, 2002).
[81] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Hexaemeron* (*PG* 44, 61-124); Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, p. 155.
[82] F.M. Young, 'Adam and Anthropos: A Study of the Interaction of Science and the Bible in Two Anthropological Treatises of the Fourth Century', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 37:2 (1983) p. 111.
[83] D. Costache, 'Approaching *An Apology for the Hexaemeron*: Its aims, method and discourse', *Phronema* 27:2 (2012) p. 67 citing *Apology* 7 (*PG* 44, 68D-69A).

scholarship has stressed the scientific, and even technical, nature of his discourse.[84] Costache believes the *Apology* 'was meant as a framework for the consideration of the cosmos – the way it was depicted by the available sciences – through a spiritual lens. Only when perused with the eyes of faith, as shaped by the wisdom of Genesis, could the world be seen as a divine symbol and/or theophany.'[85] It is true that Gregory attempts to marvel less and explain more. The connection between philosophy and the Bible, as well as the connection between man and animal, are key to his discussion of the natural world. Gregory is interested in the levels of creation, its order and form. He confirms the order of creation from vegetation to beasts to rational beings presented by the first guide to the world, Moses, who learnt of creation directly from God, and indicates that 'there are three orders of soul corresponding to each level: the nutritive, the sensitive and the intellectual'.[86] In *On the Making of Man*, Gregory spends a considerable amount of time discussing the difference in form between man and beasts, relating it to the differences between their souls and the reason with which man was endowed. If man was endowed with protection as are the beasts not only would his dominion over them be questionable, but he would essentially be a beast himself. Man is not 'armed with prominent horns or sharp claws, nor with hoofs nor with teeth, nor possessing by nature any deadly venom in a sting'.[87] Instead man is 'slower than the beasts that are swift of foot, smaller than those that are of great bulk, more defenceless than those that are protected by natural arms'.[88] This lack of protection for one who is supposed to rule the other beasts is not seen as an unexplainable weakness by Gregory. Rather, if man had horns and hoofs and such-like things to protect himself he would be:

[84] See Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, p. 155 and Costache, 'Approaching *An Apology*'.
[85] Costache, 'Approaching *An Apology*', p 68.
[86] Young 'Adam and Anthropos' p.112.
[87] Gregory of Nyssa *Dogmatic treatises*, On the Making of Man, 7, 1 p. 392; *La Création de l'homme*, p. 102.
[88] Idem; *La Création de l'homme*, p. 103.

> … a wild-looking and formidable creature, ... and moreover he would have neglected his rule over the other creatures if he had no need of the co-operation of his subjects; whereas now, the needful services of our life are divided among the individual animals that are under our sway, for this reason—to make our dominion over them necessary.[89]

Thus creation relates to theology, the 'laws of nature reflect the laws of God. The study of nature leads to a greater appreciation for the Divine Nature'.[90]

Gregory of Nyssa's presentation of Creation is thus similar to his brother's in that he limits his allegorical interpretation, and focuses on the physical, material aspects of the cosmos. Despite the more scientific nature of his work on Genesis, Gregory does not try to unite science and theology directly, considering the 'way the world was framed as a matter altogether ineffable and inexplicable'.[91] His audience and aims are different to those of his brother, but he nevertheless considers the natural world as a clear example of God's glory and power.

The third of the Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory, bishop of Nazianzus (382-384) was a friend of Basil the Great, with whom he had studied in Cappadocian Caesarea and Athens.[92] His literary output was prodigious, influential, and incredibly popular, his homilies being transmitted in more than 1500 manuscripts dated before 1500 AD.[93] Although, like Gregory of Nyssa, he did not write a *Hexaemeron per se*, he did discuss the natural world in several of his writings. He believed the observable world to be 'praiseworthy, surely, for the natural excellence of each of its parts, but still more

[89] Ibid., 7, 2 p. 392; *La Création de l'homme*, pp. 103-104.
[90] Costache, 'Approaching *An Apology*' citing D.F. Stramara, 'Surveying the Heavens: Early Christian Writers on Astronomy', *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 46:2-3 (2002) 147-62 at 155, p. 68.
[91] *Or. cat.* 11, cited in Bouteneff, *Beginnings* p. 154.
[92] J. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus; An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, N.Y., 2001) pp. 46-56.
[93] *Selected poems of Gregory of Nazianzus: I.2.17; II.1.10, 19, 32: a critical edition with introduction and commentary*, ed. C. Simelidis (Göttingen, 2009).p. 59.

praiseworthy for the proportion and harmony of all of them together'.[94] For example, in his Second Theological Homily (Oration 28), Nazianzus stresses the variety of living things and their artistry, as well as the wonder of the clouds, stars, sea, earth and snow, all as interconnected and astonishing constructions of the Creator.[95] Reflecting the taste and technique of the Second Sophistic, Gregory's orations as we have them today are highly stylized 'exquisitely self-conscious works of art'.[96] These are neither the simple, explanatory exegesis of Basil, nor the scientific discourse of Nyssa.

The most notable of Gregory's descriptions of nature appear in his *New Sunday Sermon* (Oration 44). This homily was to be read on the first Sunday of Easter, which apparently coincided with a spring festival in Caesarea for the local martyr, St Mamas, at whose shrine it was supposedly delivered.[97] It uses the imagery of spring to describe the rebirth of man through Christ.[98] In this the homily is somewhat allegorical, but Nazianzus' *ekphrasis* of nature, as the verbal praise of non-verbal art, in this case Creation, still values its physical aspect and is highly sensory:

> For everything is conspiring together, rejoicing together, for the beauty of this feast. Look at all that meets your eyes!... Now heaven shines more brightly, the sun stands higher and glows more golden... Now the meadow is fragrant, the shoots burst forth, the grass is ready for mowing, and the lambs skip through rich green fields.[99]

Nazianzus's depiction of spring would be highly influential and imitated by many other authors, such as the tenth-century author John Geometres.[100] Through the *ekphrasis*

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[94] *Gregory of Nazianzus*, ed. B.E. Daley (London, 2006) Oration 38, section 10, p. 121; *Discours 38-41: Grégoire de Nazianze; introduction, texte critique et notes*, ed. C. Moreschini (Sources chrétiennes 358, Paris, 1990) pp. 122-123.
[95] *Gregory of Nazianzus, Five Theological Orations*, trans. S.Reynolds (2011) pp.13-44, esp. 33-44. Accessed 2 August 2014. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/36303/1/Gregory%20of%20Nazianzus%20Theological%20Orations.pdf
[96] Ibid., p. 28.
[97] Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 155.
[98] Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*, p. 64.
[99] Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, Oration 44, section 10 p. 160; *PG* 36.608-621
[100] Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion*, p. 64.

Nazianzus lets his audience 'see' springtime, stressing its beauty, pleasure and peacefulness. This also led to a number of illustrations of the text. Indeed, six manuscripts survive with some form of illustrations for the New Sunday sermon.[101] The illustrations have been described as 'a series of charming bucolic scenes, very classical in character', often featuring shepherds and idyllic tableaux.[102] Other than two scenes in two manuscripts, all the images feature humans linked with the landscape in some way, catching birds, ploughing or watching their animals.[103] Nature is thus stressed in the illustrations as being utilised by man and full of pleasure. However, Gregory also warns his listeners not to be led astray by their senses as Eve was, but rather to understand the earth as reflecting Christian joy at the Day of Renewal, for it is:

> 'the world's spring, the spiritual spring, spring for our souls, spring for our bodies, spring visible, spring invisible'.[104]

Creation also provides examples for mankind to follow, for Nazianzus encourages his audience to sing God's praises like the birds and to mimic the bees in wisdom and industry.[105] He thus continues in the vein of his contemporaries in seeing nature as a means of glorifying the Creator and as an example for humanity, although to do so he utilises familiar classical works including the *Cynegetica* of Pseudo-Oppian, the illustrations for which are also similar to those for the homily.[106] In doing so, Nazianzus provided a sanctioned model for future writers who wished to discuss Creation in sensory terms.

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[101] For details of the individual manuscripts see G. Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the liturgical homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus* (Princeton, 1969) p. 149.
[102] K. Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art* (Princeton, 2014) p. xi and Galavaris, *The Illustrations* pp. 150-53.
[103] The illustrations without people feature bees and beehives in Jerusalem, Taphou 14 fol. 34r and Paris gr. 533 fol. 34v as well as a lonely horse in folios 34v and 35r of the same manuscripts.
[104] Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, Oration 44, section 12, p. 161; *PG* 36.620-621.
[105] Ibid., Oration 44, section 11, p. 161; *PG* 36.620.
[106] Galavaris *The Illustrations*, pp. 157-62.

A later author we should also discuss is George of Pisidia, a poet whose popularity in Byzantium is confirmed by the praise of later authors such as Psellos.[107] The longest of his surviving poems, the *Hexaemeron*, was written sometime in the late 620s or 630s.[108] He does not follow the pattern of Genesis but instead uses the celestial order to structure his poem, with the heavens forming the first part, humanity in the middle and the natural world, animals and plants, as the third section. In this way he covers everything from the movements of the heavens to the seasons and the design of man. The structure generally is similar to a hymn in praise of the Lord through the depiction of the created world, glorifying the one through the other as in earlier hexaemeral texts.[109] George's *Hexaemeron* draws on a range of classical sources as well as biblical material. In addition to apparently utilising such authors as Plato, Homer, Horace, Cicero and Seneca, along with Scripture and Greek mythology, George uses scientific terminology from ancient medicine and biology in his discussion.[110] This does not mean that George relies on science and philosophy to make his points any more than did Basil or even Gregory of Nyssa. He is equally clear about his religious view of the universe, believing that 'God's power pervades his whole Creation'. [111] Like the Cappadocian fathers he uses the created world as a mirror for God.[112] He states that one must 'learn about reality through nature' and that it is 'the mind's duty to progress first by learning what is available to the senses'.[113] To this end he discusses numerous aspects of nature, indicating both how great is their Creator, and using them to give some moral

[107] D.J. Nodes, 'Rhetoric and Cultural Synthesis in the *Hexaemeron* of George of Pisidia', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 50:3 (1996) pp. 274.
[108] A recent edition appeared as *Esamerone: George of Pisidia, introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e indici*, trans. F. Gonnelli (Pisa, 1998).
[109] F. Gonnelli, 'Le Parole del Cosmo: Osservazioni sull'*Esamerone* di Giorgio Pisidia', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83:2 (1990) pp. 411-12.
[110] Nodes, 'Rhetoric and Cultural Synthesis', p.274.
[111] J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a world crisis: historians and histories of the Middle East in the seventh century* (Oxford, 2010) p. 24.
[112] Gonnelli, 'La Parole del Cosmo', p. 412.
[113] Nodes, 'Rhetoric and Cultural Synthesis', p.278.

lessons, largely through the rhetorical device of questions.[114] He sees God as invisible yet present, and humanity as being able to either ascend to heaven or descend to the level of the beasts, both ideas encountered in earlier hexaemeral and patristic works.[115] George is very willing to make use of rhetoric throughout his text, a fact which the Byzantines obviously appreciated as they appear to have used the *Hexaemeron* as an example of rhetoric in the classroom.[116] This use of rhetoric seems especially significant in his closing panegyric of the imperial family and its connection to the rest of the text. While the main text is an expression of religious feeling, the theme of Creation is used at the end in connection with the idea of political renewal. Defeat of the Devil, and one's own sin, is here connected with victory over Persia and hope for the future.[117] Military victories are seen as leading to a *Pax Byzantina* and the rebirth of the state, the theme of rebirth being particularly apt if, like most homilies on the *Hexaemeron*, this work was to be performed at Lent, the time for spiritual repentance and therefore renewal. Nature could thus play a role in both a religious and political context, though the political, in this work at least, is arguably more a framework than the main point.[118]

Fundamentally George of Pisidia follows the same ideas as the Cappadocian fathers in seeing God reflected in his creation. He uses a more rhetorical style, and litters his work with scientific knowledge in a manner similar to Gregory of Nyssa, allegorising nature more directly at times than his predecessors but still essentially assigning nature its own independent significance.

[114] See for example lines 1014-1019, on the coot, and the dove, in connection with monogamy or lines 959-994 on judging animals by their size in Gonnelli 'La Parole del Cosmo'.
[115] Nodes, 'Rhetoric and Cultural Synthesis', p. 279-280.
[116] M. Lauxtermann, 'The Velocity of Pure Iambs: Byzantine observations on the metre and rythm of the dodecasyllabe', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 48 (1998) pp.15-16 and 29.
[117] M. Whitby, 'The Devil in Disguise: The End of George of Pisidia's *Hexaemeron* Reconsidered' *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 115 (1995) p.128.
[118] Ibid, p. 116.

This brief summary of some hexaemeral and patristic literature serves to outline the main perspectives used in texts concerned with Creation. It also attempts to highlight the ongoing use of philosophical and scientific material by authors of such works in connection with nature. Although in later, post-iconoclastic literature, nature could be 'corruptible, fleeting, transient, and false', the earlier patristic texts were more inclined to a positive view.[119] By and large, nature was valued for itself as a reflection of God's glory and power. It was seen as an ordered system from which one could learn directly, without the direct need of allegory, particularly when discussing nature as described in the Genesis narrative. As such, it presents the relationship between mankind and the natural world as one which is secondary to the relationship between God and mankind. Nature is valuable as a contemplative bridge. None of these authors depict nature as existing only 'to serve man's purpose', an accusation levelled at Christian literature by Lynn White, who presents the notion of nature's servitude as ecologically destructive, though admittedly based primarily on Western theology.[120] Instead, there is a much more positive presentation, which continued throughout the Byzantine period, indicating that 'all creation reveals God' and is therefore valuable.[121] The *New Sunday Sermon* of Gregory of Nazianzus touches on the tension within the doctrinal view of the natural world, in which it is both God's creation and a temptation for man. The sermon would remain a model for the rhetorical presentation of nature throughout the Byzantine period, far more so than hexaemeral literature. George of Pisidia's text indicates that the theme of Creation could be adjusted to suit a political context, in this case victory over Persia and the subsequent political renewal of Byzantium as discussed above, as well as a religious one. There is little discussion of the hierarchy of nature, and the role of man as

[119] Ibid., pp. 58-9.
[120] L. White, Jr. 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', *Science* 155: 3767 (1967) p. 1205.
[121] R. Bordeianu, 'Maximus and Ecology: The Relevance of Maximus the Confessor's Theology of Creation for the Present Ecological Crisis', *The Downside Review* 127 (2009) p. 116.

head of the terrestrial hierarchy under God. Instead the relationship presented stresses the individual, divinely-created traits of different aspects of nature, and their connection to mankind as products of the Creator entirely in a positive sense. After all, 'we ought to show kindness and gentleness to animals for many reasons and chiefly because they are of the same origin as ourselves'.[122] The works of the Cappadocian Fathers, and the *Hexaemeron* of Pisidia were still known and copied well into the later Byzantine period. Although original hexaemeral literature was rarely written after the early Church fathers, we do find a twelfth-century example in the verse chronicle of Constantine Manasses, the *Historical Synopsis*. Manasses begins, in the tradition of chronicle writing, with the Creation narrative.[123] However, this hexaemeral passage is much more poetic than others found in chronicles and stresses the sensory beauty of nature as well as describing God as an artist and gardener who is visible in his creation.[124] Thus, this symbolic approach, taking nature at face value whilst understanding it as directly reflecting the glory of the Creator, without the need for allegory, can still be found in later material, although the more allegorical or anthropomorphising viewpoints seem to become more popular.

Pseudo-scientific/Allegorical

As mentioned above, our understanding of medieval allegorical interpretations of the natural world suggests that the medieval mind could see the whole of Creation as hiding deeper truths, concealing the divine mysteries, and that true understanding could only be reached by going beyond the surface. This viewpoint is not hard to find in medieval texts

[122] A. Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (London, 1987) p. 32 citing J. Attwater *St John Chrysostom* (Catholic Book Club, 1960) pp. 59-60.
[123] I. Nilsson, 'Discovering Literariness in the Past: Literature vs. History in the *Synopsis Chronike* of Konstantinos Manasses', in P. Odorico, P. Agapitos and M Hinterberger (eds.) *L'écriture de la mémoire: la littérarité de l'historiographie; actes du IIIe colloque international philologique EPMHNEIA, Nicosie, 6-7-8 mai 2004* (Paris, 2006) p. 19.
[124] I. Nilsson, 'Narrating Images in Byzantine Literature: The *ekphraseis* of Konstantinos Manasses', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 55 (2005) p. 134.

and, in Byzantium, in connection with nature, it exists most obviously in the *Physiologus*. One of the most popular works of the Middle Ages, the *Physiologus*, in its various forms, presents certain information about animals, as well as some plants and stones, and then provides a Christian allegory of them. While there is some debate as to the date and origin of the *Physiologus*, it is generally considered to belong to the third century AD and to be of Egyptian, likely Alexandrian, origin.[125] It contains many legends which can be traced back to India, Egypt and elsewhere, and which were popular in earlier Greek and Latin literature.[126] Some scholarship suggests that the allegorical interpretations appended to these nature stories were not originally part of the text, but were added shortly after its compilation.[127] The text as we now have it requires both sections, so it will be taken here that the author(s), original or otherwise, intended the expository nature of the work.

There is considerable debate on the aim of this text, and therefore on its presentation of the natural world.[128] At the most obvious, literary level, the presentation is clearly allegorical, and thus in direct contrast with hexaemeral literature. Like the hexaemeral material, the *Physiologus* utilises Classical knowledge and provides apparently observable characteristics for each animal, plant or stone. For example, Basil refers in his *Hexaemeron* to vipers being born by 'gnawing through the womb' and to the

[125] With regard to the dating of the *Physiologus*, see *Physiologus*, ed. F. Sbordone (Hildesheim, 1991); H. Woodruff, 'The Physiologus of Bern', *The Art Bulletin* 12 (1930); A. Scott, 'Date of the Physiologus', *Vigiliae Christianea* 52:4 (1998) pp. 430-441. Sbordone identified three main redactions of the text but more manuscripts have since been found. References to the text of the *Physiologus* are found in Epiphanius' *Panarion* and *De Gemmis*, both written in the second half of the fourth century. It is also among the forbidden texts listed in the so-called *Decretum Gelasianum*. Certain terminology and the particular use of the Christian canon lead Woodruff to suggest the *Physiologus* could not have been written before the third century and the fourth century citations give us a rough *terminus ante quem*.
[126] M.F. Curley, '*Physiologus*, *Φυσιολογία* and the Rise of Christian Nature Symbolism' *Viator*, 11 (1980) p. 7.
[127] Woodruff, 'The Physiologus of Bern', p.226.
[128] See D. Faraci, 'Pour une etude plus large de la reception medievale bestiaries' in *Bestiaries Medievaux* (2005) pp. 111-125 for a summary of recent scholarship.

elephant's lack of joints, and we find the same stories in the *Physiologus*.[129] This begs the question; does the *Physiologus* have a scientific character or a purely religious one?[130] The way that the information on the natural world is presented suggests some scientific interest, although it is largely gleaned from earlier Classical sources rather than from empirical research. It also usually forms the shorter part of each chapter, with the religious allegory that follows apparently being of greater interest for author and audience. Layers of interpretation were obviously familiar to Byzantine audiences from other religious texts; mystagogical works, for example, presented a number of different typological and symbolic meanings for different passages.[131] The characteristics of the animals, plants and stones are rarely praised in the manner of the hexaemeral literature. Instead, their value lies not in their reflection of the glory of God, but in their interpretation. They are after all divinely designed and created with an inherent message for mankind to read.[132] The audience for the text, at least for the Western bestiary derived from it, also suggests a religious aim as it appears to be largely monastic, though not exclusively so.[133] The Greek versions are often found in manuscripts that contain both religious and scientific works, such as the *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes, fables and lapidaries.[134] It is important to bear in mind that the distinction between secular and sacred, scientific and spiritual, was not as clear cut during the medieval period as it seems in our own time.[135] A text could easily appeal to both a

[129] St. Basil *Letters and select works* Homily 9, section 5, p 105 and *Der Physiologus nach den Handschriften G und M.* ed. D. Offermanns (Cologne, 1966) pp. 46 and 139.
[130] *The Book of the Beasts: being a translation from a Latin bestiary of the Twelfth century*, ed. T.H. White, (London, 1954); Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users*; Faraci, 'Pour une etude plus large de la reception medievale bestiaries'.
[131] *On the Divine Liturgy: St. Germanus of Constantinople; the Greek text with translation, introduction, and commentary*, ed. P. Meyendorff, (Crestwood, N.Y, 1984) pp. 23-54.
[132] *Book of Beasts: A Facsimile of MS Bodley 764*, intro. C. de Hamel (Oxford, 2008) p. 17.
[133] See the discussion in Baxter, *Bestiaries and their Users* pp. 145-209.
[134] M. Avery, 'Miniatures of the Fables of Bidpai and of the Life of Aesop in The Pierpont Morgan Library', *The Art Bulletin*, 23:2 (1941) p. 103; M. Bernabò, *Il Fisiologo di Smirne: le miniature del perduto codice B. 8 della Biblioteca della Scuola evangelica di Smirne* (Tavarnuzze-Firenze, 1998) pp. 9-12.
[135] A. Walker and A. Luyster (eds.) *Negotiating Secular and Sacred in Medieval Art* (Farnham, 2009).

monastic and a courtly audience simultaneously. The fact that the *Physiologus* was sometimes illustrated may also have increased its accessibility and thus its audience. Manuscript illuminations could help instruct 'the viewer how to interact with the written word'.[136] We only know of two Greek illuminated manuscripts of this text from the Byzantine period; the Ambrosiana, E. 16 sup in Milan and the Smyrna manuscript, Evangelical School, B.8., which was destroyed and can only be studied from photographs.[137] The animal images in both the Milan and Smyrna manuscripts are representative of the text they illustrate, but often only if the basic story is already known, otherwise the image of a small dog-like animal crawling into the mouth of a crocodile may be rather entertaining but not necessarily elucidating.[138] However, where the animal is closely connected, in the medieval mind at least, with particular Biblical passages, as in the case of the unicorn, some idea of the intended meaning, or perhaps an alternative moral, may be drawn. Some of the images included, such as that of the deer biting its enemy the snake, may also have been familiar from classical and late antique zoological treatises such as the *Cynegetica* of Pseudo-Oppian.[139] Thus the illustrations for the animal anecdotes may have been fairly recognisable, or at least may have been able to impart something of the religious message envisioned by the text. This familiarity of imagery would be significant in a monastic setting where texts were often memorized or used in oral teachings.[140] Presumably therefore the reader/viewer would be expected to interact not just with text and image separately but also to use both together to reach an understanding of the connection between human virtue and vice and the divine. It is

[136] L. Brubaker, 'Originality in Byzantine Manuscript Illumination' in A.R. Littlewood (ed.) *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*, (Oxford, 1995) p. 155.
[137] M.S. Theocharis, 'Τεχνοκριτικαὶ παρατηρήσεις εἰς τὰς μικρογραφίας τοῦ Φυσιολόγου τοῦ Μιλάνου' Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀκαδημιᾶς Ἀθηνῶν 35 (1960) pp. 136-142; Bernabò, *Il Fisiologo di Smirne*.
[138] Curley, *Physiologus*, p. 53.
[139] K. Weitzmann and H. Kessler (ed.) *Studies in classical and Byzantine manuscript illumination* (Chicago, 1971) p. 32; K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A study of the origin and method of text illustration* (Princeton, 1947) p. 139.
[140] G. Cavallo, 'Πολις Γραμματων: Livelli di istruzione e uso di libri negli ambienti monastici a Bisanzio', *Travaux et mémoires* 14 (2002) p. 96.

possible that, for a Byzantine audience, the key vice or virtue described and its religious context could be understood without the text, or that the images taken in conjunction with the text strengthened the message and associated it with events both Biblical and contemporary. This perhaps implies that less able, or less educated, readers could still gain something from the text.

Despite the fact that this material was copied and rewritten many times, the basic format and depiction of nature in the text ultimately remained the same. On occasion, the *Physiologus* was attributed to respected fathers of the Church, such as St Basil or St John Chrysostom, but this did not prevent its adaptors from freely altering which animals they included, and sometimes even the interpretations, to suit such an attribution or their own tastes. The first animal discussed is invariably the king of beasts, the lion. Often the chapter will open with a quote from the Old Testament, and then provide information on the animals, plants and stones, which is followed by the Christian allegory and supported by a New Testament quotation:

> Jacob blessing his son Judah, said, "Judah is a lion's whelp" [Gen. 49:9}. Physiologus, who wrote about the nature of these words, said that the lion has three natures. His first nature is that when he walks following a scent in the mountains, the odour of a hunter reaches him, he covers his tracks with his tail wherever he has walked so that the hunter may not follow them and find his den and capture him. Thus also, our Saviour, the spiritual lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David..., having been sent down by his coeternal Father, hid his intelligible tracks (that is, his divine nature) from the unbelieving Jews... "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us" [John 1:14].[141]

Nature is not presented here as reflecting the glory of its Creator, but rather as having a definite connection to Scripture. As a result nature is presented as representing the Devil, Christ, sinners and the pious. By combining largely Classical, scientific information with a religious interpretation, the *Physiologus* ultimately presents

[141] *Physiologus*, trans. M.J. Curley pp 3-4; The Greek text as published by Offermanns presents different version of this passge, none of which exactly match the above translation, see pp. 14-17.

knowledge of the natural world as leading to a higher, spiritual, knowledge. Here it is the inner meaning, rather than the surface detail, that has been deemed most useful to the audience. The allegories used are not always clearly connected to the legends they purport to elucidate. Sometimes the allegorical passages twist the traditional story to fit the Biblical imagery and moral message, as is the case in the passage on the serpent where specific details, such as the 40 days and nights of fasting, are added to link the passage clearly with Christ.[142] Sometimes the connections made may simply have been clear to a medieval or Byzantine audience in a way they are not to the modern reader. The text was to be thought about in depth and could have multiple meanings. This act of interpretation and continued rumination on a text was thought to increase understanding of both the text and the spiritual world; contemplation of the possible meanings in creation could be an act of devotion in itself.[143] Nature is in this context meant to be read as a collection of *exempla*, to provide a link between the divine truth of the Scriptures and the human reality.[144] Hence the material level is solely a means of presenting this spiritual information. The allegories provided are not simply morals drawn from an anecdote by a religious scholar. Rather, the symbolism found in nature was designed as such at the moment of Creation.[145]

A similarly allegorical interpretation of the natural world can be found in the *Symbolic Garden*, a text which is not thought to date before the tenth century at the earliest.[146] The text indicates in its preface that it has two authors, the one continuing the

[142] Offermanns, *Der Physiologus*, p. 50 'ἐὰν γηράσῃ, ἐμποδίζεται τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν· ἐὰν δὲ θέλῃ πάλιν νέος γενέσθαι, πολιτεύεται τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας καὶ τεσσαράκοντα νύκτας, ἕως οὗ τὸ δέρμα αὐτοῦ χαυνωθῇ· καὶ ζητεῖ πέτραν ἢ ῥαγάδα στενήν, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἑαυτὸν εἰσπέμψας θλίβει τὸ σῶμα καὶ ἀποβαλὼν τὸ γῆρας νέος πάλιν γίνεται.
Τοῦτον οὖν τὸν τρόπον καὶ σύ, ὦ ἄνθρωπε, ἐὰν θέλῃς τὸ παλαιὸν γῆρας τοῦ κόσμου ἀποβαλέσθαι, διὰ τῆς στενῆς καὶ τεθλιμμένης ὁδοῦ, ἤγουν διὰ νηστείας καὶ ἐγκρατείας, τὸ σῶμα σου τῆξον καὶ θλῖψον·',
[143] *Book of Beasts*, p. 17.
[144] P. Cox, 'The *Physiologus*: A *Poiēsis* of Nature', *Church History* 52:4 (1983) p. 434.
[145] *Book of Beasts*, p. 17.
[146] This work is found in only two manuscripts; the Laurentianus GR. Plut. 10. 3, dateable to the twelfth century, and the Clarkianus 11, a fourteenth-century manuscript in the Bodleian, Oxford. Regarding the

work of the other, suggesting they held the same allegorical view of the world.[147] Like Gregory of Nyssa's work, there is a strongly scientific bent to this text but, like Nyssa, the author places this interest in a secondary, supportive role to the primary, spiritual account. The two editors of this text, Thomson and Rigo, take somewhat different readings, partly due to the two extant manuscript versions.[148] The text, in Thomson's reading, emerges as a spiritual exposition on a real garden, the characteristics of the trees and plants within the garden being given a religious allegory or interpretation. Such allegories are also attached to the elements needed to maintain the garden and to the gardener himself. Certainly the literal aspects of the garden are never entirely overtaken by the spiritual.[149] She sees the structure of the text as leading us through an apparently real garden to view each plant. This gives the text a degree of realism and what Thomson calls a 'sense of closeness to and enjoyment of nature', which she considers lacking in other allegories of nature.[150] Rigo sees the text as discussing an imaginary garden, using it as an image of Paradise that contains diverse virtues and with the mind itself as the gardener.[151] Both readings are useful, presenting a spiritual understanding of nature, whether the garden itself was understood as real of fictional by any individual reader. In both renderings of *The Symbolic Garden* it begins with the practical assertions of what is necessary to maintain a good garden, including good soil, water, sun, breezes and gardener. Similarly to what we know of most actual gardens in Byzantium, the garden

dating of this text see *The Symbolic Garden: Reflections Drawn from a Garden of Virtures, a XIIth Century Greek Manuscript*, ed. M. Thomson (Ontario, 1989) and *Mistici Bizantini*, ed. A. Rigo (Torino, 2008) pp. 287-289.

[147] Thomson, *Symbolic Garden* p. 3.

[148] The Bodleian manuscript Clarkianus 11 is damaged, the folios are confused, and at least one section of *The Symbolic Garden* is apparently missing. Rigo has rearranged its folios as follows; ff. 17, 19, 18, 6-13, 20-25, see *Mistici Bizantini*, p. 289.

[149] A.P. Booth, 'The Symbolic Garden, a practical guide for the care of the soul', *Cahiers des etudes anciennes* 34 (1989) p. 16.

[150] Thomson, *Symbolic Garden*, p. 9.

[151] Rigo, *Mistici*, p. 289.

described here is enclosed and even the enclosing fence and gate are allegorised.[152] In these aspects of the garden the symbolism is suggested outright and then Scripture is used to back up these interpretations. A brief sentence introduces each section on the twelve virtues, represented by 15 plants. [153]

For the plants themselves the passages are structured in a similar way to the *Physiologus*. A descriptive piece of information regarding the plant, perhaps its fruit, leaves or height, is followed by an interpretation of this feature, and the passage ends with a quote from the Scriptures. Less consideration is given to the factual description of the physical plant, and more emphasis is placed on the allegory, in a similar way to the *Physiologus.* However, the allegories are more closely connected with what they purport to interpret and are therefore more understandable. The first passage on plants, as found in the Laurentianus manuscript, considers the cedar, pine and cypress together as symbols of temperance due to their lack of 'attractive' fruit.[154] The other plants discussed are the lemon tree as a symbol of purity and wisdom; the lily as a symbol of poverty; the fig tree for gentleness; the vine for spiritual joy; the pomegranate for courage; peach for moderation;[155] the palm tree symbolising justice; the styrax as prayer; the olive tree for pity; the smilax for knowledge and the bramble for submission. All the plants are recognisable from their descriptions but the botanical information given for them is not directly quoted, and neither is it particularly easy to identify as coming from a particular source, unlike the *Physiologus.*[156] The information largely centres on the medical usage of the plants, but also mentions their use in food, where relevant. Overall it seems that at

[152] 'Εἰσίεμεν δὲ ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ Κυρίο Ἰησοῦ ἤ τις ἐστὶν ἡ θύρα', Thomson (1989) p. 31 (Laurentianus GR. Plut. 10, 3, f12v).
[153] The first virtue and the three plants connected are missing from the Clarkianus manuscript, as is the passage on the serpent.
[154] Thomson, *Symbolic Garden* p. 30 (Laurentianus GR. Plut. 10, 3, f13r). The word used for moderation in relation to the cedar, pine and cypress is ἐγκράτειαν, so that the translation may also be self-control or abstinence.
[155] The term for moderation in this instance is μετριότητος.
[156] See the discussion of possible source material in Thomson *Symbolic Garden* pp. 6-7 and Rigo *Mistici* pp. 288-89.

least some of the information presented in *The Symbolic Garden* is from observation and experience, rather than simply from book-learning. Nevertheless, the religious aspect of the text is still its main concern. In consequence, when the author expounds on the medicinal properties of a plant, they feed into the religious allegory. For example, Cedar resin, described as a tear, *δάκρυον*, is thought to treat itching and similar ailments,

> … and thus to symbolize the tear of self-restraint 'born of a burning disquietude from the fear of the Lord, [which] by its nature heals the pleasure that is itchy and irritating to the flesh'.[157]

Here we again find that nothing in nature exists that was not designed to provide some message to mankind.

One animal appears in the *Symbolic Garden*: the serpent.[158] To stress that this later text takes essentially the same allegorical standpoint as the *Physiologus*, let us compare the representation of the serpent in both texts. In the *Symbolic Garden*, the connection between the serpent and garden needs no explanation for a Christian audience. That the later author wished to include such a negative image in his paradisiacal setting is interesting. Instead of serving as an example, the serpent here is a warning. The serpent is directly identified with the Devil, being introduced as 'the malignant, tempter snake' which is 'the mask into which the wicked one slips'.[159] In this text, several of the snake's physical traits apparently engender pity for the animal, namely his lack of hands and need to crawl on the ground.[160] He is also described as being loved on account of his subtlety.[161] He even appears to be something of a rhetorician, though he is in no way praised for the 'many sounds of his imaginative

[157] Booth, 'The Symbolic Garden', p. 17.
[158] As mentioned above, this section only appears in the Laurentianus manuscript, ff. 30r – 32v, Thomson, *Symbolic Garden* pp. 106-117.
[159] Thomson, *Symbolic Garden* pp. 106-7 and 110- 111 (Laurentianus GR. Plut. 10, 3, f30r and f31r) 'Τὸν δὲ βάσκανον καὶ πειραστὴν ὄψιν' and 'ὁ πονηρὸς ὑποδύεται προσωπεῖον'.
[160] Ibid., p.110-111 (Laurentianus GR. Plut. 10, 3, f31r) 'ποσὶ τὸ θηρίον τοῦτο οὐκ ἐπιβέβηκε. χερσὶν οὐ κέχρηται ὡς ἄλλα τινὰ ζῶα, οὐκ ὄνυξιν, οὐ κέντρῳ· ὅλον λεῖον ἔξωθέν ἐστι φαινόμενον καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ἥπλωται· ὡς ἐλεεῖσάι διὰ ταῦτα πάντα·'.
[161] Ibid., 'καὶ ποικίλον δέ, ὡς διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀγαπᾶσθαι·'

speeches'.[162] Essentially, everything about the snake that appears pleasant hides his true wickedness, which belongs both to the Devil whom the animal represents, and to the dangerous physical attributes of the animal which, it is implied, are derived from the Devil. Indeed, the actual serpent is only considered in form, and is simply the metamorphosed Devil. The actual animal means nothing by itself here

In the *Physiologus* the snake appears in several chapters, though in different forms, including the serpent and the viper, though it also shares imagery with the dragon. The duality of nature, as understood by the medieval world, is present here in the combination of positive and negative imagery, as well as the duality of actual and spiritual. In a religious context the snake often has bad connotations, but it could have positive associations. In the classical tradition the snake was connected with knowledge and renewal, and this is retained, to a certain extent, in the medieval tradition.[163] Accordingly the serpent, following Matthew 10:16, is considered wise, and provides examples for correct Christian behaviour, taking on the role of the pious man.[164] However, the viper is accused of both patricide and matricide in the preceding chapter, and is explained as representing the Pharisees.[165]

While the snake in the *Physiologus* can receive a positive allegorical interpretation, serving as an example of how good Christians should behave, we are left in no doubt that the snake in *The Symbolic Garden* represents sin and the Devil as an ever-present feature in the spiritual garden.[166] But its presence can be overcome, making the deadly creature harmless and able to be trampled.[167] This defeat comes through

[162] Ibid., pp. 112-113 (Laurentianus GR. Plut. 10, 3, f31v) 'Εικότως δὲ καὶ τὸ πολύφθογγον τῶν αὐτοῦ τροπολογέων ὁ εἰς πολλὰ μερισμὸς τῆς τοῦ ὄφεως γλώσσης παρίστησι '.
[163] Wheatcroft, 'Classical Ideology in the Medieval Bestiary', p. 144.
[164] Offermanns, *Der Physiologus* p. 50-52.
[165] Ibid.,, *Der Physiologus* p.46.
[166] Thomson, *Symbolic Garden* p. 106-107 (Laurentianus GR. Plut. 10, 3, f30r) 'κὰνθάδε παρεῖναι πάντως ἀνάγκη'.
[167] Ibid., p. 114-115, referencing Luke 10:19.

reverence to God and is accomplished through the use of liquid, particularly baptismal water or oil, but also human spittle and this defeat indicates the spiritual strength mankind can attain through God.[168] This use of water compares directly with the Bible and Christian ideas of baptism, there is also a close connection with the story of the deer in the *Physiologus*. Here, the deer, or stag, as the enemy of the snake, spits water at the snake and then tramples on it, though sometimes it simply swallows the serpent whole.[169] There seems therefore to be a body of knowledge on the natural world that could be used allegorically, even if all the aspects are not present.

In both texts, the physical attributes and observable behaviour of the animal are only mentioned where they can be connected with Scripture and, as a consequence, interpreted. While they do contain information that reflects other interests of the authors, such as medicinal uses or folklore, all of this is put to use in explaining the Christian faith. The second level of nature, beyond the obvious surface, is what is important. The use of nature as a tool for learning may be familiar from the hexaemeral literature discussed above, but in these texts, the learning relationship is far less direct, and nature is of interest only in so far as it is useful to mankind, as a tool for learning or, more practically, for medicinal and food purposes. The connection between mankind and nature is thus loosened and the sense of hierarchy reinforced. Nature as presented here as limited value of its own, and the beauty described in a work like the *New Sunday Sermon* seems hardly worth expressing. As an approach to the natural world, this method of interaction creates distance, engaging only with perceived traits within nature that could be perceived as useful, and removing any inherent value from the animals and plants themselves. That said, the *Symbolic Garden* balances its allegorical presentation of the

[168] Ibid., pp. 114-117, (Laurentianus GR. Plut. 10, 3, f32r-32v).
[169] *Physiologus* trans. Curley p. 58; *ETQ*, pp. 28-30.

garden by acknowledging the other uses of the many plants within it, though again, their value lies largely in their usefulness.

The popularity of this allegorical view of nature, which has little concern for the material aspect and more interest in the hidden, spiritual truth, is evidenced by the lasting appeal of the *Physiologus*. That both these texts appear to have been copied after the twelfth century, even if only once in the case of the *Symbolic Garden*, indicates that this way of thinking about the world remained popular, or even useful, even although new ideas, and a new interest in science, were developing. Such a means of viewing the world and everything in it seems to have enjoyed a resurgence from the eleventh-century, and was applied as much to classical materials as it was to religious works, though it arguably became more subtle in Palaiologan literature.[170]

Aesopic and anthropomorphic material

A third perspective on nature that continues in a didactic vein is that found in the Aesopic tradition. Here, nature is anthropomorphised. The perceived connection between man and animal allowed the representation of animals as rational beings. This then enabled their use as parodies of mankind, to mock and to instruct, as it did in other Classical genres.[171]In discussing this genre and its representation of the natural world, I rely on the studies of Perry and Adrados.[172]

Most often associated with Aesop, fable is a genre with a long history and one in which animals, and sometimes plants, appear as central figures. Hesiod's story of the hawk and the nightingale is probably the earliest Greek example of this genre, but its

[170] P. Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia: A Poetics of the Twelfth-century Medieval Greek Novel* (2005) pp. 120-138.
[171] See Rothwell, *Nature, Culture, and the Origins of Greek Comedy* and Heath, *The Talking Greeks.*
[172]Perry, 'Fable', pp. 17-37; *Babrius and Phaedrus*, ed. B.E. Perry, (1965); F.R. Adrados, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, trans. G.-J. van Dijk, (1999-2003).

origins can be found in ancient Sumerian works.[173] Fable as a style of writing was one of the fourteen elements defined as being part of the *progymnasmata*, the rhetorical exercises that formed the basis of Byzantine education.[174]In fact fables, μῦθοι, are the first of the *progymnasmata* exercises. It was easily recognisable, memorable, entertaining and taught young men, and possibly women, not only rhetoric but also how to behave in society. In his *progymnasmata*, Theon 'defines the fable in the Aesopic sense of the term in just four words: λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν, that is a fictitious story picturing a truth'.[175] While this definition, and indeed the word for fable itself, varied with the fashion of the time, it captures the basic essence of the fable as a genre.

Having entered the Byzantine literary sphere, the Classical and Hellenistic material, which seems to have both influenced and been influenced by Eastern tales, survived in various collections of fables.[176] We have the Augustana, a late Roman or Late Antique collection, and the Vindobonensis which is a more vulgar, shorter collection, compiled between the ninth and twelfth centuries. This was then adapted to suit a more classicising, classroom style in the Accursiana, or Planudean collection. The branches are interconnected in various ways, either directly or indirectly. One did not supersede the others but all were copied and adapted, remaining in circulation throughout the Byzantine era. Each collection could include fables by named writers like Babrius and Phaedrus as well as anonymous material. Inevitably, not all manuscripts can be fitted into the three collections. The manuscript tradition is complex and confused but does not directly concern us here. It is sufficient to note that there are numerous manuscripts, dating from

[173] M.L. West, 'The Ascription of Fables to Aesop in Archaic and Classical Greece', in R. S. Falkowitzet, F.R. Adrados and O. Reverdin (eds.) *La Fable: huit exposés suivis de discussions: Vandœvres-Genève, 22-27 août 1983* (Geneva, 1984) p. 106.
[174] E. Jeffreys, 'Introduction', in E. Jeffreys (ed.) *Rhetoric in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001*, (Aldershot, 2003) pp. 1-5.
[175] *Babrius and Phaedrus*, p. xix-xx.
[176] For detailed discussion of the collections see Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable* and Perry, 'Fable'.

at least the tenth century through to the Palaiologan period, that contain fables, which indicates the continued popularity of the genre. Fables appear in prose and verse, being rewritten, adapted and even created by named authors like the ninth-century Ignatios the Deacon, and by many anonymous contributors. Oriental aspects continued to filter into the Greek fable tradition, often through Syriac, and the genre developed to suit its now Christian audience, playing up its didactic role. [177]

In addition to the main collections defined and discussed by Perry and Adrados, it must be stressed that each individual manuscript was essentially a different collection with a different author. Since fable was the first of the *progymnasmata* that formed the basis of the Byzantine education system, anyone one with a rudimentary education would be able to imitate, and therefore write, fables. Material that modern scholars may not consider fable was also often included in fable collections.[178] Consequently we find pseudo-scientific observations in the collections that are better suited to the *Physiologus*, as well as aetiological fables or tales which were used as simple explanations of reality, in the manner of the modern *Just So Stories*. The definition of fable was thus very flexible, as was its use. However, they are always fictitious and usually relate to living, breathing characters, rather than personifications of Greed or Pride, with the occasional exception in agonal fables, and they have some moral or didactic purpose, whether it is stated outright or not, instead of being simply for entertainment.[179]

Fable is primarily a genre based on the concept of speech. Unlike most classical literature featuring animals, in fables animals *can* communicate, at least with each other. There is no suggestion that individual species would speak different languages. Accordingly, in agonal fables, those based around a conflict or discussion between two characters, two animals or a man and an animal, or even plants or personifications, can

[177] Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable* vol. 2 pp. 559-628.
[178] J.M. Ziolkowski, 'The Form and Spirit of Beast Fable', *Bestia* 2 (1990) pp.8-9.
[179] Ibid., pp. 8-10; Perry, 'Fable'.

argue with one another.[180] Fable is an enchanted world in which animals 'talk like us, and act like us, in distant and fictional worlds that help us reflect on ourselves'.[181] Because it is a fictional world, far removed from normal existence, animals in it can teach humans how to behave in a more direct fashion than in other genres. Thus fables provided lessons to be followed. These were not like the *exempla* found in the *Physiologus*, in which an allegorical interpretation was provided to explain the messages divinely embedded in nature. Instead, fables have a moral of some kind, usually stated in a *promythium* or an *epimythium*, a summary of the moral at the beginning or end of the narrative. However, the moral is not always overtly stated. Often multiple morals could be drawn from any one story and the audience could therefore be left to select their own, or the author could supply one. Sometimes fables were used more as a tool for criticism or a means to persuade, but there is always some kind of lesson. From an animal studies perspective '… the classical mode of the animal fable, which, through thick anthropomorphic haze, confronts us with uncomfortable truths (truisms) about our human selves' forcing us to contemplate our own flaws through the animals depicted.[182]

Since the fable generally remains on the material plane, its depiction of the natural world does not utilise allegory in the same way as the texts discussed above.[183] Instead, specific animals are used to depict, and often mock, individuals, groups, or characteristics. Therefore, the moral did not need to be religious, and instead regularly commented on society. Fable does this without disconnecting it from the natural world. The representations of the natural world in fable tend to be relatively naturalistic, stressing particular features, though they do not dwell on specific zoological or botanical details. Instead, it is the anthropomorphism of the genre that is most striking.

[180] Adrados *Graeco-Latin Fable* vol. 1, p. 151.
[181] Heath *The Talking Greeks* p. 15.
[182] A. Pick, *Creaturely Poetics* (New York, 2011) p. 79
[183] Some Classical fables do feature gods and goddesses but in a more material, as opposed to spiritual manner.

Accordingly the traits depicted are often attached to physical aspects of the animal or plant used to portray them. The rapacious hunger of the wolf can be used to reflect the greed of men, or the apparent timidity of the hare or mouse could be used to ridicule cowardice.[184] This does not mean that an animal can only have one trait or one role in fable texts. The duality of nature encountered in the *Physiologus* continues in this genre. Animals and plants are given the rationality they are otherwise denied and required to act out scenes that can be related to by their human audience. In this portrayal we can see a connection with both the more realistic association of specific features with specific animals mentioned by St Basil and the more allegorical depiction of animal traits by Origen, mentioned above. Sometimes it makes little difference to the story whether one of the characters is actually a human or a non-human. Even if the content or form changed, the style of depiction remains the same. Once again the natural world is viewed as a source for moral or didactic lessons. However, since here it is directly related to humanity, as opposed to the divine, it can also be used to subvert and pass comment on individuals or society.

As indicated above, fables were used in the classroom, and possibly in preaching, and thus could have both a varied authorship and audience. In Byzantium they seem to have been popular in the monastic sphere. We can even find some church decorations, with inscriptions, referencing fables. For example, in the rock-cut monastery of Eski Gümüş northeast of Niğde in Turkey, datable to the eleventh century, there is a second-storey chamber above the narthex which is decorated with Aesopic scenes, including a number of animals. The seven images along the east wall are accompanied by red ink inscriptions in what Gough describes as "very rustic Greek".[185] The inscriptions are

[184] See for example H137 'The Dog and the Wolf' and H143 'The Hares and the Frogs' in Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, vol. 3, p178 and p. 186.
[185] M. Gough, 'The Monastery of Eski Gümüş: Second Preliminary Report', *Anatolian Studies*, 15 (1965) p. 164.

fragmentary but, along with the images, clearly correlate to Aesopic fables. The text above the images relates the fable while the text below provides the *epimythium*. Unfortunately, only some of the text fragments have been published, but they have been identified as coming from the metaphrase of Babrius by Ignatios the Deacon.[186] Among the fragments is the text that corresponds to the representation of a sheep-like animal standing on a masonry tower with a long-tailed quadruped trying to reach it. This image clearly depicts the fable of the Wolf, the Lamb and the Tower and the text relates the words of the insulted wolf "πύργος δ', [ὃ]ς ὀπλίζει σε πρὸς μέγα θράσος".[187] There are several other examples of such decoration from across the Byzantine world.[188] The presence of Aesopic images in religious buildings has been remarked on, since fables are generally considered a secular genre. However, in the Latin West 'with morals to justify stories, fables were certified as acceptable by the arbiters who decided which literature Christians should read'.[189] The moral or didactic nature of the material presumably made it acceptable in Byzantium as well. We know that many manuscripts containing Aesopic fables were copied in monastic scriptoria and the popularity of such tales amongst a monastic audience is suggested by the sheer number of such manuscripts, not simply copied, but adapted and even added to with original material by the monks themselves. Not just the many monks, but well-known religious figures were clearly familiar with fables, for example, Nicholas the Patrician and Kassia seems to have used their knowledge of them in a number of verses, particularly gnomic epigrams.[190] Both gnomic epigrams and fable offer advice and present a moral. Both forms were associated with Aesop during the Byzantine period due to collections of proverbs and their explanations

[186] M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres* (Wien, 2003) p. 259.
[187] Ibid.
[188] N.B. Drandakis, Ἀνάγλυπτος παράστασις βυζαντινοῦ μύθου. *EEBS* 39-40 (1972-73) 659-674; A. Bryer, and D. Winfield, *The Byzantine monuments and topography of the Pontos* (Washington, 1985) vol. 1, p. 283.
[189] Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals*, p. 24.
[190] Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp.253-260.

collected in the *Sayings of Aesop*.[191] Using the form and content often associated with Aesop to present a Christian moral then was not that unusual. It also seems that some fables from the Byzantine period were written with a specifically Christian moral in mind. For example, in the anonymous fable of the Dog, the Fox and the Cock, Adrados identifies Christian references, and allusions to Byzantine hymnography.[192] This fable is considered therefore to be of Byzantine, rather than classical, origin. The anthropomorphising view of nature can therefore be as relevant in a religious setting as the allegorical or naturalistic. That is not to say that fable was only used in a religious setting, as it obviously had a secular role as well, predominately in the school room. This allowed the genre to be used in multiple different ways for different audience, a feature which would be particularly appealing to authors and audiences during the changing atmosphere of the Palaiologan period.

From the standpoint of animal studies or ecocriticism however, this perspective on nature can take us one step further away from the natural world. The animals, or other features of nature, presented in fable are stand-ins for the humans they purport to teach. Their connection with mankind is through a projection of ideas, overlaying anthropomorphically-interpreted animal traits. Such a relationship presents mankind as being in control of nature, at least in theory, and shows little direct concern with the natural world itself. Such anthropomorphism is nevertheless universal and a useful tool in approaching literary depictions of the natural world.

Conclusion

Obviously, these three ways of looking at the natural world within Greek literature do not reflect all the ways in which nature was used in Byzantium. For example, animal and

[191] Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, pp. 256-258.
[192] Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, vol. 3, p. 334.

vegetal similes play a prominent role in chronicles and other texts throughout the period.[193] My choice of these three particular ways of presenting the natural world is, then, discretionary, but they do highlight key factors in the pre-Palaiologan perspective on, and representation of, the natural world. Nature obviously can attract, and be accessible to, a wide and varied audience, and these examples certainly show that.[194] Some of the material was intended to be understandable for all ages and educational levels, and it is possible that illustration played a role in this. Others required a more expansive literary knowledge but nevertheless remain connected with personal experience. Nature is portrayed as something real and tangible but with another, more spiritual level which at times is considered to be more important than the physical aspect in its depiction of greater truths. Here there is always a message or a reminder in nature, whether that message is simply an expression of wonder, a portrayal of divine knowledge, or human knowledge delivered via animal mouths. Nature as presented in literature always implies a human connection to the world, defining nature through human agency, particularly as it is being written about by human hands. However, that relationship can be one of near equals, or of suppression and control. These ideas of accessibility, nature for its own value and as a messenger, and as a means of definition are found in the later Byzantine period in one form or another, the key factors remaining fairly universal. The naturalistic perspective of the hexaemeral texts, which present the natural world as something to be praised for its own sake as part of God's creation, may have found only limited acceptance later.[195] However, a sensory pleasure in nature for its own sake is present in the later novels, as well as Manasses, and the traditional *ekphrasis* of Spring continued. Anthropomorphising nature is easier to find in the later period and

[193] See for example A.R. Littlewood, 'Vegetal and Animal Imagery in the History of Niketas Choniates' in M. Grünbart (ed.) *Theatron: rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2007) pp. 223-258.
[194] Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals* p. 6.
[195] Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion* p. 66.

far more closely related to the development of beast literature. All three perspectives share an instructive aim, though what they wish to impart varies between and within the styles, and sometimes nature seems to be present without any external message at all. Perhaps the most important factor in this examination of pre-Palaiologan material is the most obvious; the authors of the Palaiologan period had a long tradition of different literary presentations to make use of in their own writings. The ways in which Palaiologan authors used such presentations and others, and developed them to achieve certain aims, will be discussed in the following chapters, alongside what these developments may tell us about the Palaiologan view of nature.

3. Landscapes in Literature: The Garden in the Palaiologan Romances

While the majority of the texts discussed in this thesis are most notable for their use of animals, some consideration must be given to the role of flora, and of landscape more generally. Landscapes are, in many ways, so familiar as to become little more than background, and yet they remain incredibly evocative. Landscapes as a feature of narrative can be particularly significant. As Agapitos states, narrative space is 'a constituent of the narrative situation. As such it shapes the given episode within the narrative process in equal proportion to time and in conjunction with the action contained therein'.[196] The analysis which follows will consider the narrative role of landscape, but will be expanded also to consider characterisation. In particular, the focus will be on the presentation of the garden. Gardens, as noted by Gillian Rudd in her 2007 work *Greenery*, 'are particularly interesting spaces, owing to the cluster of associations that gather within them'.[197] Some of these associations will be drawn out through a discussion of the garden in Greek novels from the Second Sophistic onwards, in particular the connection between women and particular landscapes. Thus the approach taken in this chapter can be described as ecofeminist, in as far as it discusses the perception of gender and power in the context of the surrounding environment. Ecofeminist approaches to landscape tend to fall into one of two groups, presenting women reclaiming their natural descriptions as a space for power and positivity, or as a negative comparison presenting them only as objects of pleasure.[198] Arguably, both concepts are present in the Palaiologan texts, as will be discussed below.

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[196] Agapitos, *Narrative Structure*, p. 273.

[197] G. Rudd, *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature* (Manchester, 2007) p. 165.

[198] For examples of the positive reclaiming of natural imagery see A. Blair 'Landscape in Drag; the Paradox of Feminine Space in Susan Warner's "The Wide, Wide World"' in S. Rosendale (ed.) *The Greening of Literary Scholarship*, pp. 111-130 and R. R. Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (London, 1992). For the use of nature solely to objectify see E. C. Rose, 'The Good

There has been much recent scholarship on actual Byzantine landscapes and especially on real Byzantine gardens. Such scholarship has discussed many varied types of gardens, through examinations of the limited archaeological evidence and through literary descriptions.[199] Antony Littlewood has presented the archaeological evidence which highlights features such as enclosing walls, terracing and water channels as being key features of palace and monastic gardens from across the empire.[200] In addition to this physical evidence, we have artistic depictions of gardens in a variety of mediums, from manuscript illuminations to mosaics, which present their own set of problems. Not only are they stylized representations, more often than not they represent the ideal garden, Eden, rather than anything truly terrestrial. A further problem is that the gardens in art tend to be represented as secondary to the buildings they surround. They are more frequently a backdrop than an image in their own right. As is so often the case, our understanding of Byzantine art also has to take into account the effects of iconoclasm, which in terms of depictions of nature, at least within the larger and more public spheres of church decoration, limited natural imagery and helped alter the accepted way of viewing it, so that slabs of coloured marble became flowering meadows in the mind's eye.[201] Maguire states that "(T)he opus sectile floors can be seen as aniconic substitutions for the tessellated floors that in preiconoclastic buildings had depicted the world of nature in a naturalistic way", an option either no longer aesthetically as pleasing or less conventionally acceptable.[202] Studies of the literary source material have supported the archaeological evidence in the basic forms of the different gardens and have indicated a

Mother: From Gaia to Gilead' in C. Adams (ed.) *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York, 1994) pp. 149–67; and C. Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (London, 1995).

[199] See for example Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.) *Byzantine Garden Culture*.

[200] A. Littlewood, 'Gardens of the Byzantine World' in H. Bodin and R. Hedlund (eds.) *Byzantine Gardens and Beyond* (Uppsala, 2013) pp. 31-113.

[201] Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion* p. 124. Such an interpretation is provided by the emperor Leo IV in his *ekphraseis* of a church founded by Stylianos Zaoutzes in Constantinople. Cf. Littlewood, 'Gardens of the Byzantine World' p. 122.

[202] Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion* p. 133-4

number of uses for the garden motif. Henry Maguire's seminal works have not only identified palace gardens in *ekphraseis* but have also highlighted the use of gardens, and particularly the statues within them, for presenting an imperial ideal, with the concept of control over nature reflecting control of the emperor's internal, meaning psychological, and external enemies.[203] Power and personality are also relevant in Ingela Nilsson's recent work on the archbishop Eustathios of Thessaloniki's account of his imprisonment in his garden after the capture of Thessaloniki by the Normans of Sicily in 1185.[204] His account inverts the paradisiacal safe haven of the garden and presents the Latin invaders who are in control of it as the very opposite of those who would normally care for it, thus implying their immorality and lack of culture.[205] In her study Nilsson also highlights three ways in which the Byzantines thought about gardens. She terms these the harmonious garden, the allegorical garden and the erotic garden. These are ways of thinking about gardens which can be identified in the Palaiologan romances to be analysed here, as well as in other texts. The garden as a harmonious place was 'for reflection and beauty, but also a place of order, harmony and safety'.[206] As an allegory, the garden obviously could be imbued with religious or even mystical connotations, reflecting the heavenly paradise. The erotic elements of the garden have been a feature of study for many years and are present in fairly distinct ways in the Palaiologan romances.[207] All three of the cultural implications of the literary garden in Byzantium can

[203] H. Maguire, 'Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal', in P. Magdalino (ed.) *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries: papers from the twenty-sixth spring symposium of Byzantine studies, St Andrews, March 1992* (Aldershot, 1992) pp. 181-197. Further important texts on garden *ekphrasis* include E. Auerbach, *Mimesis; dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern, 1946) translated by W. R. Trask, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: 1953) and O. Schissel von Fleschenberg, *Der byzantinische Garten: seine Darstellung im gleichzeitigen Romane* (Wien, 1942).
[204] I. Nilsson, 'Nature controlled by artistry', in H. Bodin and R. Hedlund (eds.) *Byzantine Gardens and Beyond* (Uppsala, 2013) pp. 15-29.
[205] Ibid., pp. 15-17.
[206] Ibid., p. 18.
[207] C. Barber, 'Reading the garden in Byzantium: nature and sexuality', *BMGS* 16 (1992) pp. 1-19; C. Cupane, '"Ερως βασιλεύς": La figura di Eros nel romanzo bizantino d'amore', *Atti del Accademia di Arti*

be identified in the Palaiologan romances, and in four of the works the garden has a particularly prominent place; that is in *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, *Livistros and Rodamni* and the *Achilleid*.

Before discussing these works I will outline the use of the garden in a number of earlier Greek texts dating from the Second Sophistic to a spiritual work contemporary with the Palaiologan romances. This survey will not be exhaustive but it will highlight certain key aspects in the presentation of the garden, and the use of floral or vegetal imagery to describe heroines and their beauty. By presenting this information in chronological order I hope to show the development of the motif, before discussing its further elaboration in the Palaiologan romances.

Gardens and Other Landscapes in Pre-Palaiologan Romance Literature

As with most things Byzantine, descriptions of literary gardens looked back to earlier, classical examples by respected authors. The novels of the Second Sophistic, a period usually defined as running from the late first century to the early third century CE, remained familiar to the educated Byzantine, though it is their language rather than their content which seems to have been considered most praiseworthy. The works of the Second Sophistic were influential in the creation of the Komnenian novels, in theme and language. The Palaiologan romances, in their turn, echo their Komnenian predecessors, their authors developing ideas and plot devices, including the depictions of nature, to suit their own period.

di Palermo, series 4, 33:2 (1974) pp. 243-297; A. R. Littlewood, 'Romantic Paradises: The Role of the Garden in the Byzantine Romance', *BMGS* 5:1 (1979) pp. 95-114.

The Second Sophistic

The novels of the Second Sophistic used real geographical places in their tales, as well as the connection between people and landscapes, within a mythical or religious sense in terms of the various gods and goddesses mentioned, but also in terms of plot and character more broadly. Areas close to the sea invite danger from pirates, including death and abduction. Civilized towns and homes offer refuge and resolution. In doing so they followed the prescriptions of the rhetorical handbooks, which would also be familiar to their Byzantine successors.[208] While all of the novels from this period can be said to have lent something to their Byzantine progenies, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* and Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* were likely the most influential in terms of the dramatic use of natural imagery.[209] The garden is used as a plot setting in these works in two key instances. In *Leucippe and Clitophon* we are told of an 'ornamental garden' adjoining the house of Clitophon's family, to which he also refers as a grove.[210] It is described in some detail. Not only is it enclosed by a high wall, it also features a number of columns alongside which grow many trees, their branches interlaced and encircled with ivy and bindweed.[211] Grapes also grow in abundance, as apparently do the flowers, namely the violet, rose and narcissus.[212] A spring and a rectangular pool are also mentioned, their

[208] Among the most transmitted rhetorical texts were the works of Hermogenes of Tarsos (second century CE), Menander Rhetor (third century CE) and Aphthonios of Antioch (fifth century CE). Cf. G.L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessalonike, 1973); E. Jeffreys (ed.) *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003); G. A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Text Books of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Leiden, 2003). For example, on characterisation, '…in the case of metonymical characterization, a narrator shows character (rather than depicting it explicitly) through actions, speech (both content and style; directly, indirectly, or otherwise represented), appearance, emotions, and (social or other) setting. Metaphorical characterization, on the other hand, means that a character (e.g. a novel heroine; comparandum) is aligned/compared/contrasted with someone or something (e.g. Artemis; comparans), either explicitly or implicitly, on the basis of a certain resemblance (e.g. chastity; tertium comparationis).' in K. de Temmerman, *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel* (Oxford, 2014) pp. 30-31.

[209] Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, trans. T. Whitmarsh (Oxford, 2003); Longus, *Daphnis & Chloe*, trans. J. Henderson (Harvard, 2009).

[210] Ach Tat 1.15.1, 'τῷ παραδείσῳ' and 'ὁ παράδεισος ἄλσος'.

[211] Ibid., 1.15.3-8.

[212] Ibid., 1.15.9-14.

primary feature being their role as a mirror, 'so that the grove seemed to be doubled'.[213] The many birds, both wild and tame, which inhabit the garden, are used by Clitophon to begin his pursuit of Leucippe. He indicates the peacock's display to begin a slew of erotic examples drawn from nature in a discussion which she cannot fail to overhear.[214] In this novel the garden is an important plot device, such a conversation clearly not being suitable for a more public place. Even though the conversation is not held directly between the two lovers, and their two servants are present, this discourse in the garden forms the initial confession and attempted seduction from which the lovers' connection grows.

Longus' novel features a garden which acts as a setting for two important characters. The garden is again directly connected to a house, this time the abode of an old shepherd, Philetas:

> I have a garden, made by my own hands, that I have worked on ever since I retired from being a herdsman on account of old age. It has everything that the seasons produce in its due season: in spring roses, lilies and hyacinth, both kinds of violet; in summer poppies, wild pears, and every kind of apple; and currently vines, figs, pomegranates, and green myrtle berries. In the morning flocks of birds gather in this garden, some for food and some for song, for it is sheltered, shady, and watered by three springs. If the stone fence were removed it would look to be a sacred grove.[215]

In this garden of the old shepherd we first encounter Eros as a small boy stealing fruit from the trees. He claims to be shepherding Daphnis and Chloe and states that the garden is also under his care:

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[213] Ibid., 1.15.16, 'τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ τῶν ἀνθέων ἦν κάτοπτρον, ὡς δοκεῖν εἶναι διπλοῦν'.
[214] Ibid., 1.16.
[215] Longus 2.3.3-5, 'Κὴπός ἐστί μοι τῶν ἐμῶν χειρῶν, ὃν ἐξ οὗ νέμειν διὰ γῆρας ἐπαυσάμην, ἐξεπονησάμην, ὅσα ὧραι φέρουσι, πάντα ἔχων ἐν αὐτῷ καθ'ὥραν ἑκάστην· ἦρος ῥόδα <καὶ> κρίνα καὶ ὑάκινθος καὶ ἴα ἀμφότερα, θέρους μήκωνες καὶ ἀχράδες καὶ μῆλα πάντα, νῦν ἄμπελοι καὶ συκαῖ καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μύρτα χλωρά. Εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κῆπον ὀρνίθων ἀγέλαι συνηρεφὴς γὰρ καὶ κατάσκιος καὶ πηγαῖς τρισὶ κατάρρυτος· ἄν περιέλῃ τις τὴν αἰμασιάν, ἄλσος ὁρᾶν οἰήσεται'.

> I come to your garden and enjoy the flowers and trees, and I bathe in these springs. It is because your flowers and trees are watered by my baths that they are beautiful.[216]

At this point he is not yet named as Eros but his warnings not to wish for a kiss from him, as well as his appearance, proclaimed age and behaviour make it clear. Daphnis and Chloe are instructed on his power by Philetas, who informs them that 'All the flowers are the work of Love, all the trees are his creations, and on his account rivers flow and winds blow.'[217] Thus it is through this garden that both Daphnis and Chloe are initiated, as opposed to seduced, into the ways of love, instructed by the owner of the garden, though under the divine guidance of Eros himself. Until this point in the tale, the protagonists are unaware of what they are feeling, and misunderstand their symptoms of love-sickness. After this point, they become self-aware and attempt to remedy their pain and sleeplessness through the kissing and embracing described to them by Philetas. Though the conversation does not occur in the garden itself, it is the garden in which Eros is encountered and which sparks the discussion, thereby moving the plot forward.

The association between nature and love is clearly central to the role of nature in forwarding the plots of these novels. It was not a new concept. The eroticism of landscape is evident in Homer, through Circe's garden and Calypso's grove for example. Both Longus and Tatius utilised the concept, Longus' eroticising the landscape to mirror the stage of sexual experience that the protagonists have reached. The connection between nature and sexuality is also clearly displayed in the basic events of Tatius' novel. The connection between nature and love is furthered in the link between nature and physical beauty. The classical idea of beauty was often described with naturalistic terminology, and romance plays on this. Longus uses pastoral imagery in describing a

[216] Ibid., 2.5.4, 'εἰς τὸν σὸν κῆπον καὶ τέρπομαι τοῖς ἄνθεσι καὶ τοῖς φυτοῖς κἀν ταῖς πηγαῖς ταύταις λούομαι. Διὰ τοῦτο καλὰ καὶ τὰ ἄνθη καὶ τὰ φυτά, τοῖς ἐμοῖς λουτροῖς ἀρδόμενα'.
[217] Ibid., 2.7.3, 'Τὰ ἄνθη πάντα Ἔρωτος ἔργα· τὰ φυτὰ ταῦτα τούτου ποιήματα· διὰ τοῦτον καὶ ποταμοὶ ῥέουσι καὶ ἄνεμοι πνέουσιν'.

number of characters so that eyes are described as large, like those of a cow, and skin is white as milk. In less pastoral terminology, Chloe's lips 'are softer than rose petals'.[218] The comparisons with nature are even put into the mouths of the protagonists themselves so that Chloe 'compared Daphnis' hair to myrtle berries because it was black, and he compared her face to an apple because it was fair and pink'.[219] The beauty of these two characters sets them apart throughout the novel, constantly reminding us of their high status births. The description of Leucippe is less full of nature. She is described as blonde, with dark brows but ivory skin. Her mouth, however, is portrayed as 'like the bloom of a rose, when the rose begins to part the lips of its petals'.[220] This description is more sophisticated, and the rose, a symbol of the goddess Aphrodite, connects her with that divinity, who is invoked at a number of points as the lover's keeper.

Based on these brief examples, it is obvious that there are certain key features to the landscape-use of the Greek romance tradition. The setting is an important feature of the texts, and natural imagery is heavily used. Pan and Eros are tied to the landscapes, imbuing nature with power at the same time as making it subservient, though to the divine rather than to humanity. Beauty and eroticism are tied up with flowers, gardens and pastoral imagery. Gardens appear as male-dominated areas of erotic initiation, though the heroine's virginity is maintained. The landscape itself is sexualised and used to describe the attractiveness of the heroines, linking the two as pleasant and subservient to men, or such would be the ecofeminist interpretation. These aspects recur in the later texts, but are not static, as we shall see.

[218] Ibid 1.18.1, 'Χείλη μὲν ῥόδων ἁπαλώτερα'.
[219] Ibid., 1.24.3, 'καὶ ἡ μὲν εἴκασεν αὐτοῦ τὴν κόμην, ὅτι μέλαινα, μύρτοις, ὁ δὲ μήλῳ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς, ὅτι λευκὸν καὶ ἐνερευθές ἦν'.
[220] Ach. Tat. 1.4.3, 'τὸ στόμα ῥόδων ἄνθος ἦν, ὅταν ἄρχηται τὸ ῥόδον ἀνοίγειν τῶν φύλλων τὰ χείλη'.

Digenis Akrites [221]

The chronological gap between the novels of the Second Sophistic and those of the Komnenian period was essentially filled by the saint's life with its tales of journeys, trials and supernatural encounters in the quest for love, albeit for spiritual love in this case.[222] Landscape is often an important motif in hagiography, but it is spiritualised, rather than eroticised, so the portrayal is closer to that presented by the Cappadocian Fathers rather than the romances. [223] Moreover, there is another text which appears before the Komnenian developments of the romance genre that should be considered, albeit briefly – *Digenis Akrites*.

The tale of Digenis is in two parts:[224] the first covering the meeting and marriage of his parents, a Byzantine lady and an Arab emir, the second being the story of Digenis himself. In both sections the pursuit of love is primarily connected with hunting, so that the lovers in the first section are represented by birds in a dream, and in Digenis' own adventures a fearsome hunt immediately precedes his meeting with his beloved. Still, the idea of love is nevertheless closely connected with non-animal nature. Love is described as rooted in the heart and desire as bearing fruit.[225] Digenis utilises vegetal imagery to describe his beloved too, referring to her as 'my most delightful rose and perfumed

[221] Versions of *Digenis* are preserved in six manuscripts, only two of which are considered as direct witnesses to the original. They are Grottaferrata Z. α.XLIV (444), ff. 1r-73r and Escorial Gr. 496 (Ψ.IV.22), ff. 139r-185v, 198r-201r. There have been a number of editions of this text, including *Βασίλειος Διγενὴς Ἀκρίτης καὶ τὸ Ἄσμα τοῦ Ἀρμούρη*, ed. S. Alexiou (Athens, 1985), *Digenis Akritis: the Grottaferrata and Escorial versions*, ed. E. Jeffreys, (Cambridge, 1998), *Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, ed. D. Ricks (Bristol, 1990) and *Digenes Akrites, synoptische Ausgabe der ältesten Versionen*, ed. E. Trapp (Vienna, 1971).

[222] Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance* p. 30.

[223] See the discussion of the natural world as presented by the Cappadocian Fathers on pages 23-36 of this thesis.

[224] For the dating, oral tradition, and later reception of the *Digenis* cycle see E. Jeffreys, 'The afterlife of Digenes Akrites', in P. Roilos (ed.) *Medieval Greek Storytelling: Fictionality and Narrative in Byzantium* (Wiesbaden, 2014) pp. 141-161.

[225] *Digenis Akritis: the Grottaferrata and Escorial versions*, (ed.) E. Jeffreys (Cambridge, 1998) 4.444 and 4.5.

apple', both comparisons which are familiar from the ancient novels, among other sources.[226] Later in the story, she is again described in terms of flowers:

> For her face mimicked the narcissus' colour,
> her cheeks burgeoned like a blooming rose,
> her lips resembled a newly opened rose
> when it begins to burst out of its bud.[227]

This description of the girl follows on from a short *ekphrasis* of a meadow full of flowers and birds, all of whom she surpasses in beauty. The connection between the girl and the meadow is clear through this comparison. The meadow itself sounds like a garden with its many plants, cool spring and grove of birds.[228] However it is not enclosed, and although Digenis pitches a tent there and makes it habitable, it is not without danger. Indeed, a few lines after the description of her beauty, a serpent disguised as a good-looking boy attempts to rape the girl.[229] A recent study by Adam Goldwyn highlights this incident as presenting Digenis as a gardener, tending his beloved and protecting her and the garden from intruders.[230] He goes on to discuss the analogy of a properly tended garden as a good marriage, contrasting it with abandonment of another woman in the *Digenis* cycle, who is left in the desert by her lover and says that she has 'withered before time like a newly planted tree'.[231] This idea is brought forth again in book 7 of the Grotteferrata *Digenis*, in which he and his wife settle by the Euphrates. We are told how Digenis creates a garden there, not dissimilar in description to the earlier meadow, but this time enclosed by a marble wall.[232] The description of this garden is

[226] Ibid. 4.434, 'ῥόδον πάντερπνον, μῆλον μεμυρισμένον'.
[227] Ibid. 6.31-34, 'ναρκίσσου γὰρ τὸ πρόσωπον τὴν χροίαν ἐμιμεῖτο,/αἱ παρειαὶ ὡς εὔθαλον ἐξανέτελλον ῥόδον,/ἄνθος ῥόδων ἀρτιφυὲς ὑπέφηνε τὰ χείλη, ὁπηνίκα ταῖς κάλυξιν ἄρχεται ἀνατέλλειν'.
[228] Ibid. 6.15-.28.
[229] Ibid. 6.47-55.
[230] A. Goldwyn, 'A Case Study in Byzantine Ecocriticism: Zoomorphic and Anthomorphic Metaphors in the Medieval Greek Romance' Forthcoming.
[231] *Digenis Akritis* 5.176, 'καὶ ὡς δένδρον νεόφυτον πρὸ καιροῦ ξηρανθεῖσα'.
[232] Ibid. 7.12-16.

much longer and again includes water, birds and the most important flowers, the narcissus, the rose and, in this case, the myrtle.[233]

Like the ancient novels, the landscape can be a plot device, the meadow being a place where Digenis' beloved is attacked, the desert being a place of loss. The garden and even the meadow still appear as very male spaces, but the more direct connection with the beloved and her appearance suggests a shift, making the central female figure something to be tended as well as tamed, while nevertheless remaining symbolic of a male-dominated power balance. The contrast between the women in different landscapes highlights the reliance of both on male intervention, following the pattern generally identified by ecofeminism.

The Komnenian Novels[234]

We have four extant romances or novels from the Komnenian period, all of which are written in 'learned' Greek and three of which are in verse. They are Theodore Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, [235] Eumathios Makrembolites' prose story *Hysmine and Hysminias*, [236] the fragmentary *Aristandros and Kallithea* by Constantine Manasses,[237] and Niketas Euganianos' *Drosilla and Charikles*.[238] While the four texts

[233] Ibid. 7.12-41.

[234] The translation used here for all four novels is *Four Byzantine Novels*, trans. E. Jeffreys (Liverpool, 2012).

[235] *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* survives in four manuscripts, Heidelbergensis Palatinus gr. 43 (early fourteenth century); Vaticanus Urbinas gr 134 (mid-fifteenth century); Laurentianus Aquisiti e Doni 341 (early sixteenth century); Vaticanus gr. 121 (thirteenth century). Two modern editions of the text have been produced, *Theodori Prodromi de Rhodanthes et Dosiclis amoribus libri IX*, ed. M. Marcovich (Leipzig, 1992) and *Il romanzo bizantino del XII secolo*, ed. F. Conca, (Turin, 1994) pp. 63-303.

[236] For a full discussion of the forty-three manuscripts which preserve this novel see A. Cataldi Palau, 'La tradition manuscrite d'Eustathe Makrembolitès', *Revue d'histoire des textes* 10 (1980) pp. 75–113. A number of editions of the novel appeared during the nineteenth century and earlier, two recent editions being by Conca, *Il romanzo bizantino*, pp. 499-687 and M. Marcovich, *Eustathius Macrembolites, De Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus libri XI* (Munich, 2001).

[237] The fragments of *Aristandros* exist in collections of extracts, discussed by Elizabeth Jeffreys in *Four Byzantine Novels* pp. 276-278. The modern editions include *Der Roman des Konstantinos Manasses: Überlieferung, Rekonstruktion, Textausgabe der Fragmente*, ed. O. Mazal (Vienna, 1967); *Συμβολὴ στὴ μελέτη τοῦ ποιητικοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Κωσταντίνου Μανασσῆ καὶ κρικτικὴ ἔκδοση τοῦ μυθιστορήματος του «Τα*

share certain features, they are perhaps a more disparate group than the Palaiologan works which would follow them. The protagonists are aristocratic playthings of fate and are more passive than modern readers are accustomed to.[239] The stories generally revolve around an attractive young couple who must leave home, usually because of parental disapproval of the match or prior engagements, and who are then separated by external forces such as storms, pirates and would-be lovers, before being reunited and their relationship blessed. The maintenance of chastity throughout these ordeals and the involvement of the ancient gods are also key features of these texts. Natural settings continued to be utilised within these stories as well. *Hysmine and Hysminias* in particular presents the garden not only as a symbol of wealth and a place for entertainment, but increases the erotic dimension, using the garden and its decoration to instruct the hero, in particular concerning matters of love. In many ways they do not differ substantially from the ancient novels discussed above.

The eroticism of landscape is arguably a less obvious feature in the Komnenian romances. Nonetheless, while the most overtly sensual passages tend to be set indoors, the garden still has a role to play. Occasionally the lovers meet in gardens connected to one of their houses or where they are guests, or slaves, but only briefly. Garden meetings in these romances come with a continued risk of discovery, and are aided and abetted by friends and enemies. Nevertheless, such meetings help cement the relationship or are scenes of confirmed recognition that cannot be fully realised in a more public setting, like the recurring motif of the feast. The garden in *Hysmine and Hysminias* is an exception.[240]

κατ' Ἀρίστανδρον καὶ Καλλιθέα», ed. E. Tsolakes (Thessalonica, 1967) and *Il romanzo bizantino*, ed. Conca, pp. 684-777.

[238] *Drosilla and Charikles* appears in one thirteenth-century manuscript, Venetus Marcianus graecus 412, and three fifteenth-century manuscripts, Parisinus graecus 2908, Vaticanus urbinas gr 134, and Laurentianus aquisiti e Doni 341. Conca has produced two modern editions of the text *Nicetas Eugenianus de Drosillae et Chariclis amoribus* (Amsterdam, 1990) and *Il romanzo bizantino* pp. 305-497.

[239] Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 61-65.

[240] See M. Alexiou, 'A Critical Reappraisal of Eustahios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*' *BMGS* 3 (1977) pp. 23-43; C. Jouanno, 'Women in Byzantine Novels of the Twelfth Century: an Interplay

Here the garden retains its eroticism in that it is the place where Hysmine begins her flirtation. It is in the garden that Hysminias first attempts to make love to Hysmine but is prevented. Artistic images within the garden also serve to initiate Hysminias in the ways of loving, indicating who Eros is and how inescapable his power. The connection between art and nature in this work is heavily stressed through extended *ekphraseis* both of the artworks and the garden. In fact, it is these images which receive most of the attention devoted to the garden, being presented in long descriptive sections. The point is made specifically that the characters enter the garden to view these images and again the connection with Eros is highlighted. Despite the direct action of Hysmine in the garden, it remains very much a male space, where the hero and his friends walk freely and feasts are held at the behest of Hysmine's father, and where they discuss the various sculptures, with the heroine, like the garden itself, bordering the action.

One other example of the erotic landscape in this novel can be found in the virginity test which Hysmine must undergo, and its connection with a specific place dedicated to a female divinity. It draws on an event mentioned in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, in which Leucippe enters a cave dedicated to Artemis and containing the panpipes placed there by Pan, as a means of proving her virginity.[241] In that work it is the mythological aspect rather than the place itself on which the focus is placed, but like the virginity test in *Hysmine and Hysminias* the event is of public importance, if not often frequented.[242]

In terms of the heroines' beauty, the Komnenian novels usually recount the first meeting of the lovers usually through a first person narrative of the hero presented to a

Between Norm and Fantasy', in L. Garland (ed.) *Byzantine Women: varieites of experience 800-1200* (Aldershot, 2006) pp. 141-162.

[241] Ach. Tat. 8.13.

[242] Eustathios Makrembolites, 'Hysmine and Hysminias', 11.17.3, *Four Byzantine Novels*, ed. E. Jeffreys, p. 267; *Il romanzo bizantino* ed. Conca, p. 680-81.

fellow captive so that we get his feelings as to her appearance directly from his own report. Again the *ekphrasis* of the heroine uses natural imagery, though it is more extensive than in the ancient novels. Hysmine, following classical convention, has lips tinted red so that on sight 'you would say that the girl had crushed a rose with her lips'.[243] Drosilla's face is like a meadow, with the narcissus and rose in her complexion, violet-like eyes and ivy-like hair.[244] Rodanthe is not only well-formed in the image of Artemis but her 'flesh mimicked white snow', and she resembled the clinging vine and cypress tree.[245] When Dosikles believes that she has died he laments:

> Alas, Rodanthe, where is the springtime of your youth,
> the cypress of your fair figure,
> the roses of your cheeks and your lips,
> the ivy of your locks (that strange adornment)
> which weaves around your head as if around a plane tree?
> Where are the lilies of your fair kisses,
> the myrtle of your body, the verdure of your flesh,
> the flowers of your eyelids? Alas, maiden,
> the apple has shrivelled, the pomegranate has withered,
> the trees have lost their leaves, the lilies have drooped;
> the fruit lies on the ground, the charm has perished,
> autumn has come too soon upon the year.[246]

Unlike the beloved in *Digenis* these natural descriptions of the heroines do not link them with the garden, Drosilla and the meadow is the nearest equivalent. Nevertheless, the

[243] ' Ibid., 3.6.4, *Four Byzantine Novels* pp. 196-197; *Il romanzo bizantino* ed. Conca, pp. 140-141, 'Εἶπος ἰδων ῥόδον ἐκθλῖψαι τὴν κόρην τοῖς χείλεσι'.
[244] Niketas Eugenianos, 'Drosilla and Charikles' 4.125-130, *Four Byzantine Novels*, ed. E. Jeffreys, p. 390; *Il romanzo bizantino* ed. Conca, pp. 372-373
[245] Theodore Prodromos, 'Rodanthe and Dosikles' 1.42 and 2.209, *Four Byzantine Novels*, ed. E. Jeffreys, pp. 21 and 42; *Il romanzo bizantino* ed. Conca pp. 66-67 and pp. 100-101, 'Μίμημα λευκῆς χιόνος το σαρκίον' and 'ὡς ἀναδενδράς, ὡς κυπάριττος νέα'.
[246] Ibid., 6.291-302, *Four Byzantine Novels*, ed. E. Jeffreys, p. 105; *Il romanzo bizantino* ed. Conca pp. 212-213, '"Ὅμοι Ῥοδάνθη, ποὺ τὸ τῆς ἥβης ἔαρ,/ἡ κυπάριττος τῆς καλῆς ἡλικίας,/τὸ τῆς παρειᾶς καὶ τὸ τοῦ χείλους ῥόδον,/ὁ τῶν πλοκάμων κιττός (ἡ ξένη χάρις),/ὁ τὴν κορυφὴν ὡς πλατάνιστον πλέκων;/ποῦ σοι τὰ κρίνα τῶν καλῶν φιλημάτων,/τοῦ σώματος τὰ μύρτα, σαρκὸς ἡ χλόη,/τὸ τῶν βλεφάρων ἄνθος; ὤμοι, παρθένε,/μαραίνεται τὸ μῆλον, ἡ ῥοιὰ φθίνει,/φυλλορροεῖ τὰ δένδρα, πίπτει τὰ κρίνα·/ εἰς γῆν ὁ καρπός, ἡ χάρις παρερρύη,/τοῦ φθινοπώρου προφθάσαντος τὸν χρόνον᾽.

imagery is very traditional and can be found in other works of the period, such as Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*.[247]

The Komnenian romances as a group do not differ vastly in their presentations of nature from the novels of the Second Sophistic. *Hysmine and Hysminias* in particular develops the role of the garden, maintaining its eroticism but expanding the means by which it educates the lovers to include a range of artistic images in an ekphrastic set-piece. The natural world remains the purview of male society, used by the male characters to describe the beauty of the heroines in conventional ways. The exceptions to the male-dominated environment are the settings for the virginity trials, often associated with female deities, though the priests involved are usually male. Nevertheless, women and nature are still under the mastery of men or divine beings, so that a negative, ecofeminist reading of these works remains relevant. That said, neither the heroine nor the hero are linked directly with a particular landscape, so the relationship between mankind and the natural environment is more distant that it appears in the novels of the Second Sophistic.

Theodore Hyrtakenos' *Description of the Garden of St. Anna*

The last Greek work we will discuss before moving on to the Palaiologan romances is contemporary to them, though it is not itself a romantic work.[248] Following in the

[247] For the traditional image of beauty in Byzantium and its use in learned works such as the *Alexiad* see M. Hatzaki, *Beauty and the Male Body in Byzantium: Perceptions and Representations in Art and Text* (Basingstoke, 2009) pp. 7-32.

[248] Its author was a writer and teacher in Constantinople under Andronikos II Palaiologos as discussed in M-L. Dolezal and M. Mavroudi 'Theodore Hyrtakenos' *Description of the Garden of St Anna* and the Ekphrasis of Gardens', in Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.) *Byzantine Garden Culture* p. 106.

tradition of Gregory of Nazianzus and his sensory exposition of spring, pleasure and nature, Theodore Hyrtakenos wrote an *ekphrasis* of the garden of St Anna.[249]

In his *ekphrasis* it is the garden description rather than the spiritual story which forms the longest section in this text, although it functions as the setting for Anna's contemplation of her childlessness and her prayers to God. The description of the garden itself highlights key features already familiar to us from the earlier works discussed. It begins with a discussion of the enclosed nature of the garden, separating it from the rest of the estate through a wall made of stone in the shape of a ring.[250] Hyrtakenos stresses that the enclosure protects the garden from thieves and ensures that 'the one who enslaves his eyes to love' could not 'burn into carnal fire because of curious looks <into the garden>'.[251] This is a familiar *topos* from earlier works like *Hysmine and Hysminias*, with the enclosed heroine attracting the lascivious gaze of the hero. Obviously that is not the case here but the author plays with the ideas of fertility and sexuality so that Anna is described in an incredibly beautiful and fertile garden whose fruitfulness she compares with her own barrenness. In that enclosed space Anna essentially becomes a virgin again and is blessed with pregnancy. The concept of the garden as a representation of sexuality is present in earlier Christian material such as the *Song of Songs* with its abundant floral imagery, as well as in the *Symbolic Garden* and *ekphraseis* of spring discussed earlier in this thesis.[252] Significant also is that for Hyrtakenos, the garden is Anna's space. Her husband in his own distress at the situation, retreats to 'the thickets of the mountain' to

[249] An edition of the text appears as '῎Εκφρασις εὶς τὸν παράδεισον τῆς ἁγίας Ἄννης τῆς μητρὸς τῆς Θεοτόκου', in J. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1829–33; repr. Hildesheim, 1962) vol. 3, pp. 59–70.
[250] '῎Εκφρασις εὶς τὸν παράδεισον τῆς ἁγίας Ἄννης' *Anecdota Graeca.*, 3:59–70 translated in Dolezal and M. Mavroudi 'Theodore Hyrtakenos' *Description of the Garden of St Anna*', p. 143.
[251] Ibid.
[252] The floral imagery of the *Symbolic Garden* is discussed on pages 41-44 of this thesis and the *ekphraseis* of spring on pages 31-32.

live with the wild animals.[253] The garden is in contrast a civilised space, though kept separate enough for Anna to have complete privacy.

Mary-Lyon Dolezal and Maria Mavroudi have highlighted the many similarities between this text and the Palaiologan romances, as well as the earlier works studied here. The *ekphrasis* of a garden seems, based on the research of Dolezal and Mavroudi, to have had a fairly clear format by the thirteenth century, beginning with the enclosing wall, discussing the various trees and plants in full, paradisiacal bloom, and often containing a long description of a fountain or other statuary. It does not appear to have mattered whether the text related to a love story or a spiritual one. Both could utilise concepts of fertility and the consummation of love, or a divinely-granted pregnancy, within the enclosed space. The concept that the woman is made fertile by both the space around her and by masculine 'tending' in this text is reflected through the masculine involvement of God, and will become a significant *topos* of the romances to be discussed below. That the garden space in Hyrtakenos' work remains Anna's space is also important. As this text is directly contemporary with the Palaiologan romances themselves, it is uncertain which text may have influenced the other. However, the description, imagery and associations of the garden as described by Hyrtakenos came from the same milieu as those of the romances, which will be analysed in more detail below.

What I hope to have shown in this survey is that the use of natural landscapes to reflect sexuality and beauty in the romance genre has a long history in the Greek language. However, the role of the garden developed from a male-dominated, fairly peripheral setting which could nevertheless be used to discuss the beginnings of an erotic association between hero and heroine, into a more feminine place, closely connected with the heroine's appearance as well as her romantic relationship. In the process, the garden's

[253] Dolezal and Mavroudi, 'Theodore Hyrtakenos' p. 143.

plot role was extended so that it becomes a significant feature of the romance genre, even if the natural aspects are at times overshadowed by the sculptural features in contains.

The Palaiologan Romances

There has been some discussion as to why the romantic novel reappeared as a genre in the twelfth century. Beaton argues that the authors of the Komnenian romances were searching for some means of understanding their situation in a struggling empire after the defeat at Manzikert in 1071.[254] While recent scholarship has downplayed the aftermath of Manzikert, it seems fair to say that the eleventh century was a period when '(c)ultural flux mirrored political uncertainties', and that it influenced intellectual society under the Komnenoi.[255] The Palaiologan period can be viewed along similar lines, but the romances from that period have at times suffered from being considered as poorly written imitations of the western romances. Certainly, there is some evidence for Latin influence, for example, the joust in *Livistros and Rodamni*, and the Latin origin of the hero, the use of 'frankish' as a positive descriptor in both *Livistros* and the *Achilleid*, as well as the castle motif and arguably the imagery of Eros.[256] Conversely, there are also some similarities in the depiction and role of gardens within Persian and other Oriental literature.[257] As the earlier discussion in this chapter has shown, Byzantine authors also had no lack of earlier Greek material on which to draw for inspiration when it came to

[254] Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 54.
[255] M. Angold, 'Belle Époque or Crisis? (1025–1118)**',** *Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, 2009) p. 607.
[256] Cupane discusses the influence of Western literature on the Byzantine romances, with a particular focus on the role of the castle in 'Il motivo del castello nella narrative tardo-bizantina. Evoluzione di un' allegoria' *JoB* 27 (1978) pp. 229-67, and in her discussion of the figure of Eros in '"Ἔρως-Βασιλεύς": La figura di Eros nel romanzo bizantino d'amore', *Atti del Accademia di Arti di Palermo*, series 4, 33:2 (1974) pp. 243-97. See also the discussion by P. Agapitos on pp. 109-111 in 'Ἡ χρονολογικὴ ἀκολουθία τῶν μυθιστορημάτων *Καλλίμαχος, Βέλθανδρος* καὶ *Λίβιστρος*' in N.M. Panayotakis (ed.) *Origini della letteratura neogreca. Atti del secondo Congresso Internazionale "Neograeca Medii Aevi" (Venezia 7-10 novembre 1991)* vol. 1 (Venice, 1993) pp. 97-134.
[257] See M.R. Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage*, (Philadelphia, 1987) and J. Meisami, 'Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi, Hafez', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 17, (1985) p. 229-260.

romantic landscapes. The key features of the garden, its connection with beauty and sexuality, have been shown to be established traits which developed over time. These are the aspects which have been focused on in earlier scholarship on the topic, for example in the works of Littlewood and Barber among others.[258] These aspects, I would argue, are all taken a step further in the Palaiologan romances *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, *Livistros and Rodamni* and the *Achilleid*. [259]

These four works, along with *The Tale of Troy*, are original vernacular Greek compositions dateable, albeit loosely, to the mid-thirteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries. [260] In his 2006 edition of *Livistros and Rodamni*, Agapitos has suggested that that particular romance was produced in the mid-thirteenth century at the Laskarid court in Nicaea, based on the texts that influenced it, its courtly references, in particular the shield-raising ceremony, and on its apparent influence on *Consolation Concerning Ill Fortune and Good Fortune* (*Λόγος παρηγορητικὸς περὶ Δυστυχίας καὶ Εὐτυχίας*) as preserved in a manuscript dating to between 1354 and 1374, Leipzig Gr. 35, which appears to have utilised an earlier manuscript preserving *Livistros*.[261] The connection with the Laskarid court is not secure, but it has generally been accepted that it is at least one of the earliest romances.[262] *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* has been dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. The dating of this romance relies on an epigram by Manual Philes,

[258] Littlewood, 'Romantic Paradises'; Barber, 'Reading the garden in Byzantium'. See also, C. Cupane, 'Il Motivo del Castello Nella Narrativa Tardo-Bizantine: Evoluzione di un'allegoria', *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik* 33, (1983) pp. 229-267; P.A. Agapitos, 'The Erotic Bath in in the Byzantine Vernacular Romance Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 41 (1990) pp. 257-273; Jouanno, 'Women in Byzantine Novels'.

[259] *Historia extraordinaria de Beltandro y Crisanza*, ed. J. Egea (Serie Bilingüe de Textos Griegos Medievales, 1.,Granada, 1998) pp. 57-137; *Le Roman de Callimaque et de Chrysorrhoé*, ed. M. Pichard (Paris, 1956); *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου και Ροδάμνης. Κριτική έκδοση της διασκευής α*, ed. P.A. Agapitos (Athens, 2006); *The Byzantine Achilleid. The Naples Version*, eds. P.A. Agapitos, K. Hult, and O.L. Smith (Vienna, 1999). All references to the English translations of these romances come from *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. G. Betts (New York, 1995). The editions of the texts used are abbreviated as shown in the list of abbreviations at the beginning of this thesis.

[260] See Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*; P.A. Agapitos, and O. Smith, *The Study of Medieval Greek Romance: A Reassessment of Recent Work* (Copenhagen, 1992) and E. Jeffreys, 'Byzantine romances: Eastern or Western?' in *Renaissance Encounters* pp. 221-237.

[261] *Livistros* pp. 50 and 197.

[262] E. Jeffreys, 'Byzantine Romances', p. 223.

which describes a similar tale and attributes it to Andronikos Palaiologos, the cousin of Emperor Andronikos II and nephew to Michael VIII, who is believed to have died as a monk around 1310.[263] There are differences between the story presented by Philes, and the *Kallimachos* we have, which may be explained by scribal adaption, or which may suggest the poem refers to another text, the elements of the romance stories being fairly repetitive. Nevertheless, Philes' poem indicates that individuals like Andronikos were writing such poetry, and that it was appreciated within the Byzantine court milieu of the time. While the manuscripts that preserve them are often of a considerably later date, it seems relatively safe to suggest that the romances were produced largely during the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[264]

The Palaiologan romances share a consistency in style and theme which 'suggest an implicit awareness of a common genre'.[265] Their use of a more vernacular register and unrhymed fifteen-syllable verse form a stylistic link, while their subject matter, focusing on young, aristocratic lovers in chivalric or courtly environments, follows set patterns which nevertheless allow for creative flexibility. *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* and *Livistros and Rodamni*, are most obviously connected to one another and utilise the more fantastical elements of the genre while *The Tale of Achilles*, or the *Achilleid*, combines romantic elements with a more familiar landscape, in

[263] *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. E. Trapp (Vienna, 1976-96) no. 21439. For a discussion on the attribution of this work to Andronikos Palaiologos see Knös 1962, pp. 274-95; *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, Betts, p. 33 and Agapitos and Smith, *The Study of Medieval Greek Romance*, pp. 55-56.

[264] *Kallimachos* is preserved in one early sixteenth centurymanuscript (Codex Lugdunensis Scaligeranus 55; *Livistros* is found in five manuscripts dated between the mid-fifteenth and early sixteenth century (Vaticanus gr. 2391, Scorialensis Ψ IV 22, Neapolitanus III A a 9, Parisinus gr. 2910 and Leiden Scaligeranus 55); three manuscripts preserve the *Achilleid* (Neapolitanus III B 27, Lond. Add. MS 8241 and Bodleian Auct. T. 5. 24); and *Velthandros* survives in one manuscript from the sixteenth century (Parisinus gr. 2909).

[265] Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 101.

a manner which has been linked by some to the *Digenis* cycle.[266] Of the five works mentioned, the *Tale of Troy* seems to be the latest and makes the least use of the natural world. As such it will largely be left out of this study. The other four works which will be focused on here are anonymous, with the possible exception of *Kallimachos*. Additional issues include the implications of oral tradition in the repeated phrases and lines within and across the texts, as well as the variations between manuscripts, which can often be extensive. These factors have been written about in detail and will not concern us here as they have limited influence on the motif of the garden and other landscapes.[267]

The Palaiologan romances certainly display a particular interest in their settings, being full of *ekphraseis* of such spaces, in connection with three areas; the town or palace, the wilderness, and somewhere in between, the garden. Carolina Cupane has discussed the use of the castle as a motif with these texts, mentioning gardens in connection with them, but the gardens and other landscapes within these romances deserve further study as they play a role beyond that of simple set-pieces and displays of rhetoric.[268] The gardens of the Palaiologan romances 'belong more to the world of fairyland than do their Komnenian forebears.'[269] They, and other landscapes, continue to affect the plot, arguably more obviously than in the earlier works. The erotic nature of gardens in particular is increasingly present, and their connection with the heroine and her beauty, as opposed to the hero, extends the presentation in *Digenis* and the *ekphrasis* of Hyrtakenos.

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[266] Ibid., pp. 102-103, 117-118 and 147; K. Mitsakis, *Προβλήματα σχετικὰ μὲ τὸ κείμενο, τὶς πηγὲς καὶ τὴ χρονολόγηση τῆς Ἀχιλληΐδας* (Thessaloniki, 1963). The connection has been questioned by Agapitos and Smith in *The Medieval Greek Romance* p. 80.

[267] See for example the discussion in Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance*; E. and M. Jeffreys, 'The Oral Background of Byzantine Popular Poetry', *Oral Tradition*, 1:3 (1986) pp.504-547; P. Agapitos, *et al.* 'SO Debate Genre, structure and poetics in the Byzantine vernacular romances of love' *Symbolae Osloenses* 791 (2004) pp.7-101; and Horrocks *Greek*, pp. 344-45, who discusses the learned language features visible in *Kallimachos* and suggests that a 'morphologically conservative vernacular' may have been used for all the original romances, but was later adapted by copyists in 'western dominated areas'.

[268] Cupane, 'Il Motivo del Castello Nella Narrativa Tardo-Bizantine'.

[269] Littlewood, 'Gardens of the Byzantine World', p. 66.

The descriptions of the gardens

The gardens described in *Velthandros and Chrysandza, Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe, Livistros and Rodamni* and the *Achilleid* vary in size and style, but retain similar features. The manner in which they are presented can be described as 'broken'. Often the different features of the gardens are presented in turn, moving from the enclosure, water sources, trees and flowers, to the fountains, statues and bathhouses that adorn them.[270] This is most obviously the case in the *Achilleid* and *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, two texts with gardens containing elegant bathhouses and golden trees.[271] Some of the gardens described in these romances are quite large and lavish, like the garden area attached to Eros' castle in *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, others consist of little more than a small courtyard, such as the internal garden of the Silver Castle in *Livistros and Rodamni*. The descriptions differ but usually include shady trees, under which the lovers can meet, as well as flowers and fruit, all in timeless full bloom.[272] Other than specific references to roses and lilies, the types of plants in the gardens are largely left up to the imagination. This is similar to the treatment of gardens in the Second Sophistic novels, described as paradises with many flowers, with those actually named including roses and lilies, as well as violets, hyacinths and narcissus.[273] In the larger gardens we are given more idea of space; for example, the garden of Eros in *Velthandros* has a beautiful terrace.[274] All feature at least one man-made object, usually a fountain, and are quiet, and reasonably

[270] See Agapitos, *Narrative Structure*, pp. 177-204.
[271] The bathhouse is described in lines 291-343 of *Kallimachos* and lines 831-855 in *Achilleid*; the golden tree appears at line 507 and line 940 in the *Achilleis byzantina (e cod. Brit. Mus. addit. 8241)* and in lines 317-18 in *Kallimachos*.
[272] This reflects the paradisical nature of the gardens as well as the youth of those within them. It is a common feature of garden descriptions not only due to the biblical Eden but also the ever-fruitful gardens at Alcinous described by Homer.
[273] I. Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure*, (Stockholm, 2001) p. 97; F. Zeitlin, 'The Poetics of Eros', in D. Halperin, J.J. Winkler and F.I. Zeitlin (eds.) *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton, 1990) pp. 445-6.
[274] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans.. Betts, p. 13, *Velthandros* line 474.

private, spaces. They are also so beautiful as to be beyond the description of the pen, with authorial interventions designed to stress the beauty of the space without going into exhaustive detail.[275] The *ekphraseis* of gardens in these romances are therefore not dissimilar to the evidence we have for real Byzantine gardens, discussed above. They certainly appear to follow the directives for pleasure gardens presented in the *Geoponika*, a compendium of agricultural and horticultural information assembled in the tenth century under the auspices of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus:

> 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 that the air about it, drawing on what rises from the plants, will make the property healthy. It should be entirely surrounded by a wall or other enclosure. Do not plant it at random or in a confused way, relying, so to speak, on the contrasts between plants to lend beauty. Instead put in each kind in its own place, so that the smaller are not overpowered or deprived of nourishment by the larger. Fill the space between the trees with roses, lilies, violets and crocuses, plants that are the most pleasant and inviting in appearance, aroma and use.[276]

The requisite feature for all these gardens is that they are enclosed, as most real Byzantine gardens appear to have been. The enclosure is generally a wall, but it may also be the castle buildings which surround it. Thus access both to the gardens and to the people connected with them, either Eros or the heroine, is limited. This sense of enclosure is an important aspect of the gardens described. Nature itself is really outside of society, a wilderness, a place of chaos outwith normal social conventions. By enclosing the garden within walls and connecting it to the castle or walled town the author brings untamed nature into society and the care of a gardener, whilst creating an area at least partially free from normal social conventions, being in essence a private

[275] For example line 490 of the *Achilleis byzantina (e cod. Brit. Mus. addit. 8241)* 'καὶ ποῖος νοῦς νὰ δυναστῇ καθάρια νὰ τὸ εἰπῇ;'.
[276] *Geoponika: Farm work: A Modern Translation of the Roman and Byzantine Farming Book*, ed. A. Dalby (Totnes, 2011) p. 200.

space.[277] Walled gardens are designed to provide a good environment for the plants we choose, while excluding unwanted plants, seen as weeds.[278] To an extent this concept is visible in the exclusion, or at least attempted exclusion, of outsiders from the gardens described. The walls can, however, act as an access point as well. In both the *Achilleid* and *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* the heroine is seen on the walls by a man who then falls in love with her. In the case of Chrysorrhoe the sighting directly leads to her abduction. Such walls can be, and have been, interpreted in a number of different ways. As they usually connect the garden space with a castle, they have been seen as the protective construction of the heroine's parents, and primarily her father as the owner of the castle. In the *Achilleid* the connection between the walls and the heroine's chastity is also made clear, as Achilles destroys the walls of the garden and the heroine's bed-chamber after symbolically marrying her.[279] The walls themselves can be decorative, full of allegorical imagery. This is most obviously the case in *Livistros*, where the walls of the Silver Castle, the home of Rodamni and her parents, are richly ornamented with depictions of the virtues, the twelve months and the Ἐρωτόπουλα, the erotic virtues.[280] Like the garden walls in *Hysmine and Hysminias*, these decorated walls are part of the hero's erotic awakening. Here they appear after Livistros has been enslaved by Eros, and they do not connect directly with the garden, or the heroine, although her bedchamber is referenced immediately after the walls. Although they are therefore the most splendid of the walls described in the romances, their role is slightly different, as the hero does not need to overcome them directly, instead entering the castle as Rodamni's accepted

[277] Agapitos and Smith, *The Study of Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 85-6.
[278] Rudd, *Greenery*, p. 165.
[279] *Achilleid*, p. 54, lines 1275-1277 'Τὸ ἀπελατίκιν του ἔσυρεν τὸ ἐρωτικόν του ἐκεῖνο,/ ἐτίναξεν τὸ χέριν του, κρούει το εἰς τὸ τεῖχος,/ καὶ ἀπάνω κάτω ἐρράγισεν τῆς κόρης τὸ κουβοῦκλιν'.
[280] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, pp. 114-119; *Livistros* lines 1022-1249.

husband, after victory in combat.[281] The decorative and interpretive function of the walls in the other romances remains secondary to the role of the wall as a physical barrier. Entry in to the gardens through these gated walls certainly initiates the romantic aspect of these stories, and often initiates the hero and heroine in the ways of love, whether overtly erotic or otherwise. As much is hinted at in the words inscribed at the entrance to Eros' castle in *Velthandros and Chrysandza*:

> The man never touched by the shafts of the cupids will straightway be subjected to ten million woes by them when he sees Love's castle from the inside. [282]

Water, whether controlled or simply guided, is a second crucial feature of the many gardens of the romances. The water in the pools and fountains, sometimes with an associated reservoir, stream or river, can be the means of watering and maintaining the garden, but it is equally a source of refreshment for those enjoying the garden. Love was considered to be refreshing and revitalising like water, an allusion to love's connection with the garden that was perhaps quite obvious to contemporary readers.[283] The fountains and pools bear inscriptions of love and prophecy, cause mechanical birds to sing and are focal points of the gardens. Aside from the decorated pools and ornate fountains in these gardens, the bathhouse is a major source of water. In both *Kallimachos* and the *Achilleid* the bathhouses are filled with rose water, a familiar flower from the garden, and one with specifically erotic connotations. In *Kallimachos* the bathhouse is the setting for the consummation of the relationship between Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe. The combination of water and furnaces within the bathhouses, as well as their opulent

[281] For a full discussion of the imagery used in describing the walls, and its precedents, see *Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου καὶ Ροδάμνης (Livistros and Rodamne) The Vatican Version* ed. T. Lendari (Athens, 2007) pp. 325-347 and C. Cupane, 'Concezione e rappresentazione dell'amore nella narrativa tardo-bizantina. Un tentative di analisi comparata', in A.M. Babbi, A. Pioletti, F. Rizzo-Nervo and C. Stevanoni (eds.) *Medioevo romanzo e orientale. Testi e prospettive storiografiche colloquio internazionale (Verona, 4-6 aprile 1990)* (Soveria Mannelli, 1992) pp. 283-305.

[282] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 10; *Velthandros* lines 259-61 'Τὸν οὐκ ἐφθάσαντα ποτὲ τὰ βέλη τῶν Ἐρώτων/μυριοχιλιοκατάρδοτον εὐθὺς να τὸν ποιήσουν,/ ὅστις τὸ Ἐρωτόκαστρον ἀπέσω να τὸν ἴδῃ'.

[283] Littlewood, 'Romantic Paradises' p. 97.

decorations, gold and precious stones being key features of these buildings in both *Kallimachos* and the *Achilleid*, indicate the erotic fire of love and the beauty of the lovers. Bathhouses themselves had attracted comment as erotic spaces since classical times, and the nudity connected with them occasionally led to religious disapproval of public baths in the Byzantine period, though they often featured religious iconography and could be associated with healing.[284] The implicit connections between fire, water and love are utilised by the author of *Kallimachos* not only in the erotic scene between the hero and heroine; the fire of Chrysorrhoe's love for Kallimachos causes her to weep for him after her abduction by the foreign king. That king in turn tries to quench her emotions by keeping her in a garden and constantly watering her, and is completely unsuccessful, the implicit connection between love and water meaning that until Kallimachos returns to her, she remains in passionate mourning.

The description of the natural features comes second to those of the man-made objects within the garden, as is often the case for *ekphraseis* of real gardens. The detailed portrayal of statues and fountains, often of gold or marble, and with some reference to love, are frequently almost all the information we get on the garden space. This seems to draw specifically on *Hysmine and Hysminias* and its set-piece descriptions. In the Palaiologan romances, even the plants are sometimes described as though man-made:

> He threw a glance up at them and saw their beauty, their pleasant symmetry and the graceful rise of their trunks. You would certainly have said that a carpenter had turned them smooth on a lathe, set them upright and planted them there. The form of their flowers and leaves was very beautiful.[285]

At other times the trees are actually artificial, such as in the garden in the Dragon's castle where, amongst the heavily perfumed flowers and curtain of roses and

[284] P. Magdalino, 'The bath of Leo the Wise and the « Macedonian Renaissance » revisited. Topography, iconography, ceremonial, ideology', *DOP* 42 (1988) pp. 97-118.
[285] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 10; *Velthandros* lines 286-291 'Ἄνωθεν βλέμμαν ἔρριψεν ὡς πρὸς τὰ δένδρη τάχα/καὶ δένδρων εἶδε καλλονὴν καὶ ἰσότηταν εὐμόρφνη/καὶ τὴν κορμοανάβασιν εὐκολωτάτην πάνυ,/ὅτι νὰ εἶπες ἐκ παντὸς ὅτι ῥουκανοτέκτων/ἐρρουκανοετούρνευσεν, σταθμίσας ἔπηξέν τα,/καὶ τοῦ ἀνθοφύλλου ὁ πλασμὸς πολλὰ ὡραιομένος'.

lilies, is a beautiful pool and 'a tree from gold and on it skilfully placed jewels for fruit'.[286]

The emphasis on the artistic nature of the gardens is a common descriptive tool in Byzantine literature. Control of nature is the key aspect of the garden and man-made art represents and extends this concept. Not only does it in essence tame the wilderness, trees made of gold never fade, making the garden even more evergreen and timeless. In the Byzantine imagination, as in the classical before them, cultivated nature was considered far more beautiful than untamed nature, so that '(w)ith their enclosed and irrigated orchard, vineyard, and orderly rows of greens, the storied gardens of Alkinoos (Odyssey, 7.112–32) outshone the flourishing grove, vine, and soft flowery meadows of Kalypso's island (Odyssey, 5.63–74)'.[287] These two settings became contrasting points of reference for writers depicting fertile landscapes, the one being clearly favoured over the other. The presence of artistic objects, like the enclosing wall, stressed the cared for quality of the garden and its ownership.

The artistic objects found in these gardens are more than decorative. They often prophesise the fate of the lovers in some way, for example the statues in Eros' Castle seen by Velthandros depict the power of Eros, as well as foretelling Velthandros' own future love for Chrysandza.[288] The fountain in Rodamni's courtyard does not prefigure the love of the hero for the heroine, instead following on from their marriage, but it predicts their situation:

> Here is a pool, a fountain with water, a fair inner courtyard, the noble mistress of the Graces, Queen Rodamni, and her king, a mighty man from abroad, a prince in his own land. He went into exile because of her, he suffered but he did not fail, he won what he desired. However, pain and a

[286] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 43; *Kallimachos* lines 317-18 'τὸν χρυσὸν εἰς δένδρον μεταπλάττει,/ ἀντὶ καρπῶν δὲ τεχνικῶς ἐνέθηκεν τοὺς λίθους'.
[287] R. Rodgers, 'Κηποπιΐα: Garden Making and Garden Culture in the Geoponika', in Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.) *Byzantine Garden Culture*, p. 169.
[288] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, pp. 11-12; *Velthandros* lines 337-388.

> torment of two years await him after his joy. After that, those separated will be united and love will be without impediment.[289]

Such pieces are impressive, ornate and clearly important. Art as a human creation centres nature around it and the terminology used to describe the objects within the gardens 'turned the attention of the observer from the detail of a scene being depicted to its inner meaning or spiritual reality'.[290] Not only could such objects tell the reader of the plot, they could allow the reader an access point to the symbolism of the garden, in the case of Rodamni's fountain even going so far as to overtly link her with the garden space. The fountains and statues found in the gardens of the romances, like those in *Hysmine and Hysminias*, have a role to play not just in adorning the space, or indeed controlling it in some sense, they offer a deeper understanding of the role of the garden itself and its connection with love, for both the characters and the audience.

The garden space and the heroine

As we have seen, the garden and its imagery can be used when describing the beauty of the heroine, stressing the pleasing nature of both, but without any sense of worth beyond that of the male gaze. A major difference between the Palaiologan romances and their earlier Greek counterparts is the relationship between the garden and the heroine, with whom the garden is now unequivocally connected. Although the gardens of the romances are, like their antecedents, often, though not always, joined to a castle or other dwelling owned by the heroine's father or lover, the garden is now a space very much associated with the feminine. It is somewhere outwith society, protected both from it and by it,

[289] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 146; *Livistros* lines 2596-2603 '«Φισκίνα, βρύση καὶ νερόν, ξενόχροον μεσοκήπιν,/κυρὰ Χαρίτων εὐγενής, βασίλισσα Ροδάμνη,/καὶ τῆς Ροδάμνης βασιλεὺς ἄνθρωπος ξένος μέγας,/ ρήγας ἀπὸ τὴν χώραν του καὶ δι'αὕτην ἐξενώθην,/ ἔπαθε καὶ οὐκ ἀπέτυχεν, ἐκέρδησεν τὸ ἐπόθειν·/ πλὴν πάλιν μετὰ τὴν χαρὰν ἀπόκειται καὶ πόνος/καὶ δίχρονος τσιγαρισμὸς καὶ ἀποτότε πάλιν/ἀποξενώσεως ἕνωσις καὶ ἀπρόσκρουστος ἀγάπη»'.
[290] Gregory, 'Narratives of the Byzantine Landscape', p. 486.

remaining close to the untamed wilderness. Its enclosure sets the heroine apart in beauty and importance. Whereas in the ancient novels and the Komnenian works, the male characters walk freely in this space, now they only enter it in certain circumstances. The hero, being worthy of doing so, is able to enter the garden, but by implicit invitation. Velthandros only dares to enter Chrysandza's garden after hearing her say that she loves him, despite Eros' intervention two years previously.[291] After he is caught leaving her garden by the guards and imprisoned, it is not the guards but Chrysandza herself who addresses a complaint of trespassing to her father, though she does so in an elaborate scheme to save Velthandros. To make the complaint she 'donned the arms of a man, girt herself with boldness',[292] and addressed her father as follows:

> How can I not appear serious and disturbed when Your Majesty's men shamelessly enter my own garden as they see fit?[293]

The garden is clearly stated as belonging to Chrysandza herself and the presence of men in that space is presumptive and criminal.[294]

Kallimachos serves Chrysorrhoe in the garden of the Dragon's Castle, tending to her wounds after he has rescued her, once she has accepted his affection. The garden is not hers directly, and Kallimachos has travelled through it once already to reach her, but the description of the garden, and the description of the heroine, as will be discussed below, are so closely connected that, in combination with Kallimachos' role as bath-servant and nurse, there can be no doubt of Chrysorrhoe's hegemony in this space.

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[291] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 20; *Velthandros* lines 838-47.
[292] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 22; *Velthandros* line 928 'Ἅρμα ἀνδρὸς ἐφόρεσεν, ἀποτολμίας ζωνάριν'.
[293] Ibid.; *Velthandros* lines 936-939 '«Καὶ πῶς οὐ σχῆμα σοβαρὸν ἔχει μ'ἀγριωμένον,/ὅτι τῆς βασιλείας σου ἄνθρωποι, ὡς τοὺς δόξῃ,/εἰς περίβολιν ἀναιδῶς ἐμβαίνουν ἰδικό μου,/καθὰ ἀπόψα Βέλθανδρος ἦλθε, προσεχωρήθην;»'.
[294] The four guards who catch Velthandros find him leaving the garden and on his way to his quarters so presumably they are also stationed outside and not allowed direct access to the space.

Achilles is the exception in that he pole-vaults over the wall into the garden to see the heroine. Then again, even in his case, the heroine, who has previously refused Achilles' love, has been convinced by Eros to love him just before he accesses the garden. Thus the garden can be seen as the kingdom of the heroine, a place in which she is not only enclosed from society but in which she can, to a degree, choose whom to see. The unnamed heroine in the *Achilleid* when in her garden even goes so far as to state her wish to be a beautiful tree in the garden, untouched by love, expressing her sense of independence and safety in that space.[295] The more direct association between women and gardens can be seen in both *Digenis* and Hyrtakenos' text as well. In reality Byzantines were familiar with women having areas of control. The empress had her own quarters in the palace, in which she presided over a retinue of aristocratic women who held equivalent titles to those of their husbands, and who were present at court ceremonials. These spaces, guarded by eunuchs, clearly gave the empress considerable control, as here empresses are known to have continued the worship of icons during iconoclasm, and even hidden people who were out of favour with the emperor.[296] An area in which a woman had control was thus recognisable to Byzantines as being somewhat outside the male sphere, which itself is symbolised in these texts by the castle.

Feminine power in the garden can also be contrasted with male subservience in that space. Kallimachos, as mentioned above, tends Chrysorrhoe's wounds in the bathhouse of the garden, acting as nurse and servant. Later he becomes a servant to another man in order to be able to access the garden in which Chrysorrhoe is allowed to live after her abduction. Velthandros must follow the orders of his lady after his capture on leaving the garden. Achilles, most explicitly, contrasts correct masculine behaviour with the feminine garden space, indicating that, although he can fight myriad men, in the

[295] *Achilleid*, p. 47, lines 1050 – 1056.
[296] J. Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: women and empire in Byzantium* (Princeton, 2013) pp. 223 – 225.

heroine's bed, situated in the garden, if attacked he would be killed, as he himself becomes effeminate in that space.[297]

The *ekphrasis* of the heroine in each of these romances closely links her appearance with the garden, mirroring the *ekphrasis* of that space. The description of the heroine usually comes within a few lines of a description of a garden and is as full of natural imagery and concepts of art and artifice. The Palaiologan authors depict the garden and the heroine so that 'the beauty of the one reflects and augments that of the other'.[298] When Velthandros describes Chrysandza to Eros as the winner of the beauty contest he says:

> Her cheeks are rose-red, her lips have the colour of nature. Certainly, her mouth is perfumed.[299]

Chrysandza's neck is also described as 'from a lathe', as were the trees he saw earlier in Eros' garden, so that she too is so naturally beautiful as to appear to be a work of art.[300]

The unnamed heroine in the *Achilleid* is described as having red lips, a neck white as crystal, pale skin with rose-coloured cheeks and a spring-like mouth.[301] As mentioned above, she expresses her wishes to become a tree in the garden, and in the same song identifies herself with the various delightful sights and smells of the garden.[302]

The *ekphrasis* of Chrysorrhoe occurs after she has bathed and recovered from her ordeal of torture. We are told that:

> Her hair flowed down in rivers of lovely curls and shone on her head with a gleam which surpassed the golden rays of the sun. Her body, which was

[297] *Achilleid*, pp. 53-54, lines 1255-1260.
[298] Littlewood, 'Romantic Paradises', p. 99.
[299] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 18; *Velthandros* lines 703-704 'μάγουλα ῥοδοκόκκινα, αὐτόβαπτα τὰ χείλη./ἐμύριζε τὸ στόμαν της χωρίς ἀμφιβολίας'.
[300] Ibid.; *Velthandros* line 706 'τράχηλος τουρνεμένος', reflecting Betts, p. 10 and *Velthandros* line 290.
[301] *Achilleid*, p. 42, lines 872-877.
[302] Ibid., p. 47, lines 1042-1056.

> whiter than crystal, beguiled the sight with its beauty as it seemed to blend the charm of roses with its colour.[303]

Her golden hair is mirrored by the golden pavement in the bathhouse, and the golden tree and vine therein.[304] Chrysorrhoe's crystalline skin reminds us too of the roses and lilies that together form a curtain for the bathhouse.[305] The authorial exclamations questioning the ability to describe Chrysorrhoe's beauty also mimic those expressed by the author earlier in relation to the *ekphrasis* of the garden.[306] Not only is Chrysorrhoe's beauty likened to that of nature, it is specifically connected with the garden and bathhouse where she now is.

The *ekphrasis* of Rodamni is no less full of allusions to the beauty of nature but in common with the others, the rose is central to her image;

> Her lips were red and thin, like a rose when it opens at dawn to receive the dew [307]

Rose-coloured features, particularly cheeks, in combination with pale skin, at its best resembling milk with rose petals floating in it, as described by Ovid and Propertius, was the epitome of classical beauty, and many attempted to achieve the effect through the use of cosmetics.[308] This ideal was clearly continued in Byzantium for both men and women.[309] The rose has been a symbol of love and beauty since classical times and was

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[303] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 53; *Kallimachos* lines 811-816 'Βοστρύχους εἶχεν ποταμούς, ἐρωτικοὺς πλοκάμους·/ εἶχεν ὁ βόστρυχος αὐγὴν εἰς κεφαλὴν τῆς κόρης,/ ἀπέστιλβεν ὑπὲρ χρυσῆν ἀκτῖναν τοῦ ἡλίου./ Σῶμα λευκὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν τὴν τοῦ κρυστάλλου φύσιν·/ ὑπέκλεπτεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ σώματος ἡ χάρις./ Ἐδόκει γὰρ σὺν τῷ λευκῷ καὶ ῥόδου χάριν ἔχειν.'

[304] *Kallimachos* line 800 'τοῦ χρουσοῦ τὴν καλλονὴν τοῦ πάτου', line 317 'τὸν χρυσὸν εἰς δένδρον' and line 321 'ὁ χρυσὸς ὡς ἄμπελος'.

[305] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 43; *Kallimachos* lines 337-340 'Εἰς δὲ καὶ πάλιν τοῦ λουτροῦ τὴν ἐνδοτέραν θύραν/ βηλόθυρον ἐκρέμετο πρὸς τὸ λουτρὸν ἁρμόζον/ Καὶ γὰρ ἦν τὸ βηλόθυρον κρίνων καὶ ῥόδων ἄνθη·/ τῆς τέχνης τὸ παράξενον οὐ συνεχώρει βλέπειν.'

[306] For example, *Kallimachos* lines 295-7 'Τί πρῶτον εἴπω τοῦ λουτροῦ, τί δὴ καὶ γράψω πρῶτον,/ τὸ μῆκος τὴν λαμπρότηταν, τήν ἐκ τοῦ κάλλους χάριν/ ἢ τὴν ὁλόφωτον αὐγὴν ἢ τῶν φυτῶν τὸ ξένον;' and line 790 'Τίς γοῦν <ποτε> καὶ ποταπὴ γλῶσσα τὴν χάριν εἴπῃ;'.

[307] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 145; *Livistros* line 2562-3 'κόκκινα χείλη καὶ πτενά, τὸ κόκκινον ὡς ῥόδον/ ὅταν ἀνοίγει τὴν αὐγὴν νὰ δέξεται δροσίαν'.

[308] S. Stewart, *Cosmetics & Perfumes in the Roman World* (Stroud, 2007) p. 89.

[309] See the many examples quoted in Hatzaki, *Beauty and the male body*, particularly in pp. 7-32.

sacred to, and symbolic of, Aphrodite in classical literature, although not specifically of Eros himself. It was used in a similar way in Persian literature, where the rose's thorns also signified 'the suffering man accepts as the price of his pursuit' of his lover.[310] The *Geoponika* indicates that this connection was well-known to the Byzantines:

> If surprised by the beauty of the rose, they say, consider the wound of Aphrodite. This goddess loved Adonis, but Ares loved her. So Ares, in anger, put an end to Adonis, thinking that his death would cure her love. Finding out about this, she hurried to Adonis's aid, and in her haste stepped on a rose while wearing no sandals. Its thorns pricked the sole of her foot. The rose, formerly white, was changed by the *ichor* that flowed from the wound to the colour that we now see. Ever since that time it has been red and scented.
>
> Others say that when the gods were carousing in heaven and plenty of nectar was ready to serve, Eros was leaping in the dance, knocked with his wing the stand on which the mixing-bowl stood and upset it. The nectar fell down to earth and gave a red colour to the flower of the rose.[311]

The connection between Aphrodite and the heroine is highlighted almost as often as her rose-like beauty; both the heroine in the *Achilleid* and Chrysorrhoe are directly compared to the goddess.[312] This nature-like beauty consequently appears almost divine, and certainly ideal.

The relationship between the heroine and the garden is stressed further by the authors of these romances. Not only do they mimic each other's beauty, the heroine can be tended in much the same way as her garden. Despite her degree of control, the heroine nevertheless needs to be cared for by a civilising, masculine, presence. In a similar manner to that presented in *Digenis*, the heroine can be presented as being tended by her 'gardener' lover. In *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* this concept is made manifest:

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[310] Meisami, 'Allegorical Gardens' p. 249.
[311] *Geoponika*, trans. Dalby, p. 240.
[312] *Achilleid* line 857 and *Kallimachos* line 819.

> You are the ruler of the plants and I am the protector of the garden. When you go to bed as queen you will have your labourer to protect and defend you. He will also pick your roses and tend your plants.[313]

Kallimachos has at this point taken on the role of gardener within the palace where Chrysorrhoe is confined. This portrayal of Kallimachos as gardener, both in occupation and love, adds to the symbolic act of 'watering' Chrysorrhoe, extending the connection of the heroine to the garden through vegetal imagery. Chrysorrhoe indeed uses this concept herself. After her abduction and subsequent reuniting with Kallimachos, the pair are discovered together in the garden and brought before her abductor. It is Chrysorrhoe and not Kallimachos who steps forth to defend their actions through use of an allegory:

> A man plants a vine with his own hands, hoes it, prunes it, puts a fence around it, weeds it carefully, tends it, spends the whole day with a sling frightening away birds who wish to destroy it, walks around by night to guard it. He suffers hardship and agony. At harvest time another man comes and seizes possession of it for himself.[314]

She then asks the king whether the first or the second man should be allowed to enjoy the vine and when the king states that it belongs to the first man, she identifies Kallimachos as the man he had killed by magic in order to abduct her, and asks 'Whom did he wrong in enjoying the fruits of his labour?'.[315] In doing so she clearly implies that she herself is the vine and the 'fruit' of the vine is sexual intimacy. In using vegetal imagery of herself, Chrysorrhoe accepts that she must be tended like a plant, but she also uses the symbolism to give herself control of the situation, speaking out on behalf of

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[313] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p.78; *Kallimachos* lines 2084-2087 'Αὐθέντης εἶσαι τῶν φυτῶν, ἐγὼ τοῦ κήπου φύλαξ./ Ἂν πέσῃς εἰς τὸ στρῶμάν σου βασιλικῶς ἐπάνω,/ παραμονὴν τὸν μισθαργὸν καὶ φύλαξιν εὑρήσεις/ καὶ τρυγητὴν τῶν ῥόδων σου καὶ τῶν φυτῶν δραγάτην'.

[314] Ibid., p. 85; *Kallimachos* lines 2457-2464 'Ἂν ἐξ οἰκείων τῶν χειρῶν φυτεύσῃ τις ἀμπέλιν/καὶ σκάψῃ καὶ κλαδεύσῃ το, φράξῃ τὸν γῦρον ὅλον,/βλαστολογήσῃ το καλὰ καὶ δραγατσύσῃ τοῦτο/καὶ τὴν ἡμέραν στήκεται μὲ τὴν σφενδόνην πᾶσαν,/νὰ φοβερίζῃ τὰ πτηνὰ νὰ μὴ τὸ καταλοῦσιν,/τὴν νύκταν πάλιν περπατῇ τὸν γῦρον καὶ φυλάσσῃ,/κακοπαθῇ καὶ δέρνεται, καὶ τὸν καιπὸν τοῦ τρύγους/ ἔλθῃ καὶ δυναστεύσῃ το ἄλλος νὰ τὸ ἐπάρῃ'.

[315] Ibid, line 2483 'Τίνα λοιπὸν ἠδίκησεν, νὰ φὰ τὸν κάματόν του;'.

herself and her lover despite being bound and before an angry ruler to whom she is supposed to be subservient. Unlike Chrysandza, Chrysorrhoe is not described in masculine terms at this point, but she does use the concept of the garden to allow herself a degree of hegemony.

A similar idea is presented in the *Achilleid*. Chrysorrhoe uses the phrase 'νὰ τὸ τρυγήσῃ' to describe the harvesting, or possibly stripping of the vine, representing herself. The heroine in the *Achilleid* uses the same word, τρυγήση, when she sings of not wanting to bow to love or the nobleman, Achilles, who wishes to reap her garden.[316] Achilles uses the word in his love song to the girl, compounding the imagery.[317]

By employing natural imagery of themselves, these heroines actively employ an imagery which presents them as passive, but they subvert it to go beyond the restrictions of being a tended plant. They fulfil the expectations of femininity while at the same time getting what they want, or at least are able to express their own desires and conditions before the hero can fulfil his. Although Chrysandza seems to require male dress to enter a serious discussion with her father, she and the apparent grievance nevertheless remain closely linked to the garden. A sense of feminine power and fulfilment thus contrasts with the tended nature of the garden and heroine also presented, but the language used displays these aspects as complimentary, not contradictory.

The imagery of the tended and harvested vine, along with a number of other aspects of the garden, has led to scholars looking at the development of the relationship between the garden and the heroine in a more erotic sense. In the Palaiologan works 'the enclosed beauty of the garden seems to represent the maiden's chastity and virginity', and entry into the garden seems to indicate sexual conquest.[318] Achilles' destruction of the walls of the garden and the watering of Chrysorrhoe mentioned above can both be

[316] *Achilleid*, p.47, line 1050, 'Βούλεται κάτις εύγενής, ζητεῖ νὰ τὸ τρυγήσῃ'.
[317] Ibid., p. 55, line 1306, 'καὶ δός με ἀπὲ τοῦ κήπου σου μηλέα νὰ τὴν τρυγήσω'.
[318] Nilson, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure*, p. 98.

seen as examples of this. There is some suggestion that the style of the garden is representative not just of virginity, but of levels of sexuality.[319] A well-tended and neat garden can indicate acceptable affection, while the more sensual the description the more passionate the relationship, hence the flowers 'perfumed beyond nature' round the bathhouse in the Dragon's Castle and the subsequent fire of Chrysorrhoe's emotions.[320]

This arguably connects with classical and Christian gardens; Marian imagery is tied in with fertile but immaculate nature, while the garden areas of Calypso and Circe are clearly erotic. David Abram has argued that such depictions of nature are a positive thing, rather than being negative, as ecofeminism often perceives them.[321] Indeed, he argues that we need to reawaken a corporeal awareness of the natural world in order to regain the emotional, and even sexual, relationship with the world as presented in these romances.

Entrance into the garden of the lady therefore creates a deeper connection between her and the hero. Although not married in any official sense, once the garden is entered, the question of a sexual relationship sometimes appears resolved. Livistros obviously does not enter the inner courtyard until defeating his rival and marrying Rodamni. Achilles and his heroine refrain from consummating their relationship when alone in the garden together at night, the question of their relationship being postponed to the following night when she places a wreath of flowers from her garden on his head, which he accepts and kisses in a symbol of marriage. In the lines which follow he destroys the walls of the bed chamber, symbolising the pair's sexual union. This event is followed by Achilles' abduction of the heroine and their subsequently approved and celebrated marriage.

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[319] Littlewood, 'Romantic Paradises', p. 103.
[320] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 42; *Kallimachos* lines 298-299 ''Ἀπέσω γὰρ παρέκυπτεν εἰς τοῦ λουτροῦ τὸ πλάτος/ ἀνθών καὶ φύλλων καὶ φυτῶν εὐώδης παρὰ φύσιν·'.
[321] D. Abram, *The spell of the sensuous: perception and language in a more-than-human world* (New York, 1996).

Velthandros and Chrysandza kiss, embrace and gratify their desires in the garden, a discreet reference to their love-making, but only after Velthandros has confirmed that she is the girl to whom he gave Eros' wand as her prize for winning the beauty contest early in the story, itself a symbol of union.[322] The pair are officially married at the end of the story, once they have returned to the court of Velthandros' father.[323]

The erotically-charged scene in the bathhouse in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* is perhaps the most explicit, with Kallimachos reaping:

> the sweet fruits of pleasure. I mean something sweeter than everything sweetest.[324]

This scene also occurs after a symbolic wedding, in this case the exchange of vows, witnessed, at least figuratively by Eros himself.

It appears then that within the setting of the garden the hero and heroine feel able to behave as though married. That is not to say that there are never consequences, Velthandros, is after all caught and must marry Chrysandza's maid in order to stay near Chrysandza until the pair can escape together. This feature of the Palaiologan works differs considerably from the chastity tests of the Second Sophistic and Komnenian novels. It has been suggested that this is due to an increased Western influence on the Palaiologan romances.[325] Another suggestion is that the morals of Byzantine society loosened in this period.[326] However, as has been pointed out by Agapitos, there is a disconnection between life and literature in the West during this period as well, and licentiousness in romances is not necessarily reflective of daily practice.[327] Agapitos

[322] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, pp. 20-21; *Velthandros* lines 854-868.
[323] Ibid., p. 30; *Velthandros* lines 1330-1335.
[324] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 52; *Kallimachos* lines 781-2 'ήδονῆς φύλλον γλυκὺν ἐτρύγα,/εἶπά τι καὶ γλυκύτερον πάντων τῶν γλυκυτέρων'.
[325] C. Cupane, 'Topica romanesca in Oriente e in Occidente: "avanture" e "amore"', in H.-G. Beck, F. Conca and C. Cupane (eds.) *Il romanzo tra cultura latina e cultura bizantina: testi della III settimana residenziale di studi medievali, Carini, Villa Belvedere, 17-21 ottobre 1983* (Paerlmo, 1986) pp. 66-72.
[326] H.-G. Beck, *Byzantinisches Erotikon: Orthodoxie, Literatur, Gesellschaft* (Munic̣g, 1984) pp. 183-8.
[327] Agapitos 'The Erotic Bath', p. 269.

presents a number of examples from other sources to show that eroticism was not an uncommon feature of Byzantine literature from other periods.[328] In the Palaiologan romances, the erotic episodes do go a step further than their predecessors. If this is connected to Western influence, the Byzantine heroines have considerably more autonomous involvement than the western heroines discussed below, such that a positive response to female sexuality may be posited. This would not seem completely outside the realms of possibility when considered in conjugation with the fertility imagery of the garden and its religious aspects as presented by Hyrtakenos in his *ekphrasis* of St Anna, or erotic imagery of the *Song of Songs*.

It is also worth noting the gendering and eroticising of the garden landscape, connecting 'the land to pleasures of the human body *and* the human mind, does not necessarily entail or even enhance discourses of domination, control, and mastery of nature'.[329] The heroine and the garden, with all their natural beauty and sensuality, create not only a sense of pleasure but also of belonging. Manuel Philes' interpretation of the heroine as the hero's soul suggests a link between admiration for nature and appreciation of divine creation, with the feminine character, in a manner similar to that of the Theotokos, acting as the intermediary.[330]

The heroine is presented in these romances as being as beautiful as nature, more so when described in terms of the tended artifice of the garden. The garden reflects her personality and appearance, and forms her natural setting or literal home. She is not wholly subject to any man when in this space or when using its imagery, but the pleasure taken in the heroine and the landscape by the hero and the reader is also positive, and not completely objectifying. Her lover functions within this sphere as the gardener who

[328] Ibid., pp. 269-272.
[329] C. Gersdorf, 'Ecocritical Uses of the Erotic' in G. Carr (ed.) *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism* (London, 2000) p. 177.
[330] B. Knös, 'Qui est l'auteur du roman de Callimaque et Chrysorrhoé', *Hellenika* 17 (1962) pp. 286-287.

protects and nourishes her, and the couple are able to consummate their relationship, before marriage, in the fertile garden.

Eros and the garden

Despite the prominent connection between the heroine and the garden, it is also an important setting for Eros, who, unlike the male heroes, is never an intruder in the garden, but as much a part of it as any of the heroines. This is not an unfamiliar aspect, being a factor highlighted in the discussion on earlier works above. It reflects Eros' dominion over all living things, so although he may not always be welcome, he can never be shut out. That being said, the authors of the romances do limit Eros to a degree, keeping his visible presence or influence confined to artistic objects, dreams and gardens.

The gardens in which Eros appears are similar in form to those of the heroine, often connected with his castle, and full of the artifice that blurs the line between nature and art in the romances' depictions of the garden, but are often even more fantastical, or part of a dream. The artistic objects in the garden of Eros can even move around or sing, much like the automata in Constantinople:[331]

> Around the reservoir's rim there sat all sorts of small birds made of gold, each of them chirping as a bird does – you would say with its own natural voice.[332]

Within the garden Eros is king, with servants, weapons and the ability to punish harshly those who deny him, even going so far as to make them part of the decoration of his castle and garden.[333] He is the sole character 'whom the author invests with what

[331] G., Brett, 'The Automata in the Byzantine 'Throne of Solomon'', *Speculum*, 29:3 (1954) pp. 477-87.
[332] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 13; *Velthandros* lines 467-470 'γύρωθεν δὲ τοῦ στόματος ἐκείνης τῆς φλισκίνας/πουλίτζια ἑκάθηντο, γένη χρυσᾶ παντοῖα,/καὶ τὸ καθ'ἕνα ἐξ αὐτῶν ὡς ἔθος ἐκελάδει,/τὴν ἰδικήν του τὴν φωνὴν ἀνθ'ὅμοια νὰ εἶπες'.
[333] For example, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, pp. 11; *Velthandros* lines 336-365. The kingly depiction of Eros is discussed in Cupane '"Ερως βασιλεύς"'. However, Cupane suggests that this imagery comes from the French romances, in particular *Le Roman de la Rose*, rather than linking it to Byzantine court imagery.

Byzantines recognised as the apparatus of divine and monarchical authority: Eros alone comes complete with a throne, a court, a ceremonial, and a well-developed ruler iconography', and has complete control over his setting. [334] Just as Eros controls emotions, the garden is wilderness tamed. This also highlights the direct connection between love, beauty and the garden, so that Eros and the garden both act as signposts for the action of the story. The lovers are brought together by, or at least approved of by, Eros and his connection with the garden perhaps also serves to explain the sexual freedom experienced by the lovers within this setting. Through the approval of Eros, in his capacity as lord, comes the acceptance of the lovers so that they can be thought of as married despite the lack of a ceremony. When Eros himself is not present in a garden, there are often references to him and to love, sometimes as symbolic objects, sometimes through related imagery, as is the case at the bath in the garden of the Dragon's Castle where the Graces, as attendants of love, 'gave their services and joined the lady there' to accentuate Chrysorrhoe's beauty as well as that of the bathhouse and its setting.[335] Eros' appearance in dreams and dream-gardens, as well as his apparent connection with the 'real' gardens of the romances adds a divine element, as does the connection between Aphrodite and the heroine, which accentuates the beauty and status of the lovers and the gardens, as well as placing them outside of normal civilisation.

Eros' connection with the garden stems from classical romances such as Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, accentuating the beauty and virtue of the landscape and its associated characters. Eros' role is similar to that of the emperor; he maintains complete control over the fates of the lovers, and the play of emotions, as well as the form of the

[334] P. Magdalino, 'Eros the King and the King of 'Amours:' Some Observations on "Hysmine and Hysminias"', *DOP* 46, (1992) p. 197.
[335] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 52; *Kallimachos* lines 787-789 'Καὶ Χάριτες ἐδούλευσαν τὰ τῆς ὑπηρεσίας/καὶ συνελούσθησαν ἐκεῖ μετὰ τῆς κόρης τότε'.

landscape itself, maintaining a boundary between the tame and the wild in human behaviour and nature itself.

The garden as a plot device

The garden setting is often used to advance the basic plot as it was, to an extent, in the earlier romances. It is within the garden at Eros' castle that Velthandros is initiated into the ways of love and first encounters Chrysandza as the winner of the beauty contest he judges. Their actual relationship outside the romanticism of Eros' realm also begins in a garden, two years after Velthandros enters the service of the Prince of Antioch in order to be close to Chrysandza. Velthandros is then caught leaving the garden after their tryst, and Chrysandza is forced to save him by making him marry her maid, albeit in name only.

In *Livistros and Rodamni* the hero is introduced to love in a similar way to Velthandros, and in an equally beautiful garden, albeit one in a dream. Livistros also meets Rodamni with Eros in a dream-garden, which, despite being incredibly beautiful, cannot compare to Rodamni herself. The third garden in this romance is the small courtyard outside Rodamni's chambers and here is the fountain that foretells the lovers two years of separation and subsequent reunion.[336]

In *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* the garden we encounter at the Dragon's castle is a hint that this awesome castle with its serpentine guards is not entirely horrible and contains a more human beauty. The later garden in *Kallimachos* is the scene of the lovers' reunion after Chrysorrhoe's abduction.[337] It allows them to meet in secret, at least for a time, yet it is also where they are discovered and the king who abducted

[336] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 146; *Livistros* lines 2596-2603.
[337] I am here ignoring the island meadow or garden used in Chrysorrhoe's abduction as I believe it is not a typical garden and will therefore be considered with the other landscape settings as opposed to being considered as a garden, as it is by A.R. Littlewood.

Chrysorrhoe then puts them on trial, although he is persuaded to release them after Chrysorrhoe's defence of their love.

Most commonly, the gardens are the setting for the initial meeting between hero and heroine, in reality or within a dream. They also provide a safe haven, a place for the lovers to meet outwith society's restrictions. The gardens of Eros are symbolic of the lovers' trajectory, as is the heroine's garden in the case of *Livistros and Rodamni*, providing both a warning and a promise of happiness. Nonetheless, it is within the garden that two of the couples are caught and forced to account for their actions so that this place on the boundary of society and wilderness holds the possibility of safety as well as the risk of exposure.

Other landscapes and other women in the Palaiologan romances

The garden in these texts can be contrasted with other landscapes depicted in the Palaiologan romances, such as the closely connected castle, meadows, or even the more distant and intimidating mountains and rivers, to add another layer of interpretation.

Very similar to the garden, and occasionally considered as gardens, are the meadows which appear in both *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* and *Livistros and Rodamni*. Meadows do not contain artwork and are not usually enclosed, though there is some suggestion that meadows in Byzantium could be planted and maintained in much the same way as a modern meadow, or wildflower, garden. In spite of this, they are more a part of the wilderness than a part of society, situated close to inhabited places but not connected to them like a garden is. The meadow is nevertheless 'a charming and pleasant

spot … of quite exotic grace'.[338] The first meadow we encounter in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* contains a 'crystalline river'[339] and is full of beauty:

> Roses and lilies were mixed in profusion over the ground, with flowers of every plant which captivates the soul.[340]

Here the three brothers rest, having climbed a huge mountain, just prior to their arrival at the beautiful and terrible Dragon's Castle and Kallimachos' first meeting with Chrysorrhoe.[341] Perhaps this meadow acts as a hint of the beautiful girl to be found in the castle, serving as a sort of initial *ekphrasis* of the tortured Chrysorrhoe. More practically it allows the brothers to rest and bathe after their prior climb. The mountain itself can be interpreted as the brothers' struggle against nature, a precursor to the Dragon's Castle and the departure of two of the brothers.

The second 'meadow' of this romance is actually an island but it is so similar in description to, and therefore is often treated as, a garden, thus being useful for comparison. Described on three occasions, it is a:

> fair island with the strange beauty of its shores, with its charms, its perfumes and its smells, full of delights and roses, plants and cool waters.[342]

This island/meadow provides the second garden *ekphrasis* connected to Chrysorrhoe, as well as a weekly pleasure for the lovers. Because of its placement outside of the castle walls and its attraction for the lovers, it forms an integral part of Chrysorrhoe's abduction by a foreign king, with the aid of a witch, something which

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[338] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 39; *Kallimachos* lines 149-50 'καὶ τόπον εὗρον εὔνοστον καὶ κεχαριτωμένον,/ λιβάδιν ἄλλης χάριτος, παράξενον ὁκάτι'.
[339] *Kallimachos* line 151 'κρυσταλλώδην ποταμὸν'.
[340] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, pp. 39-40; *Kallimachos* lines 152-153 'ῥόδα καὶ κρίνα σύμμικτα κάτωθεν ἐστρωμένα,/ ἄνθη φυτῶν παντοδαπῶν ὅσα ψυχὴν ἁρπάζει'.
[341] I am using the translation of Gavin Betts as opposed to the translation of Ogre's Castle sometimes used. Dragons in Byzantine literature often appear in human form and as Betts suggest in his introduction to the translation, this explains the later references to Chrysorrhoe as a dragoness.
[342] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 61; *Kallimachos* lines 1241-1245 'καὶ τὸ νησίτζιν τὸ καλόν, το εὔμορφον ἐκεῖνον,/τὸ ξενοχαραγόπλαγον, ἅπαξ τῆς ἑβδομάδος,/ τὸν εὔοσμον, τὸν εὔμορφον, τὸν καταμυρισμένον,/τὸν γέμοντα τὰς ἡδονάς, τὸν γέμοντα τὰ ῥόδα,/τὰς ἡδονὰς καὶ τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ νερὰ τὰ κρύα'.

would never occur in a garden. Bordered by the woods, it provides a place for the witch 'to hide and to complete my [the witch's] machinations'[343].

Comparable with this is the meadow in which Rodamni is abducted. In this case we are only told that it is an 'ἔμνοστον λιβάδιν' translated as a 'fair meadow' and a 'lovely spot' but it is here that another witch and foreign king abduct the heroine.[344] It is also in a meadow that Livistros begins his initiation in love, as he dreams of walking through:

> a most beautiful meadow with countless flowers. Fresh, cool water gushed forth among thousands of tress. If you had seen it you would have said that the place with all its beauties and colours had been created by the hands of an artist.[345]

This description is very similar to those of the gardens in the romances, except its lack of enclosure. It is from this meadow that Livistros is escorted by armed servants of Eros. Livistros also meets Klitovon, his companion in finding Rodamni, in a 'sloping meadow', 'on a narrow path beside a flowing stream'.[346] He also waits in a meadow while Klitovon goes to find Rodamni. Several meadows are described towards the end of the romance too, as the couple get closer to their home and happiness, reflecting their own joy.

Livistros and Klitovon, having met in a meadow, use it as a setting for narrative, Klitovon convincing Livistros to impart his story and share his sorrows. This is similar to the act of telling we find in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* in which the author is told Clitophon's tale in 'a grove at no great distance, where many thick plane-trees were growing, and a stream of water flowing through, cool and translucent, as if it came

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[343] Ibid., p. 61; *Kallimachos* line 1255 Ὑπάγω τὸ νὰ κρυβηθῶ, τὴν μηχανὴν νὰ ποίσω'.
[344] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 147; *Livistros* lines 2654 and 2657.
[345] Ibid., p. 99; *Livistros* lines 205-208 'λιβάδιν πανεξαίρετον μυριοανθισμένον/καὶ κρύον νερὸν γλυκόβρυτον, χιλιοδενδρογεμᾶτον·/ χέρια ζωγράφου νά 'λεγες, ἄν εἶδες τὸ λιβάδιν,/τὸ ἐποῖκαν χιλιοέμμορφον, μυριοχρωματισμένον'.
[346] Ibid., p. 95; *Livistros* lines 28-29 'Νέος εἰς ἀναπόταμον, εἰς ἀναλιβαδίαν,/μέσα εἰς στενὸν ἐδιέβαινεν θλιμμένος μονοπάτιν.'.

from freshly melted snow' where they sit on a low bench.[347] Once seated the author instructs Clitophon to begin his tale in what he considers to be appropriate surroundings.[348] The same is true for Livistros and Klitovon, although the story is not yet complete in their case, and is told not in a relaxed manner but in an emotional one, whilst travelling.

The meadow can thus be seen as another significant landscape, comparable with the garden, though not associated with a particular figure, and more often the scene of woe than of joy.

There is a clear distinction between the more fantastical, paradise-like nature of the gardens and the exaggerated realism of some of the other landscapes depicted, such as the cliffs and sea. However, this more realistic depiction of certain settings does not entirely remove their symbolism and the other landscapes in these romances play a significant role in their association of characters and events. Although less overt than the use of woodland in Western romances such as those by Chrétien de Troyes, the wild landscape is still concomitant with the more feral and violent aspects of society, and in particular with witches. This connection between nature and discomfort or fear has been termed ecophobia.[349] When combined with depictions of women, this ecophobia presents a very negative picture of the feminine. Thus in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, although we first encounter the witch at the palace of the foreign king, her main role occurs in the landscape surrounding the Dragon's Castle, specifically the woodland close to the small island garden. She is cursed as 'you foul, black baggage, you accursed mother of devils' and derided for creating an apple which not only killed Kallimachos, but was also used to

[347] Ach. Tat. 2.2. This is obviously reminiscent of the *locus amoenus topos*, a popular feature going back to Plato's *Phaedrus*.
[348] Ach. Tat. 1.2.
[349] Estok, *Ecophobia*, p. 2.

revive him.[350] In so doing, she saved the protagonists, but is burned without being given the opportunity to defend herself, apparently as part of the king's humanity in releasing Chrysorrhoe and a reflection of his own subsequent grief.

More theatrically, the witch in *Livistros and Rodamni*, although initially encountered in a meadow, tells her story to Livistros and Klitovon in 'a lonely place on the coast with some fearsome crags on the water's edge' where she had been left by Verderichos, the prince of Egypt who had used her to capture Rodamni. [351] Black and naked as the landscape around her, this unpleasant creature is made the more so due to her situation, and yet we are to feel little sympathy for her. The landscape appears as an *ekphrasis* of her personality, but is one in which she has no real power, in contrast to the heroines and their gardens. Though she is able to help Livistros reclaim Rodamni, and does so, she is nevertheless summarily killed by Livistros.

As witches, these characters have power over the natural world itself. The creation of an apple to kill but also to revive, and of flying horses to cross the sea, mean that these women undermine the natural order, making them as dangerous as the border areas in which they are encountered. When these women and their powers over nature are used by powerful men for their own aims, they are to some extent 'safe'. When they have fulfilled their purpose 'they are summarily blamed and discarded', and being outside of male control become a threat.[352] Conversely, they cannot apparently use their powers to protect themselves, and are violently killed in either the male sphere of the castle or in the wilderness itself.[353]

[350] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 87; *Kallimachos* lines 2578-2579 'Εἰπέ, τὴν λέγει, μυσαρά, σκεῦος μελανωμένον,/ ἠσβολωμένη καὶ κακὴ καὶ τῶν δαιμόνων μήτηρ,' and lines 2580-2581.
[351] Ibid., p. 151; *Livistros* lines 2871-2872 'εἰς γῆν παραθαλάσσιον, εἰς τόπον μοναξίας,/εἰς γῆν, εἰς βράχη φοβερὰ καὶ εἰς ὄχθον τῆς θαλάσσης'.
[352] Goldwyn, 'Towards a Byzantine ecocriticism', p. 71.
[353] Ibid., p. 71-72.

Within the tale of *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, the ungendered and inhuman river is another significant landscape feature. It is a fantastical river with a 'moving star which remained within the water' that draws Velthandros to enter the castle of Eros, an act which eventually leads him to Chrysandza.[354] While judging the beauty contest at Eros' castle, Velthandros is cursed by the runner up:

> O most unjust of judges, I hope in God's name that you fall to the depths of Love's passion and that you drown in the water's current and die [355]

This motif is then repeated at the end of the romance when Velthandros and Chrysandza flee together with his three squires and the maid Fedrokaza. On trying to cross a river during a stormy night, the curse nearly comes to pass. Only Velthandros and Chrysandza survive, naked and initially separated, this separation being equivalent to the abduction of the heroines in the other two romances, but with Chrysandza abducted by a river rather than a man. The river then, like all water in these romances, has a powerful role, although not a positive one. It instead resembles the role of the sea in the Second Sophistic novels, a place of separation connected with pirates and the slave trade. The beauty contest contestant who issues the curse, herself female, though subservient to Velthandros' decision in Eros' garden, nevertheless is linked with power over nature through her prophetic words, so that we again see the negative connection between women and landscape.

Other landscape features, namely woodland, cliffs and the river, are then significant in these tales. They provide settings for more unpleasant women, still closely connected with the natural world but now fully outside the confines of society and thus

[354] *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, trans. Betts, p. 9; *Velthandros* lines 237-238 'ηὕρηκεν μικροπόταμον καὶ εἰς τὸ νερόν του μέσον/ να εἶπες οὐρανόδρομον ἀστέρα ἔχει ἔσω'.
[355] Ibid, p. 17, *Velthandros* lines 637-639 'Ὦ ἀδικώτατε κριτά, εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἐλπίζω/ να πέσης μέσα στὸν βυθὸν τῆς ἐρωτοαγάπης/ καὶ εἰς τὸ ρεῦμα τοῦ νεροῦ νὰ πνιγῆς, ν'ἀποθάνης'.

dangerous, much like Circe in her wild Aiaia.[356] The river more specifically plays the role of another character in *Velthandros and Chrysandza* further stressing the importance of nature within these romances.

Religious elements and interpretations

Although the gardens and other landscapes of the romances have a clear erotic element to them, they do draw connections with religious material. It has been indicated above that Hyrtakenos' *Garden of St Anna* highlighted the fertility of the garden, its feminine aspect, and used it to accentuate a biblical story. For the Byzantines, no garden, and especially not a garden forever-fruitful, could escape the connection with the eternal Garden of Eden, even one as erotic as that in *Kallimachos*.

As has been discussed in relation to the theological and allegorical discussions of nature in earlier texts, the act of interpretation was a familiar procedure, and even a purpose, and different levels of understanding producing different meanings made the story more valuable and worth witnessing. Though texts were read at face value, it was also normal for them to be thought about in depth. In terms of interpreting these romances, we have a contemporary guide. Whether or not the poem by Manuel Philes entitled *Epigram on a Book of Love by the Emperor's Cousin* is actually about *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, it does describe and discuss a romance written at the imperial court in this period. In writing about the romance by Andronikos Palaiologos, Philes provides a spiritual interpretation for the story. For Philes the hero's father symbolises God, the heroine as the beloved represents the hero's soul while the dragon killed by the hero is obviously an image of the Devil.[357] Admittedly this difference of presentation, exchanging fantasy and eroticism for spirituality, may have been entirely

[356] P. Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape*, p. 78; Homer, *The Odyssey*, X. 209-10.
[357] Knös, 'Qui est l'auteur du roman de Callimaque et Chrysorrhoé', pp. 274–95.

manufactured in order to make the romance, and the reading of it, acceptable to the audience of Philes' poem, or indeed to the poet himself.[358] It was certainly not uncommon for classical, pagan or otherwise unsuitable texts to be read with a spiritual, Christian interpretation. We find clear evidence of this in the writings of Psellos and Philip the Philosopher who provide allegorical and hermeneutical interpretations of a variety of texts including Heliodoros' novel, the *Aethiopika*.[359] It is also possible to see a number of religious elements in the romances, especially in connection with the gardens themselves.

As mentioned above, prior to the Komnenian romances, the main genre of fantastical tales was that of the saint's life. A feature of that genre is the transportation of the saint or hero to a world of dreams or visions, as is the case in the translated story, the *Life of Barlaam and Ioasaph*.[360] It can be suggested that the same generic feature is present in at least some of the Palaiologan romances, in that the dream-gardens in which the heroes and heroines are often initiated into the servitude of Eros work in much the same way.[361] Like the episodes in Saints' Lives, the hero or heroine is transported away from reality and given instruction in terms of their actions and future. This is equally true of the dream-meadow in *Livistros* and the fantastical garden of Eros which Velthandros enters while awake. As pointed out by Ulrich Moennig in a recent article, 'in Saints' Lives expectations are mediated to the audience through *katabasis* scenes', and much the same occurs through the prophetic objects and commands of Eros found in these sections

[358] Hagiography had previously combined the thrill of adventure with spiritual romance between mankind and God. The prose romance *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, which was probably translated into Greek in the tenth century, provided a spiritual lesson using the romance genre, but it does not feature the erotic imagery we find in *Kallimachos.*

[359] Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia* pp. 132-36.

[360] U. Moennig, 'Literary Genre and Mixture of Generic Features in Late Byzantine Fictional Writing' in Roilos (ed.) *Medieval Greek Storytelling*, p. 170.

[361] For a discussion of the dream spaces in hagiography and the romance tradition see S. MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London, 1996) pp. 115-152.

of the romances.[362] Nature is utilised as an almost, or actually, otherworldly setting, a place of beauty, whether garden or meadow, but also a place of fear. Livistros is physically captured and brought before Eros; Velthandros is shown the pain of love, as well as Eros' many weapons, and falls into swoons of fear and grief.

In *Velthandros and Chrysandza* again, Velthandros enters the garden of Eros by following an extraordinary river to its gates. This is reminiscent of the four rivers of paradise, which were manifested in four terrestrial rivers.[363] Like the river in *Velthandros*, the four rivers of paradise have a fountain set in a beautiful garden as their source. In later Byzantine hagiography rivers of fire become more a feature of the journey to paradise as well, and the river which Velthandros follows contains a flame, indeed, that is what causes him to follow it in the first place.[364]

The Garden of Eden as a place which could be reached by travelling is a feature of the *Life of St Makarios*.[365] In that work, the journey to paradise, and indeed paradise itself, has become connected with 'notions of judgment, retribution, and reward'.[366] The same can be said of the gardens in the Palaiologan romances; the hero and heroine can be judged and subjugated by Eros, and the hero rewarded for his servitude or brave actions by being allowed into the garden, and receiving the love of the heroine.

A further characteristic of the divine garden in hagiography is the desolate landscapes which surround it. This is partly because paradise was reserved for the pious, who could traverse the difficult landscapes in relative safety, suffering for their faith. It is reflected in the tendency of later Byzantine writers to portray the garden as 'a place

[362] Moennig 'Literary Genre', p. 169.
[363] H. Maguire, 'Paradise Withdrawn' in Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.), *Byzantine Garden Culture*, p. 25.
[364] Ibid., p. 31.
[365] *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina* ed. A. Vassiliev (Moscow, 1893) pp. 135-165; *ODB* 2:1270-1271.
[366] Maguire, 'Paradise Withdrawn' p. 27; C. Angelidi, "La vie de Macaire le Romain: écrire pour le plaisir?" in P. Odorico (ed.) *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine: le texte en tant que message immédiat. Actes du colloque international, Paris, 5-6-7 juin 2008 organisé par le centre d'études byzantines de l'EHESS* (Paris, 2012) pp. 167-178.

preferably closed off and completely distinct from its surroundings, a confined site where the most desirable features of nature were collected together and guarded by a strong enclosure'. [367] This concept relates to the secluded nature of the gardens in the Palaiologan romances, the limited access to them, granted only to the deserving, and, on occasion, their actual situation. In *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, the brothers must traverse a huge mountain, in an uninhabited land, before they can reach the meadow in which they rest. On leaving the meadow they again enter a deserted land of cliffs before facing the walls of the Dragon's Castle, and the paradisiacal garden it contains.

These possibly religious aspects of the romances reiterate the importance of the gardens and meadows in the texts, as places of initiation and as destinations in themselves. While it may be argued that these romances, with their classical references, such as the presence of Eros, and the comparison of at least one heroine with Aphrodite, and their lack of overt Christian content, should not be read in a religious way, it is clear that at least some of their audiences did, as exemplified by Philes. [368] The religious element does not however detract from the romantic aspects of the garden, nor its sensuality. Indeed, it unites it with the *Song of Songs*, its erotic imagery and the various interpretations put forward by its exegetists. [369] In both cases the female character is important, as is the natural imagery associated with her, so that the transference of these elements from one genre to another is neither unprecedented nor unacceptable.

[367] Ibid., p. 31.
[368] A few direct Christian references are made, such as the archbishop who appears in the closing section of *Velthandors and Chrysandza*, in line 1330, but they are limited and easily overlooked given the focus on Eros as the central divine figure.
[369] For a discussion of the erotic imagery of the *Song of Songs* see E.A. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1990). Roilos discusses the connection between the *Song of Songs* and the Komnenian novels in *Amphoteroglossia*, pp. 203-223.

Western and Eastern Parallels

Some comparison has already been drawn between the portrayal of the garden in these vernacular Greek romances and texts of eastern and western origin. Certain important similarities and differences can be drawn in their roles within the texts as well.

The western romances, as previously mentioned, have been seen to have had a powerful influence on the authors of the Palaiologan romances. Certainly, during that period a number of western romances were directly translated into Greek. We have a Greek version of the non-chivalric tale *Apollonius of Tyre*, the Arthurian *Old Knight*, of which we only have a fragment, *Imperios and Margarona*, which is probably a translation of the French tale *Pierre de Provence et la Belle Maguelonne*, and *Phlorios and Platzia-Phlora* based on the Tuscan version of the French *Floire et Blancheflor*, a Greek version of Boccaccio's *Teseida*, as well as a relatively faithful translation of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Le Roman de Troie*. However, these texts have a limited amount in common with the four romances on which we are focusing here. The garden as an important feature is more obvious in some other western romances, such as the works of Chrétien de Troyes.

In general, the gardens of the western romances are described in similar terms to those of the Palaiologan romances. They are enclosed, contain fountains and some specific plants are named; the overall impression is of colour, scent and light. The descriptions are very limited until the early thirteenth century, when the idealism of the gardens appearance comes to the fore.[370] The enclosure of the garden is again a protective feature, and those within the walls are protected by men, and thus must be feminine. The direct connection with women accordingly is also a feature, though in the West the garden often forms a social space in which pleasant hours can be spent, so the

[370] E. A. Augspach, *The Garden as Woman's Space in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-century Literature* (Lewiston, N.Y., 2004) p. 107-108.

connection is often that the garden is a thing of pleasure, and so are women.[371] Nevertheless, the setting is still romantic. In Marie de France's *Lanval*, Guinevere attempts to seduce the hero in her garden, with thirty of her companions to entertain the other thirty knights present.[372]

The beauty of the western heroines utilises natural imagery in a similar manner to the Byzantine works too. The comparison with flowers in particular is key. Emelyne, the heroine of 'The Knight's Tale' in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, for example, is described indirectly as rivalling the flowers of May, being fairer than the lily and blushing like the rose, so that we 'do not see Emelyne as a person, but as another flower to grace the garden'.[373] The descriptions of the Palaiologan heroines, though they utilise floral imagery in a similar way, extend the imagery to include trees, rivers, snow and other natural phenomena, providing details regarding the heroines hair, body and individual features, so that the Byzantine heroine's seem to be an embodiment of the pleasure and beauty of nature more broadly.

The courtly romances follow the precepts of courtly life, so that the heroines in them are subservient to their male counterparts, but have a degree of control over them. This is however presented as a truly negative aspect when it prevents a knight from fulfilling his duties. Like Achilles' statement of emasculation in the garden, a western knight who stays too long in a garden has given in to temptation and causes grief to himself and others. This is true in Chrétien de Troyes *Erec et Enide*. In that romance it is only after taking his wife with him on his adventures and eventually defeating a knight held captive in his lady's garden by his own promise, that Erec is re-assimilated into normal society, along with the defeated knight and his lady. A woman in control of her

[371] Ibid., p.108.
[372] 'Lanval' in *The Lais of Marie de France* (trans.) G. S. Burgess and K. Busby (Harmondsworth, 1986) p. 76.
[373] Douglass, 'Ecocriticism and Middle English Literature', p. 153; *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L.D. Benson, 3rd edition (Boston, 1987) p. 39, lines 1035-50.

own garden upsets the social balance. Guinevere's attempted affair with Lanval provides an example. The lady of the garden in *Erec et Enide* is another example, as is Morgan Le Fay, whose female paradise causes some men to kill themselves.[374] Gardens are commonly places to encounter women, as they are places for pleasure, but they are owned by men so that they are tamed spaces. A woman in control of a garden makes it too close to the wilderness to be places of safety. This is true despite the prominent relationship between the Virgin Mary and gardens, and her autonomy, a factor which seems to have been deliberately ignored by the authors of the courtly romances. The connection is nevertheless maintained in that women outside of gardens can only be witches, outcasts or 'fair game', as they were in the earlier Greek texts.[375] This obviously contrasts with the positive control presented in the Byzantine romances, with Chrysorrhoe and the heroine of the *Achilleid* in particular.[376] Ladies in the western romances are seen in gardens, love develops there, but gardens, like the women who inhabit them, are entirely secondary to the male adventure spaces, forming a backdrop rather than a symbolic place. Women in Byzantium did have separate spaces of power in the court, and were highly influential in diplomatic discussions and in spreading Byzantine culture, with powerful women being visible also in literary spheres, and Byzantine authors seem to have chosen to include feminine power in their portrayal of the heroine.[377]

A key difference between the Byzantine and western texts is also the plot role of the garden. Enclosed gardens are a recurrent feature of western romances:

> … but rarely do they claim centre stage. Instead they hover on the fringes of the action, either as spaces a knight must travel through or as intermediary resting-

[374]See the episode of Morgan's *val sans retour* in *Lancelot-Grail: the old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. N.J. Lacy, vol. 2 (5 vols., New York, 1993) pp. 303-312, chapters 92-95.
[375] Augspach, *The Garden as Woman's Space*, p. 105.
[376] See above pp. 83-85 and 88-91.
[377] For discussions of the female role in Byzantine life see Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence* and L. Garland (ed.) *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527-1204* (London, 1999).

> places. Like the castle to which they are adjoined, they are markers of civilisation, in sharp contrast with the unknown that lies in the forest and beyond.[378]

The exception to this is *Le Roman de la Rose*.[379] The first part of the work, written by Guillaume de Lorris, has the hero describe a dream in which he travelled to a walled garden and was amazed by the beautiful rosebushes. During his attempt to pluck a bloom, the God of Love shot him with several arrows, so that he is forever in love with the Rose. In the story the Rose is at times an actual lady, at times a reflection of female sexuality. The hero attempts to woo the Rose with little success because she is closely guarded and safely enclosed. The narrative is then taken up by a second author, Jean de Meun, who concludes the narrative with a bawdy account of the plucking of the Rose through deception. The first part of the poem dates to around 1230 and is very similar in some ways to *Hysmine and Hysminias* with its long discussion of artistic images on the garden wall and the praise of nature and spring. The second part, written around 1270, is more similar to the *Achilleid* and *Kallimachos* with their harvesting imagery. The whole work is still far more allegorical than the Byzantine texts, with personifications leading the hero throughout his adventure and the Rose remaining a somewhat ambiguous figure.

While there are certainly similarities in the basic portrayal of the garden and its connection with women and love in the western romances, these are generally limited and somewhat superficial. They certainly do not seem to add much to our understanding of the Palaiologan works.

If we look eastward to the Perso-Arabic tradition we find that gardens, especially in literature, are 'walled off and protected from the outside world'.[380] Like the gardens of the Palaiologan romances considered here, the main features included 'running water… and a pool to reflect the beauties of sky and garden; trees of various sorts, some to

[378] Augspach, *The Garden as Woman's Space*, p. 1.
[379] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. F. Lecoy (3 vols., Paris, 1965-70).
[380] Meisami, 'Allegorical Gardens' p. 231.

provide shade merely, and others to produce fruits; flowers, colourful and sweet-smelling'.[381] These gardens, especially those of medieval Persian literature, combine spirituality and sensuality, as they do in the writings of the thirteenth-century poet, scholar and theologian, Rumi.[382] While Oriental literary gardens are familiar to Western readers largely from modern adaptations of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, they appear in many other, more mystic, texts.

The story which is perhaps most comparable with the Palaiologan romances, at least in terms of the garden, is that of the *Seven Beauties*, or *Haft Paykar*, a twelfth-century work by Nezami of Ganja.[383] In this tale, two gardens feature in the frame story, one in which the king Bahrām celebrates his wedding, the other in which he holds court and rules well. In the main body of the story, each of the seven princesses who are his wives, tell stories to the king in the individual pavilions built for them. Three of the stories feature gardens prominently. In the first the garden is an unearthly paradise, ruled by a woman, with whom the king, the hero in the story told to him, falls in love.[384] He is allowed to remain for a month, feasting and enjoying the pleasures of the garden and the many beautiful women in it, except the one he loves most. When he insists on embracing her, the garden disappears and the king loses his heart's desire through his own actions. The second tale featuring a garden is similar, though with a more arduous terrestrial journey leading to calm and refreshment in a garden.[385] The hero of this tale is told to wait unspeaking in a tree in the garden while his host, the apparent owner of the garden, prepares to wed him to his daughter and give him many riches. Instead, the hero is tempted to climb down and join a feast of beautiful women, sleeping with the most

[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid., p. 232 and 239-245. See for example the poem 'Life is Coming to the Rose Garden' in *The Forbidden Rumi: The Suppressed Poems of Rumi on Love, Heresy and Intoxication*, trans. N.O. Ergin and W. Johnson (Rochester, 2006) p. 138.
[383] Nizami Ganjavi, *The Haft paykar: a medieval Persian romance*, trans. Julie S. Meisami (Oxford, 1995).
[384] Ibid., pp. 114-131.
[385] Ibid., pp.175-197.

charming who then turns into a monster. The third garden story again includes a feast and beautiful women, though this time the events occur to the owner of the garden.[386] Despite that, it is largely the women who are in charge, initially taking the owner for a thief and tying him up. Once released and concealed he falls in love, the lady accepts his affections, but a series of accidents occur in the garden preventing their union until the owner decides to make her his lawful wife. Each of these gardens is opulent, fertile, and highly sensual. While two are the property of men, the women found within them are distinctly not. The women in these texts may not control who enters the gardens, but they certainly have a degree of control over the actions with them. All are gardens of love, all provide allegorical lessons for the king being told about them, and all are highly erotic.

These eastern examples of literary gardens are similar to the Palaiologan gardens in the female autonomy they portray, as well as their more sexual and spiritual nature. Nevertheless, they seem to differ in aim and role, often being the scene of danger as well as pleasure.

Conclusion

Within the Palaiologan romances there is a consistency of representation and purpose among the gardens depicted. They are described in both naturalistic and artistic terms in much the same way as actual Byzantine gardens were described by contemporaries. Although we are in fact given limited information on the landscape and more about the objects, a sense of the garden as a generic motif is present. This motif is closely related to the heroine, arguably in an erotic sense, with her being ‘tended’ by her lover and opening her garden to him at the same time as allowing him access to her body. The natural imagery used also serves to unite the garden and the heroine in their beauty and status.

[386] Ibid., pp. 217-233.

The male role in the garden is generally limited to that of gardener/lover and is dependent on the favour of the heroine, so that the ecofeminist concept of male domination over women and nature is, to an extent, reversed. A positive presentation of femininity and nature as pleasurable and powerful in their own rights can also be identified, both in the acceptance of the hero prior to allowing him access to her space, and in the use of natural imagery in self-defense. Eros is the only male figure closely connected with the garden but this is as much an expression of his divinity and power over mortals' hearts as it is an expression of his role in connecting the lovers. He does after all have power over all nature, as is indicated in his depictions. The gardens themselves serve as the initial meeting place for the lovers as well as an area in which they are able to behave as they please, even if only for a short time. It is also within garden spaces that the couples find prophesies regarding their relationship. In a similar way the meadow, almost a garden but without the enclosing walls, provides a setting for the introduction to love and the abduction of the heroine, the latter being unsuitable for the garden proper. Nature then, and most specifically the garden, serves a common purpose within this genre, a purpose that can be subtle or obvious as the author desired but which contained motifs recognisable to the audience and designed to influence their thoughts and feelings as to the plots and characters of the romances. Gardens as a setting for love share particular imagery, across geographical and chronological boundaries, and the Palaiologan texts are no different, drawing on a number of influences. While they essentially take the basic features of the literary garden from earlier Greek works, they utilise allegory as well as an appreciation for the beauty of nature to expand traditional motifs, and altering them to fit new fantastical plots and foreign influences. In doing so they indicate the late Byzantine perception that the beauty of nature augments the beauty of women, the virtue of creation can be reflected in the virtue of people, and allows for a degree of female

autonomy. Put simply, the feminine gender is more strongly connected with the natural world than the male, and both are considered to thrive best when under the care of virtuous men, without being entirely under male control. When compared with western and eastern texts, the authority of women within the garden most closely resembles the Perso-Arabic tradition. In contrast with the western depictions, neither women nor the garden are only positive when sensual *and* subservient. Ideas about nature and women appear interlinked in many cultures, and the authors of the Palaiologan period developed such ideas to reflect not only a range of literary influences, but also their own experiences of gardens and women, mainly in a positive way.

4. *The Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*

Having discussed some significant landscape and vegetal imagery, and its development in the Palaiologan period, let us now examine another aspect of nature in literature, animal stories. To begin with one text in particular, the *Συναξάριον τοῦ τιμημένου Γαδάρου*, or the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, as we have it today may be found in only one manuscript, Cod. Vindobonensis theol. gr. 244, dated to the early sixteenth century.[387] It is written in vernacular Greek, in fifteen-syllable political verse and the author is anonymous. The language of the work, as well as several stylistic features and motifs, have led scholars to date it to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, suggesting it is least 150 years older than the manuscript that preserves it.[388] Previous editions and studies of the *Synaxarion* have combined it with a late fifteenth- or sixteenth-century text entitled Γαδάρου, λύκου κι ἀλουποῦς διήγησις ὡραῖα.[389] This has led to some confusion in the editions of the text.[390] While they share many features, the latter adapting the Byzantine text, these two stories come from rather different periods, and thus each from a different *zeitgeist*, with different literary styles, language and ideas of humour. Although the later reception of a text is interesting, I will focus here on the *Synaxarion* itself, and am indebted to the edition produced by Moennig.[391]

The *Synaxarion* is an example of what we might term beast literature, by which I mean a text whose protagonists are animals. It tells the story of the Donkey, who is taken

[387] The manuscript is significant as it is the single largest collection of Greek literary texts in the vernacular, and additionally contains a number of non-literary, theological and scientific works, also in the vernacular. For an indepth discussion of the manuscript itself, and its scribes see P. Vejleskov, 'Codex Vindobonensis theologicus graecus 244,' in H. Eideneier, A.F. Van Gemert and D. Holton (eds.) *Copyists, collectors and editors: manuscripts and editions of late Byzantine and early Modern Greek literature*, (Heraklion, 2005) pp. 179-214.
[388] *ODB* 3:1991-1992; *Synaxarion*, p. 128.
[389] *Synaxarion*, p. 110. See for example G. (=W.) Wagner (Hrsg.), *Carmina Graeca medii aevi* (Leipzig, 1874) pp.112-123.
[390] See *Synaxarion*, pp. 131-134.
[391] Moennig has also indicated in 'Das Συναξάριον' that he plans to produce a comparison of the fourteenth- and sixteenth-century stories. The text as quoted below is my own translation.

from his field by the Fox, or rather vixen, and the Wolf, ostensibly to be educated by them. The animals travel together on a boat to the middle of the sea, where the Fox 'prophesizes' an imminent storm and their subsequent deaths. To prevent this, the animals agree to make confession and sacrifice whoever has committed the worst sin, apparently in an attempt to gain God's favour and save themselves from drowning. Inevitably, the poor Donkey is chosen despite the trifling nature of his sin. Yet the outcome is not as expected; the Donkey is not eaten, as the Fox had intended, but saves himself, and the Wolf and Fox declare that he should no longer be referred to as a γάδαρος, an Arabic loan-word for donkey, but as νικόν (=ὀνικόν), another word for donkey which, however, holds a different connotation with which the author plays.[392]

The *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey* centres on anthropomorphised animals who fulfil certain stereotypical roles associated with them through the fable tradition and beyond. Thus the Fox is cunning, the Donkey is humble, and the Wolf repents his greed. Although the deeds which they confess are realistic to each animal, the act of confession itself and several aspects of the discussions and personalities of these animals are decidedly human, over and above their ability to speak. One aim of this chapter will be to show how the author presents these animals in a highly anthropomorphic way, utilising literary perceptions of the animal to present humanity and human issues, largely bypassing the actual animals along the way.

The language and stylistic features of the text allude not only to the fable tradition, but also to more religious writings, as well as the later Byzantine novel. The form and language reflect and inform the content, so this discussion of the *Synaxarion* begins with the generic form of the text, stylistic features that relate to these genre elements and indications of the literary pretensions of the work. Then the content itself

[392] *Synaxarion*, pp.117-118. The connotations are discussed in more detail below, but play on the fact that νικόν, meaning 'ass', sounds like νικῶν, meaning 'he who wins'.

will be analysed, highlighting the similarities with, and differences from, material from earlier periods, and then focusing on the humour of the text. Each animal will be considered separately before the unusual ending is considered, in an attempt to situate the *Synaxarion* in the political and religious climate of the Palaiologan period. The *Synaxarion* is here being studied separately from the other Byzantine animal stories, especially the *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds*, the focus of the next chapter, because it is different in style and content, and yet presents many important features of the genre as it existed in the Palaiologan period. Several ideas will therefore be introduced here, and then developed in connection with other types of beast literature in the next chapter.

Genre and the *Synaxarion*

One branch of ecocriticism, literary ecology, argues that 'genres have all "evolved" in relation to various needs, pressures and desires, and continue to evolve'.[393] Moennig argues that the *Synaxarion* not only plays with different genres, but is *sui generis*.[394] The genres which the author uses are surveyed below, though the possible 'needs, desires and pressures' behind this development will be discussed later in the chapter.

Fable

The basic plot of the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, in its use of talking animals, journeys and attempted deceit, as outlined above raises associations with fable literature in particular. Defining a fable by its content is difficult though, particularly as Byzantine fable collections could and did include texts which today we would describe as

[393] R. Kerridge 'Ecocritical Approaches to Literary Form and Genre' in G. Garrard (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* p. 369.
[394] *Synaxarion*, p. 128.

anecdotes, aetiological tales, myths, and even novellas. As indicated in my earlier discussion of fable, a text belonging to this genre is always fictitious, involves specific characters, as opposed to personifications, and has some moral or didactic meaning beyond simple entertainment.[395] Perry suggests that it is more accurate to define the fable based on its structure.[396] However, this again is hard to define on the basis of the Byzantine collections. That being said, there are a number of features of both form and content that are related to the genre of fable which can be connected in one way or another to the *Synaxarion.*

Our understanding of fable, along with that of the Byzantines, seems to limit the length of a fable, not to a standard number of lines, but to an undefined length, which is longer than a simple anecdote but shorter than a novella. It would appear, therefore, that the form of the *Synaxarion* is too long to be termed a fable. In Moennig's edition the text covers 396 lines. Indeed, this seems not to have been unusual in Byzantine use of fable outside of the collections. For example, Nikephoros Chrysoberges, a twelfth-century rhetorician, uses a fable, *Πίθηκοι πόλιν οἰκίζοντες* (Perry 464, 'The Apes founding a city'), in one of his orations and, although he does not appear to alter the narrative, the fable is four times longer, and far more rhetorical, than the version preserved in the fable collections.[397] The same fable is treated in a similar fashion by Gregory of Cyprus, Patriarch of Constantinople 1283-1289.[398] Papademetriou suggest that such expansion and rhetorical elaboration were common features of later Byzantine versions of fables.[399] However, the two extended fables mentioned above are not nearly as long as the

[395] Ziolkowski, 'Beast Fable', pp.8-9. See also the discussion in chapter 1 on Aesopic material, pp. 47-53.
[396] Perry, 'Fable', pp. 17-37.
[397] *Aesopica: a series of texts relating to Aesop or ascribed to him or closely connected with the literary tradition that bears his name*, ed. B.E. Perry, (Urbana, 1952); J.-T. Papademetriou, 'Some Aesopic Fables in Byzantium and the Latin West: Tradition, Diffusion, and Survival,' *Illinois Classical Studies* 8:1 (1983) pp. 122-23.
[398] Papademetriou, 'Some Aesopic Fables', p. 123.
[399] Ibid. Concerning this tendency of the Byzantines see J.-T. Papademetriou, *Studies in the Manuscript Tradition of Stephanites kai Ichnelates* (Ph.D. dissertation Urbana, Illinois, 1960) p. 177.

Synaxarion and are clearly recognisable as expansions of a traditional text, while the *Synaxarion* resembles many fables without being a clear development of any single fable in particular.

One of the structural features that Perry particularly mentions as an identifier of fables is the presence of a clear moral in the form of an *epimythium* or *promythium.*[400] The 'moral' at the end of the *Synaxarion*, if indeed there is one, is not overtly expressed. Although the stereotype of the Donkey, both as a character and a species, as foolish is forcefully overturned by the Fox and the Wolf, we are left to guess whether this is to warn the powerful not to oppress the weak or whether some other moral is intended. The moral of a fable does not have to be explicitly stated though. Indeed, the lack of an overt moral allows for multiple interpretations, and is perhaps safer if the story is critical of the *status quo*, something medieval fable-style works often were. For example, the *Reynard* cycle draws heavily on fable, was prevalent across Europe, and in its different versions acted as a vehicle for the representation of feudal justice and social conflicts, with many of the regional versions of *Reynard* being connected with specific political figures.[401] That the characters of the *Synaxarion* themselves are animals is another connection with, though not a prerequisite of, that genre, and a further method of distancing the author from his criticism, allowing his characters to use direct speech, which is a stylistic trait of fable, without incurring the wrath of those being criticised.[402]

Several of the motifs found in the *Synaxarion*, such as the confession, the gift of the Donkey, the character traits of the Fox and the Wolf, seem to draw directly from earlier fables. We can find a number of examples collected in Adrados's extensive survey

[400] Perry, 'Fable,' p. 21.
[401] K. Varty (ed.) *Reynard the Fox: Social engagement and Cultural Metamorphoses in the Beast Epic from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York, 2000).
[402] Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals* p. 7.

of the Graeco-Latin fable tradition.[403] The confession and subsequent punishment of the most innocent animal is found in not-H.193, M.271 and M.224, along with their variants, though with certain differences in the number and nature of the characters.[404] Other fables featuring donkeys and wild animals, such as H. 154 "The Lion, the Ass and the Fox", place the donkey in a difficult situation, in which he is often killed.[405] In some variants of that fable, the donkey does escape, and in other tales he sometimes manages to outwit, and then outkick his opponents.[406] These examples show, if not awareness of the exact fables, at least a reasonable knowledge of the genre on the part of the *Synaxarion*'s author. The *Synaxarion* is not a direct copy of earlier material, rather, the anonymous author has used recognisable motifs and a familiar genre, developing them into a complex story and using their associations to further his plot, and possibly his message. The basic form of the text plays with the genre, as does the content, but it does so for its own aims, adding a further layer to each animal, disassociating it from its animal nature, a feature which will be discussed in detail further on.

It is important to bear in mind that the, often humorous, fable elements played with here do not detract from the religious content, nor do they remove the possibility of a monastic author and/or audience. In fact, they may strengthen this possibility. Fable material was used by Western preachers in sermons, and it is possible that the same occurred in the Orthodox Church.[407] In the Byzantine world we find a direct connection between fable material and monasticism in a number of works, including those of

[403] F.R., Adrados, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable.*
[404] The predators involved are usually foxes, wolves or lions, often, but not always as a pair with one notably larger and/or stronger than the other. For example Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable*, vol. 3, not-H. 193 features only a wolf and an ass; in M271 the wolf hears the confession of the fox and ass before passing judgement; in M224 it is the lion who presides over the confessions. pp. 499, 704, 677.
[405] Ibid., pp. 204-206.
[406] For example, in Adrados, *Graeco-Latin Fable* vol. 3, H.198 "The Ass and the Wolf", M.56 "The Ass with Privilege, the Fox and the Wolf", and M.273 "The Unfortunate Wolf, the Fox and the Mule" pp. 258, 600, 705-706.
[407] Baxter, *Bestiaries and their Users* pp. 190, 192-194.

Kassia.[408] The moral aspect, transmission of popular wisdom, and indeed the simple style of fable, similar to that of gnomic epigrams, ensured fable remained useful and popular for a Christian audience. This connection is even found outside the scriptorium. The Aesopic decorations with inscriptions at Eski Gümüş mentioned in my earlier chapter, are not the only examples of this.[409] In the main building of a late eleventh-century church in the Mani, in a village called Charia, there is a bas-relief showing a cock on the right hand side, standing by the trunk of a T-shaped tree.[410] Two quadrupeds appear below, at least one of which is identifiable as a fox, suggesting the image depicts the fabled attempt of the fox to trick the cock into coming down from the tree. The image is laid out to a plan and was presumably carefully chosen for the space. A comparable, though not contemporary, example can be found in the early fifteenth-century church of St Theodore, or the Evangelistria, at Sanxenou, Trebizond.[411] Here there is an image of a fox or wolf, with a cock on a branch above it, on the exterior of the north wall. An inscription next to the cock reads 'φοβοῦμαί σε, κῦρι, ὦ ἄλεπε, πολλὰς κανόνας ἔχεις' while next to the wolf/fox we find 'κατέβα, Δέσποτα, ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ κι εὐχήσου'.[412] The fable depicted appears to be that of "The Dog, the Fox and the Cock", recorded as an anonymous Byzantine fable.[413] In this fable the cock and the dog are friends. When the cock crows at dawn, a fox comes to eat him and attempts to flatter him out of the tree. Instead the cock asks him to sing under the tree himself and the dog destroys him. This fable contains references to Christian practices and, according to

[408] Lauxtermann, *Byzantine poetry*, pp. 253-260.
[409] Gough, 'The Monastery of Eski Gümüş' pp. 157-164.
[410] A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung. Band 3, Teil I* (Wien, 2014) pp. 218-19.
[411] A. Bryer and D. Winfield (eds.) *The Byzantine monuments and topography of the Pontic,* (*DOP*, 1985) p. 283.
[412] Bryer and Winfield, *The Byzantine monuments*, p. 283, and Drandakis, 'Ἀνάγλυπτος παράστασις', p. 666.
[413] Adrados *Graeco-Latin Fable* vol. 3, p. 334.

Adrados, alludes to Byzantine hymnography.[414] We know that manuscripts containing Aesopic fables were copied in monastic scriptoria, a prime example being the prose version produced by Maximus Planudes. The popularity of such tales among monastic audiences is suggested by the spread of the artistic representations of fable material in churches across a broad geographical range. The later fable is considered to be of Byzantine, rather than Classical, origin due to these Christian references. It plays with motifs found in other fables, such as that of the lamb, the tower and the wolf, depicted in Eski Gümüş, as well as the fable of "The Fox and the Crow". Similar stories can be found in the West, in Marie de France's fable of "The Cock and the Fox", for example, obviously coming from the shared classical tradition. However, the deliberate friendship displayed here between the cock and the dog is an unusual feature and, in combination with the Christianising aspects, suggests that there were some attempts at adding new texts to the fable collections in Byzantium, even if these were not as widespread as they seem in Western vernacular material. The *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey* and its fable elements thus connect strongly with the monastic element of the Orthodox Church, and link in with the continuing popularity of that genre shown by the rewriting and creation of fables, as well as their ongoing use in church decoration.

Basing his story within the fablesque allows our author to utilise a number of familiar motifs. The characteristics of the animals, as cunning, greedy and modest, would have been familiar to a Palaiologan audience from fables and from religious texts, such as the *Hexaemeron* by Saint Basil and the *Physiologus*. This genre also encourages interpretation of the anthropomorphised animals as metaphors. They are just similar enough to humans to represent them, but different enough to not need to be considered as individuals themselves.

[414] Ibid. See also Drandakis, 'Ἀνάγλυπτος παράστασις', pp. 672-673.

Religious literature

Although the *Synaxarion* and its fablesque style can be connected with the monastic sphere, there is also a connection with more overtly religious literary material, hinted at by the title of the text; *Συναξάριον τοῦ τιμημένου Γαδάρου*. The term "synaxarion" is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'An account of the life of a saint, read as a lesson in public worship; also, a collection of such accounts'.[415] The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* further indicates that "synaxarion" can be used to refer to a church calendar of fixed feasts, as well as collections of brief hagiographical notices, usually focusing on the martyrdom of a saint.[416] These notices would customarily be read after the sixth ode of the *kanon*, and are much shorter and simpler than the accounts of saints to be found in a *menologion*. The use of such a term in the title of the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey* therefore implies an immediate connection with a religious text, though the structure and tone are clearly different. Aside from the title, the story focuses on a central event in the life of the Donkey. The event in question almost leads to the martyrdom of the Donkey, the most commonly depicted event in *synaxaria* of saints.[417] The death of the Donkey would be the expected, and traditional, outcome for a story involving predators and a donkey.[418] But the Donkey does not die, instead becoming the hero of the tale. The acts of confession which surround the episode also highlight the religious theme of the poem, at the same time as allowing us to get to know more of the characters, and accentuating their characteristics. Additionally, the epithet *τιμημένου* seems to tie in with the idea of a *vita*, but comically, by attributing saintly features to the Donkey. The ass or

[415] *OED* online http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/196369?redirectedFrom=synaxarion#eid
[416] *ODB* 3:1991.
[417] Ibid.
[418] See the above discussion on fable, pp. 117-122.

donkey has a number of connotations in Christianity, which may be connected with its almost saintly role in the *Synaxarion*, but, as these are not generic, they will be discussed below in relation to that animal.

Some of the language used in the *Synaxarion* also suggests a religious preoccupation. For example, the Fox states that she and the Wolf wish to educate the Donkey so that they may appoint him as their envoy. The verb used for appoint, χειροτονῶ, was used in connection with appointments made within the church hierarchy and the ordination of clergymen.[419] The Fox also refers to the *nomocanon*, the codex of ecclesiastical law. Such terminology creates a religious connection, further supported by the content of the work, which includes, among other things, the act of confession. However, the religious content is highly satirical, and the synaxarial form must therefore also be parodic.

There are a number of allusions to specific biblical people and events in the *Synaxarion*. The Fox compares the three companions to the inhabitants of Nineveh (v. 109) and to Jonah (v.110) in their need to confess in an attempt to receive God's forgiveness.[420] When he absolves the Fox of her crimes, the Wolf compares her to two other biblical figures, telling her:

> You surpassed Manasseh, you imitated the harlot,
> And you have become again like them,
> My divine one, my holy one and you have been justified.[421]

The harlot imitated is obviously Mary Magdalen, the prime example of a female repentant, and Manasseh, king of Judah, was also a familiar penitent, notably being described as repenting idolatry in 2 Chron. 33:12-14. The Fox herself also takes on the

[419] E.A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100)* (New York, 1900) p. 1163.
[420] *Synaxarion* lines 109-111.
[421] Ibid., lines 213-215, 'τὸν Μανασσῆν ἐνίκησας, τὴν πόρνην ἐμιμήσω,/καὶ γέγονας σὺ ὅμοιος πάλε ὥσπερ ἐκείνους,/όσια μου, ἁγια μου καὶ δεδικαιωμένη'.

role of prophet as it is she who 'foresees' a storm and encourages the confusion and punishment of sins.[422]

A further link with the religious may be suggested through the tales commonly called *narrationes*, in Greek διηγήσεις ψυχωφελεῖς, sometimes termed beneficial tales. These are something of a sub-genre of hagiography that began as an oral tradition and were popular around the sixth and seventh centuries, as well as during the second half of the tenth century, when a number were written by Paul, bishop of Monemvasia.[423] *Narrationes* could be produced as individual texts, but are also commonly found inserted into saints' lives and chronicles.[424] What is more, by the time Paul was writing, the spiritual element seems to have been of lesser importance than previously and had 'become the excuse for telling a good tale, which frees the artist to develop his tale at will, without restraints'.[425] It was generally believed that new tales of this kind were not written after the early eleventh century, though the tales can be found in a number of later collections, so they seem to have continued to hold some interest for the Byzantine population, or at least the monastic population.[426] This may be due to their 'simple and direct message which conformed to their language, style and concise manner of expression', making *narrationes* an accessible and entertaining vehicle for religious messages.[427] Some new tales from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries have recently been identified and assigned to the genre on the basis that they were produced in a monastic context, intended to edify their readers and show an affection for the exciting and bizarre.[428] Based on these criteria alone there seems to be a connection with the *Synaxarion*. The later versions of such tales also seem to mix

[422] Ibid., lines 96-111.
[423] *ODB* 2:1437; *The Spiritually Beneficial Tales of Paul, bishop of Monembasia and of Other Authors*, trans. J. Wortley (Kalamazoo, 1996).
[424] S. Efthymiadis, 'Redeeming the Genre's Remnants: Some Beneficial Tales Written in the Last Centuries of Byzantium,' *Scripta & e-Scripta* (2010) p. 308.
[425] J. Wortley, 'Paul of Monembasia and His Stories' in J. Chrysostomides (ed.) *Kathegetria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey for her 80th Birthday* (Camberley, 1988) p. 314.
[426] Efthymiadis, 'Redeeming the Genre' p. 309.
[427] Ibid., p. 307.
[428] Ibid., p. 309.

genres, using older forms to criticise new, or at least contemporary, problems, but their aim was always 'to provide good service to a religious cause through a simple mode of instruction'.[429] *Narrationes* could be highly critical or mocking of religious practice, particularly in connection with prideful or false monks, as represented in the *Synaxarion* by the Wolf, and so contained some humorous and entertaining features, rather than being purely spiritual works.

Finally, there is the renaming of the Donkey which can be construed as a religious element. Having confessed his sins and survived the trials put before him by the Fox and Wolf, the Fox announces that the Donkey is no longer to be called γάδαρος, but νικόν.[430] While the meanings of these terms and the word-play involved will be discussed below, here it suffices to say that this act of renaming mimics the taking of a monastic name when becoming a monk. Whether the author is using this as a conscious religious motif, for humour, or to reverse the traditional fable format is, nevertheless, debatable.

The animals used already have religious connections through known stereotypes which build on the characteristics they have in fable. Again, the stereotypes used present the animals as anthropomorphic metaphors for human behaviour, the animality adding insult and humour.

The Novel

Previous scholarship has highlighted the *Synaxarion*'s connection with both fables and religious material, though not the *narrationes*.[431] Moennig has also drawn attention to similarities with the later Byzantine novel, which he designates as a *genus proximum*

[429] Ibid, p. 317.
[430] *Synaxarion*, pp. 115-117.
[431] Ibid., pp. 117-119.

maius of the *Synaxarion*.[432] This genre is perhaps not as far removed from the religious material discussed above as it first appears. Manuel Philes' poem on a romance by Andronikos Palaiologos, possibly a version of *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, interprets the erotic novel allegorically - the hero who kills the dragon to be united with the heroine is the Christian who slays Satan to unite with God - so some connection could be drawn between the two, if only to justify the reading of a text so obviously to be disapproved of by 'good' Christians.[433] The features of the *Synaxarion* reminiscent of the romances include the omniscient 'authorial' presence, and the use of direct speech, though this is also a distinctive feature of fable, as mentioned above. There is also the common factor of the vernacular language and the key use of nature, as well as the presence of a hero of some form, fictitious or even fantastical events with no reference claim, and smaller stories embedded in a larger frame story. However, the *Synaxarion* does not feature ekphrastic passages, one of the most apparent rhetorical devices in the romances, and focuses mainly on a single event rather than a longer, more developed narrative tale. The content of the *Synaxarion* is humorous, as opposed to amorous, and therefore the nature of the conflict, a central plot device for both the *Synaxarion* and the romances, is also different. While there is some similarity between these genres, it is hard to see a clear influence of one upon the other, though the extensive focus on the natural world and the ways it can be used seems to be connected with a wider development in Palaiologan literature.

The *Synaxarion* appears to be a text that plays with several genres in terms of both its form and its content. Genre as a concept was somewhat ill-defined and

[432] Ibid., p. 127.
[433] P. Agapitos, 'SO Debate Genre, structure and poetics in the Byzantine vernacular romances of love,' *Symbolae Osloenses* 79:1 (2004) p. 18; Knös, 'Qui est l'auteur du roman de Callimaque et Chrysorrhoé', pp. 274-295.

changeable in Byzantium, though that is not to say that it did not exist.[434] Certain features were expected of certain texts and, if these were not present, the work could be described in a manner which would indicate this. Within what we might call hagiography, a *vita* might be termed a *bios kai politeia*; Paul of Monemvasia described his spiritual tales as *diegeseis psychopheleis* and the term *historia psychopheles* was used to define *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, each having a religious message but presenting it in a different guise.[435] Rhetoric followed certain rules in Byzantium, as evidenced by the various rhetorical handbooks, and many genres, including historiography, epistolography and romance, also had particular required generic features.[436] Nonetheless, cross-genre works are not unusual and our modern understanding of how genre should function has been much debated in connection with Byzantine literature.[437] Here it seems reasonable to suggest, as Moennig does, that the use of different genres, and a range of literary features, has produced a text *sui generis*.[438] Fable is obviously a genre that lends itself to ecocrticism, as it often features animals, and in combination with the other genres discussed above, it becomes more fantastical, both connecting and disconnecting the audience from the familiar animal characteristics it plays with, so that the genres used within this *sui generis* text are an important, knowing, selection on the part of the author. By choosing these generic aspects, the author is adding to the evolution of each genre, developing them to suit his audience and their situation.

[434] M. Mullet, 'The Madness of Genre,' *Homo Byzantinus: Papers in Honor of Alexander Kazhdan, DOP* 46, (1992) pp. 235-243.
[435] S. Ivanov, 'Spiritually Beneficial Tales in Byzantine and Slavic Literature – Foreword,' *Scripta & eScripta*, issue 89 (2010) p. 48.
[436] Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*.
[437] See for example the aforementioned works Mullet 'madness of genre' and Agapitos, 'SO Debate'.
[438] *Synaxarion*, p. 128.

Stylistic Features of the *Synaxarion*

Aspects of religious writings, fable, and even romance are clearly present in the *Synaxarion*, but the generic style of the *Synaxarion* is hard to define clearly, at least in part due to its sampling and mixing of different features from other genres to suit its content, which is fairly comic. However, the *Synaxarion* can be defined as beast literature on account of its protagonists being animals, its use of the vernacular, and the possibly satirical aspect. The features are familiar from Western beast literature like the *Reynard* cycle, as well as Palaiologan texts like the *Book of Birds* and *An Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds*.[439] In Byzantium beast literature is generally in verse form and often addresses itself to the audience to announce a didactic aim. More often than not, it is thought of in general terms as animal stories and thus associated with folk tales and children's fairy-tales, implying a certain lack of literariness. The *Synaxarion* is more complex than such associations may suggest. As Leverle says, 'We must not, then, make the mistake of dismissing stories about animals, no matter how unnatural, as simply naive'; they can have any number of aims and utilise various literary devices.[440]

I have already indicated above that the *Synaxarion* is written in the fifteen-syllable verse common to vernacular fiction of the fourteenth century. Vernacular language does not equate with 'popular' literature, but was commonly used for fictional writing during the fourteenth century by authors who arguably also wrote in the higher register, more classicising form of medieval Greek usually termed 'learned'.[441] The use of the vernacular does not preclude the text from a reasonable degree of literariness or from the use of certain rhetorical devices, and texts in the vernacular have increasingly

[439] *The Romance of Reynard the Fox*, trans. D.D.R.Owen, (Oxford, 1994); *Ὁ Πουλολόγος; κριτική έκδοση με εισαγωγή, σχόλια και λεξιλόγιο*, ed. I. Tsavarē, (Athens, 1987); Nicholas and Baloglou *An Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds.*
[440] Leverle, 'Monks and Other Animals,' p. 157.
[441] E. and M., Jeffreys, *Popular literature in late Byzantium* (London, 1983); Agapitos, *Narrative Structure*; Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance;* Horrocks, *Greek.*

been shown to be varied and original. In the case of the *Synaxarion*, Moennig attributes the generally poor opinion of it as a piece of literature to errors made in the edition produced by Wagner.[442] Rather, the author appears to have been well-educated, and able to write to suit his, or perhaps her, aim and audience. He may have been a member of the court at Constantinople, or a religious man, but he was clearly well-read. In his re-evaluation, Moennig stresses the use of synonyms, homonyms and antitheses as an indication of the literariness of the text, specifically in connection with the names associated with the donkey; γάδαρος and νικόν.[443] Indeed, Moennig considers that the puns and wordplay provide the central humour of the text.[444] The synonyms ὁ γάδαρος and τὸ νικόν (ὀνικόν) essentially mean the same thing, donkey. The word γάδαρος (γάιδαρος) is the *koine* for donkey, and seems to be connected to the word ἀείδαρος, meaning 'he who is always beaten'.[445] The *koine* noun implies all the stereotypical traits associated with that animal and its owners, some of which the Fox enumerates for us:

> Do not pretend so much, so that you appear a boor,
> A rustic and uneducated, vulgar and a liar
> Indeed it is appropriate for you, Donkey, to be called a donkey.[446]

The Fox continues with praise of whomever assigned the Donkey this name since it fits his character and appearance, but here we have a lacuna, so the Fox's wit is somewhat lost. She continues to describe the 'deformed' appearance of the Donkey and to refer to him as a coarse barbarian.[447] Moennig also notes the pun here between ξυλοσοφῆς (ξυλοσοφῶ, to represent/pretend to be a philosopher) and φιλοσοφῆς

[442] *Synaxarion*, p. 115.
[443] Ibid., pp. 115-117.
[444] Ibid., p. 115.
[445] George Akropolites, *The History: Introduction, translation and commentary*, trans. R. Macrides (Oxford, 2007) p. 309.
[446] *Synaxarion* lines 49-51, 'Μηδὲν ξυλοσοφῆς πολλά, ὅτι χωριάτης εἶσαι,/βάναυσος καὶ ἀπαίδευτος, χοντρὸς καὶ ψευδολόγος·/ὄντως πρέπει σε, γάδαρε, γάδαρον νὰ σὲ λέγουν.'.
[447] Ibid., lines 54-56, 'ὅλὰ 'ναι παρασούλικα μετὰ τῆς θεωρίας./ Μὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν οὐδαμῶς θέλω τὸ ὄνομά σου!/'Ακούω σε ὅτι βάβαρος, πολλὰ χοντρὸς ὑπάρχεις.'.

(φιλοσοφῶ, to practice philosophy) the former being a playful corruption of the latter.[448] The similarity with the term ξύλο(ν), meaning 'a stiff beating' additionally implies that this 'philosopher' deserves a beating.[449] The animal which the Fox describes here is not the stubborn, hard-working, humble creature that is presented in Biblical works, or by his own actions, but a human representation that combines ideas of the animal and of the lower levels of society to insult. The synonym τὸ νικόν, the name which the Donkey earns from the Wolf and Fox at the end of the tale, has very different connotations. It acts as a homonym with the participle νικῶν from νικάω, meaning to conquer or have victory over, clearly an appropriate name for one who can escape two predators known for being rapacious and cunning. This word overturns the assumptions that the Donkey is χοντρὸς, βάναυσος, ἀπαίδευτος, as the Fox had earlier described him, the antithesis of his πονηρίαν, usually attributed to the Fox, and his γνῶσιν providing the humour as well as the 'moral'.

Various other rhetorical devices can be found in the text, including the biblical references I have mentioned above, the Fox's *anaphora* of ἐγώ at lines 57 through 59, in which she stresses her education in almost eulogic fashion, and the use of alliteration to create a kind of internal rhyme (χοντρὸν κοτσάκιν κόκκινον, line 170; μὲ ρέκλαν στραβοδίκωλον τὸ κωλοκούκουρόν μου, line 232; καὶ σφυροκατουρεῖ συχνὰ καὶ συχνοπορδαλίζει, line 315). There are also a number of catalogues or enumerations, features of Homeric, epic poetry, within the poem. These catalogues cover a number of topics including types of hunting dog (lines 31-33), game (line 38), what Moennig terms traits of education and status (lines 57-59), the Wolf's prey (lines 126-127), weapons

[448] Moennig suggests the word is an invention of the author, *Synaxarion*, p. 120 and p. 159. See the online *Epitome of the Kriaras Dictionary* entry which says 'Παριστάνω το φιλόσοφο (αν και είμαι μωρός)'. http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/medieval_greek/kriaras/.

[449] See the online *Epitome of the Kriaras Dictionary* entry http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/medieval_greek/kriaras/search.html?lq=%CE%BE%CF%8D%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BD

(lines 338-339) and instruments (lines 340-341).[450] Among these classically Greek enumerations we find many loan words, especially where technical terminology is employed. When the Donkey first meets the Fox and the Wolf, he tries to make them leave by listing the variety of dogs with which his master hunts, and with whom he will attack the two predators. The Donkey states that his master has more than thirty σκύλους δυνατούς including hounds, tracking dogs and harriers.[451] The terms used are etymologically connected with either the Greek σκύλος or the Turkic *zağar* (ζαγάρι). The use of loan words is particularly obvious in lines 338 to 342. Here the Fox lists a number of weapons and instruments to describe the 'weapon' with which the Donkey attacked the Wolf, following his question as to where the μπουσδουγάνι with which he was beaten is[452]. The term μπουσδουγάνι itself probably derives from the Turkic word *bozdoğan*, at least in the sense in which it is used here, to mean an iron club.[453] Many of the words used for the different weapons and military instruments such as horns and drums seem to have come from Latin, Italian and Turkish. The terms for instruments had been in Greek usage long before the fourteenth century, but that the terms for weapons, and in particular clubs and guns, are not Greek is interesting. For example, the words ματσούκας (club or cudgel, *matteūca*), σκλόπους (*sclopi*, hand gun) and λουμπάρδα (cannon) are all loan words. They feature in other texts of the same period including the *Spanos*, the *Chronicle of Morea*, Pseudo-Kodinos, and the *Chronicle of the Turkish Sultans*. The use of loan words in a vernacular text is not surprising but as we have relatively limited evidence for

[450] *Synaxarion*, p. 120.
[451] Ibid., lines 32-33, 'ζαγάρια, βαρύσκυλους, ζαγαρογυρευτάδες,/λαγωνικούς, χοντρόσκυλους ἀπὸ τὴν Λουμπαρδέαν'.
[452] Ibid., line 335.
[453] See the online *Epitome of the Kriaras Dictionary* entry, 'μπουσδουγάνι το., α) Σιδερένιο πολεμικό ρόπαλο: (Ιστ. Βλαχ. 1172)· β) (με αισχρό νόημα): Γυρεύει (ενν. ο γάδαρος) και την αλουπού … με το μπουσδουγάνι του καμπόσες να της δώσει (Γαδ. διήγ. 458). [<τουρκ. bozdoğan. Λ. πουσδογάνον στο Du Cange. Κύρ. όν. -ης στην Ιστ. Βλαχ. 1123]'.

Byzantine weaponry, these terms are significant.[454] One entry in Pseudo-Kodinos indicates that the Byzantine government supplied some Alan soldiers with equipment which was later returned.[455] However, in general, it seems that soldiers, particularly mercenaries from abroad, would provide their own equipment.[456] This may well have led to foreign terms being used for specific weapons, particularly in the later Byzantine period, when so many mercenaries were employed and conflict with Italian- and Turkish-speakers was frequent. Bartusis believes 'the earliest possible reference to the use of firearms in Byzantium' occurs around 1390 in relation to John VII's attack on his grandfather John V.[457] It would thus make sense that the language used for cannons and guns in Byzantine vernacular would come from those more familiar with the weapons. These terms may also help to date the text more precisely, as they are clearly familiar to the author but still described through foreign names, so perhaps this work can be placed after such weapons had become familiar to a Byzantine audience through their use by foreign mercenaries or enemies. Cannons in particular, when attested for this period, were commonly used against the Byzantines, rather than by them. Such disassociation may then allow for the euphemistic element of the description, which I will discuss further in relation to the humour and the animals below. The alliteration, catalogues and loan words act as stylistic features, and show awareness of rhetorical devices, and of specific terminology. That the terminology is derived from foreign tongues, as well as Greek, may indicate the influence of external source material or simply the importation

[454] On Byzantine weaponry see T. G. Kolias, *Byzantinische Waffen: ein Beitrag zur byzantinischen Waffenkunde von den Anfängen bis zur lateinischen Eroberung* (Wien, 1988).
[455] M.C. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army* (Philadephia, 1992) p. 333.
[456] Ibid., p. 333.
[457] Ibid., p. 335.

of names, of weapons and dogs, at the same time as the objects and animals themselves.[458]

A further indication of the literary ambition of the *Synaxarion* is the omniscient narrator, who comments on the story, occasionally directly addressing his audience, For example, in line 272, the narrator tells us to listen and be amazed at the contrivance of the Donkey 'Καὶ τί ἐμηχανήσατο, ἄκουσον καὶ θαυμάσεις', and at the end of the story he instructs the audience to change how they refer to the humble donkey;

> By your honour, do not call him a donkey at all,
> Since he was victorious, certain good men
> - such as Your Honour – do not say donkey
> But Niketas and Nikon, who have knowledge of it.[459]

The narrator knows the intentions of the characters (ταῦτά ᾽λεγεν ὁ γάδαρος, ὅπως τοὺς δελεάση /καὶ φύγουσιν καὶ λυτρωθῆν αὐτὸς ἀπὸ κινδύνου, lines 42-43), and knows that the characters are sometimes aware of each other's objective (ἡ δὲ ἀλώπηξ πονηρὰ οὖσα καὶ μηχανοῦργος /οὐκ ἔλαθεν αὐτὴν καὶ τοῦ γαδάρου λόγοι, lines 44-45), and sometimes not (ὁ λύκος δὲ ὡς ἤκουσεν τῆς ἀλουποῦς τοὺς λόγους, /καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν συγκρότησιν ἐπίστευσεν εὐθέως, lines 292-293).[460] He seems to know how the story will end, even as it is just beginning; 'Καθάπερ καὶ ἐποίησεν, ὡς ἔδειξεν τὸ τέλος'(line 92).[461] Occasionally, the narrator expresses an opinion as to the behaviour or speech of the characters; ταῦτα ἔλεγεν ὁ γάδαρος ὡς φρόνιμος ὁπού ᾽τον, line 250). However, Moennig argues that the narrator is not always reliable in the information he provides. As

[458] As an example, the first attestation for the word ζαγάριον (hound) indicated in the online *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität* is the paraphrasis of Choniates, nowadays dated around 1350. http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lbg/#eid=29151&context=lsj&action=hw-list-click

[459] *Synaxarion* lines 390-393, 'διὰ τὴν τιμήν σας, γάδαρον ποσῶς μὴ τὸν εἰπῆτε/καθὼς καὶ ἐπεκράτησεν, τινὲς καλοὶ ἀνθρῶποι/- ὡσὰν τὴν ἀφεντίαν σας – γάδαρον δὲν τὸν λέγουν/ἀλλὰ Νικήτα καὶ Νικόν, ὅσοι τὴν γνῶσιν ἔχουν'.

[460] *Synaxarion*, pp. 120-121.

[461] *Synaxarion*, p. 140.

evidence he discusses lines 114-115 and 208-211.[462] In both cases, where the text suggests that the Wolf is unaware of the trick intended by the Fox, Moennig considers that the events that follow leave no doubt that the Wolf is aware of the trick, contrasting pretence and intention for comic effect.[463] In contrast, the narrator highlights, rather than masks, the Donkey's attempts at trickery by using the term ἐφεύρεμα to mean invention (line 20) and describing him as contriving a plan in lines 270 to 272.[464] The role of the narrator here seems to replace the more familiar authorial presence we find in the Komnenian novels. The anonymity of the author connects this story again with the other beast literature of the period, as well as with the Palaiologan novels which are mostly authorless, with the possible exception of *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi* as mentioned above. Indeed, the majority of the vernacular works from this period are anonymous.[465] In the case of the *Synaxarion* the lack of a named author does not affect the material. The authorial presence remains authoritative, and is free to mock through the character of the apparently omniscient narrator.

The *Synaxarion* then is not a text without literary pretensions. It uses a number of rhetorical devices that place it in the Palaiologan literary context, from its use of classical practices like the catalogues, loan words that seem familiar from other texts but which relate here to more practical matters, and the mixing of generic styles. This must be born in mind when we look further into the content of the work, as it places the author into a

[462] Ibid., lines 114-115 'Not wholly perceiving the deceitful way of the Fox/Nor his scheme, which was against the donkey' (ὅλον μὴ γνοὺς τὸν δόλιον τρόπον τῆς ἀλωπέκου/μηδὲ τὸ ἐπιβούλευμα, ὃ ἦν κατὰ γαδάρου) and lines 208-211'The Wolf hearing such devoutness/and that pure confession,/ was amazed by such wisdom, such repentance,/and accepted and forgave her' (Ὁ λύκος δὲ ὡς ἤκουσεν κατάνυξιν τοσαύτην/καὶ τὴν ἐξομολόγησιν τὴν καθαρὰν ἐκείνην,/ἐθαύμασεν τὴν σύνεσιν, μεταβολὴν τοσαύτην,/καὶ ὑποδέξατο αὐτὴν καὶ ἐσυγχώρησέν την).
[463] Ibid, pp. 122-23.
[464] Ibid., lines270-272 'εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐνόησε ποιῆσαι πρᾶγμα ξενον,/ἐπαινετὸν καὶ ἀκουστόν, ὡς ἔδειξεν τὸ τέλος./Καὶ τί ἐμηχανήσατο, ἄκοθσον καὶ θαυμάσεις,'.
[465] For a discussion on anonymous writers in Byzantium see the articles in *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Functions, and Identities*, ed. A. Pizzone (Berlin, 2014).

relatively select social group, and elevates an apparently simple animal story to considered piece of entertainment.[466]

Humour

The content of the *Synaxarion* manipulates the genres and stylistic features addressed above, incorporating disparate features from religious material, fable and elsewhere to play with different associations, usually in comic fashion. Byzantine beast literature, the only 'genre' to which the *Synaxarion* directly belongs, displays a predominately humorous nature, often of a satirical style. For example, the *Poulologos*, *Porikologos* and *Opsarologos*, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, mock particular individuals, as well as parodying institutions and authority more generally.[467] Humour is produced in the *Synaxarion* through parody, stereotyping, subversion and wordplay. It is also present in the slapstick violence, a feature shared with the *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds*, on which the next chapter focuses. Humour, as described by Garland, is 'the ultimate unorthodoxy, with its implications of mockery, lack of respect or restraint, reversal of roles, and evasion of social and/or political control'.[468] Humorous texts from the Palaiologan period seem to greatly enjoy abusive mockery, comic violence, defecation, sexual humour and obscenity in general.[469] Add to this the use of parody and satire and we have a fairly representative depiction of later

[466] M. Mullett, *Letters, literacy and literature in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2007); I. Ševčenko, 'Palaiologan Learning,' in C. Mango (ed.) *The Oxford History of Byzantium* (Oxford, 2002) pp. 284-293.
[467] See pp. 198-201 of this thesis.
[468] L. Garland, 'Street-Life in Constantinople: Women and the Carnivalesque,' in L. Garland (ed.) *Byzantine Women: varieties of experience, 800-1200* (Aldershot, 2006) p. 163.
[469] B. Baldwin, 'A Talent to Abuse: Some aspects of Byzantine satire,' *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982) pp. 19-28; M. J. Kyriakis, 'Satire and slapstick in seventh and twelfth century Byzantium,' *Byzantina* 5 (1973) pp. 291-306; L. Garland, '"And His Bald Head Shone Like a Full Moon...": an appreciation of the Byzantine sense of humour as recorded in historical sources of the eleventh and twelfth Centuries,' *Parergon*, 8:1 (1990) pp.1-31; J. Haldon, 'Humour and the everyday in Byzantium', in G. Halsall (ed.) *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2002) pp. 48-71.

Byzantine humour as seen in the Ptochoprodromic poems, Mazaris' *Journey to Hades* and the beast literature.[470] Such abusive humour was rarely nonsensical, instead it relates an opinion, giving us a perspective of a person, group or event. In Byzantium, satire was often politically charged, as best seen in the works of Constantine of Rhodes, an important court figure who satirised other such figures to their detriment.[471] Such comedy was not wholly divisive though. Rather, it could strengthen shared bonds, point out appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, and unify through culturally specific ideas. Mikhail Bakhtin coined the term 'Carnival laughter' or the 'carnivalesque', meaning a literary mode that subverts the status quo, in the broadest sense, through humour and chaos. This somewhat anarchic comedy, he argues, was restorative. He relates it specifically to the religious festivals that occurred throughout the Christian year, and particularly those after Lent or other periods of sacrifice.[472] Regarding the connection between the carnivalesque and animals, and specifically the donkey, he notes that that animal traditionally symbolises 'the material bodily lower stratum, which at the same time degrades and regenerates'.[473] In the *Synaxarion* we find obscene carnivalesque humour, some specifically related to religious practices and women, arguably acting as a uniting force here too. Aside from the religious and misogynistic humour, Moennig refers generally to the 'parodic' nature of the text, which he compares to the *Spanos*, a late fifteenth-century work.[474] This text, while obscene in its humour, also uses a religious format, here an *akolouthia*, as its guiding structure. Again there may be some

[470] M. Alexiou, 'The Poverty of Ecriture and the Craft of Writing: Towards a Reappraisal of the Prodromic Poems,' *BMGS* 10 (1986) pp. 1-40; *Ptochoprodromus: Einführung, kritische Ausgabe, deutsche Übersetzung, Glossar*, ed. H. Eideneier (Köln, 1991); *Mazaris' Journey to Hades: or, Interviews with dead men about certain officials of the imperial court*, trans. A. Smithies and M.J. Share (Buffalo, N.Y., 1975); L. Garland, 'Mazaris's *Journey to Hades:* Further Reflections and Reappraisal', *DOP* 61 (2007) pp. 183-214.
[471] M. Lauxtermann (forthcoming).
[472] M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington, 1984) p. 99.
[473] Ibid., p. 78.
[474] *Synaxarion*, pp. 125-26; *Spanos: Eine byzantinische Satire in der Form einer Parodie. Einleitung, Kritischer Text, Kommentar und Glossar*, ed. H. Eideneier, (Athens, 1990).

comedic value in this, but the sheer familiarity of the structure would also make it easy to write and to remember for both author and audience. *Spanos* also features a goat, who gives birth to a beardless man, the central figure of the work, uses vernacular language, and is highly comic - all features it has in common with the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*. The *Synaxary of Noble Women and Most Honourable Ladies*, a sixteenth-century text, probably of Cretan origin, mocks women, again seeming to utilise religious associations, and sharing some terminology and style with the *Synaxarion.*[475] Neither of these texts can be shown to have had a direct influence on the *Synaxarion* but they do imply that the combination of humour obscenity, misogynism and fantasy and religion was a familiar practice.

The *Synaxarion*'s mockery of religious practice is fairly obvious. The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* suggests that the text specifically mocks 'unscrupulous clergy who bemuse their simple parishioners with mumbo-jumbo'.[476] This would tie in well with the association drawn between the *Synaxarion* and the *narrationes*, as these texts regularly mocked prideful monks. However, this is only one interpretation of the text. There is also a level of misogynistic humour here, alongside the obscenity and fable-like subversion and satire. These aspects of comedy are hard to separate from each other, some pervading the text as a whole and some relating to specific characters, all of whom very clearly add to the humour.

The Animals

The *Synaxarion*'s employment of nature centres on animals, though sometimes the landscapes to which they refer are also important. The use of animal characters connects

[475] F. Koukoules, 'On the poem Synaxarion ton eugenikon gynaikon kai timiotaton archondisson (Synaxary of Noble Women and Most Honourable Ladies)', *Kretika Chronika* 7 (1953) pp. 55-60.
[476] *ODB* 3:1992.

the text with both the fable tradition and the development of beast literature in the Palaiologan period, particularly as it depicts nature anthropomorphically, attributing intelligence, speech, and even personality, to its three protagonists. Each of the animals adds something of their own to the story, fulfilling and subverting stereotypes familiar from other literature and cultural ideology. In using these stereotypes they reflect shared ideas on the nature of animals, but are heavily anthropomorphised, so that at times they hardly seem animal at all. It is this humanity, and the religious imagery connected with it, that encourages the audience to seek a moral. After all, animals 'are the limit case, if you like, of all our structures of understanding. They stand between us and our sense of ourselves, but they also allow us to think about ourselves'.[477] This was as true for past societies as it is for our own, and when defining 'us' as opposed to 'them', remains a significant tool.

The Wolf

The Wolf, as indicated above, may or may not be aware of the Fox's plotting through the *Synaxarion*. He is a companion to her and seems to be of lesser importance, but is the first of the three animals to make confession. He confesses to eating, and therefore killing, a large number of animals including sheep, cows, deer and pigs. Because his killing is excessive, he cannot eat all that he kills, and therefore he hides food in the hills in which he apparently lives, in order not to waste his food. Ostensibly feeling guilty about such gluttonous behaviour, he states that he goes;

> ... into the hills where there is a τσιμάδι
> And immediately pass through and I confess
> And become a monk, I darken my back,
> I become reverend, I resemble an abbot,

[477] Fudge, *Animal*, p. 8.

And repent the evil which I made in the world.[478]

The word τσιμάδι in line 130 has yet to be satisfactorily explained. Etymologically, it can be suggested the word is connected with the Italian 'cima' meaning summit. It may be possible that it is connected with the Greek σημάδι, which can mean a mark or sign. Moennig suggests, following Basileiou, that it could mean a charcoal burning site or charcoal pit, which makes sense in terms of the Wolf's act of darkening his fur to resemble a monk's habit.[479] This act plays on the theme of the false wolf-monk. While several other animals, including the fox and the cat are recorded as masquerading as monks and holy men in the Greek, Latin and Arabic/Persian traditions, the wolf is the animal most commonly associated with this trick. In Latin literature the most famous example is probably Ysengrimus who pretends to be a monk to live an easy life and eat well, a tale which is continued into the *Reynard* cycle.[480] This popular association was habitually used to recall Matthew 7.15 'beware false prophets, who come to you in sheepskin, though inside they are wolves'. It also links nicely with the carnivalesque practice of costumes and cross-dressing in Byzantine street festivals in which 'laymen could act the part of monks or clerics, and clerics those of soldiers and animals'.[481] Such role-reversal is a common feature of comedic texts and here not only mocks those who try to be something other than they are, but criticises the behaviour of important religious figures.[482] In the case of the *Synaxarion*, the Wolf, though rapacious, does not seem overly intelligent, and is thus less of an obvious threat than the Fox. He is,

[478] *Synaxarion* lines 130 to 134, 'Πλὴν ἀνεβαίνω εἰς τὸ βουνὶν ὁπού ὐναι τὸ τσιμάδι,/καὶ κυλιοῦμαι παρευθὺς καὶ ἐξομολογοῦμαι,/καὶ γίνομαι καλόγερος, τὴν ράχην μου μαυρίζω,/γίνομαι μεγαλόσχημος, ἡγούμενον ὁμοιάζω,/καὶ μεταγνώθω τὸ κακὸν τὸ πολεμῶ εἰς τὸν κόσμον'.
[479] Ibid., p. 164.
[480] J. Morton, 'Wolves in Human Skin: Questions of Animal Appetite in Jean de Meun's "Roman de la Rose"', *The Modern Language Review* 105:4 (2010) pp. 979–80; also Papademetriou, 'Some Aesopic Fables', pp. 128-132.
[481] Garland, 'Street-Life in Constantinople,' p. 172.
[482] S. Dentith, *Bahktinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London, 1995); A. Szakolczai, *Comedy and the Public Sphere: the rebirth of theatre as comedy and the genealogy of the modern public arena* (New York, 2013).

however, the constant companion of the Fox throughout the tale, and apparently wishes to appear as something he is not, in this case an abbot, while at the same time bringing his attributions of violence and greed to that office. He nevertheless looks for absolution from his companion and is willingly given it. The sin confessed to by the Wolf, who apparently believes he will survive the perceived threat of the sea if he confesses, is the sin of gluttony, one of the sins most regularly associated with monks, and which is a particular feature of Ptochoprodromos's fourth poem. If we agree with Moennig that the Wolf is fully aware of the Fox's plan, then he is truly a false monk. The humour of the false confessions would then connect strongly with the *narrationes* which, though not exactly comedic, were decidedly against prideful and false monks, who regularly get their comeuppance and are forced to truly repent. If we follow the text more directly and assume the Wolf to be less aware of the Fox's plot, then the attempt to become a monk rather reflects the inability to change one's nature. That the Wolf makes such a confession and attempts to transform himself in the hills adds a further aspect to this. The hills, like the desert, are an area outside of society, a place of retreat, implying a spiritual journey, self-improvement and seclusion, as they had traditionally been since St Basil's withdrawal to a country estate and even before. The Wolf mimics such holy withdrawal, which was believed to improve one's spirituality, apparently improving himself enough to appear as an abbot, and therefore clearly mocking, if not the practice, then the attempt without real belief.

The Fox

Although animals in Greek are grammatically gendered so that their presentation as being of one sex or another may be purely linguistic, the designation of the Fox as female in the *Synaxarion* is so heavily stressed that it seems to be a conscious choice by the

author. In Moennig's words, the 'anonymous author designed this persona specifically as female and delves deep into the chest of misogynist commonplaces.'[483] She is spoken to by the Wolf as a female; he addresses her as συντέκνισσα five times.[484] In line 212 she is simply κυρία μου, and in line 215 the Wolf goes so far as to call her ὁσία μου, ἁγία μου. He also describes her as νομοδιδασκάλισσα (line 117a) meaning teacher of law or, here, possibly teacher of all things. It is perhaps also worth noting that the word used when the Donkey desires to attack her is κουκουδώση which can be translated as rape.[485] In contrast, both the Wolf and the Donkey are addressed with masculine terms; the Wolf is κὺρ σύντεκνε (lines 97, 103, 288, 360, 336) or ἀφέντη μου (lines 97, 288, 360) to the Fox, and the Donkey is referred to as αὐθέντη, καλή or γάδαρε.

Apart from the terminology of address used, the anthropomorphic representation of the Fox is closely linked with the misogynistic representation of women. This is done both through the adjectives used of the Fox and through her behaviour. She is described several times as πονηρά (lines 44, 96, 252, 265), meaning conniving, a term used to describe women in any number of Greek works. For example, it is used frequently in S*yntipas,* a Persian work translated from Syriac into Greek around the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century, and reworked, probably in the thirteenth century, which focuses on the sexual misdemeanours and general scheming of women.[486] The fox is also termed μηχανοῦργος (line 44) and δολιοπανοῦργος (line 252), both of which may be translated as cunning or wily. She commits cunning deeds and slanders, τὰ ταύτης πανουργεύματα καὶ τὰς διαβολίας (line 140), and behaves in a deceitful way, δόλιον

[483] *Synaxarion*, p. 124.
[484] Ibid., lines 117, 219, 334, 345, 354.
[485] Ibid., lines 318 and 328; *Kriaras Dictionary* http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/medieval_greek/kriaras/search.html?lq=%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%B4&dq=
[486] *Novelle bizantine: il libro di Syntipas*, ed. F. Conca (Milan, 2004).

τρόπον (λινε 114), so that we are left in no doubt as to her deceptive and sinful character, a character which women, as descendants of Eve, were often accused of possessing.

Although not overtly mentioned as a trait, the Fox is by far the most verbose of the animals. This corresponds to the misogynist *topos* of loquaciousness. In the ancient novel, the heroine does sometimes speak more than the hero, but this trend was reversed in the Komnenian novels where the correlation between femininity and silence is often highlighted.[487] For example, in the fragments we have of Manasses' novel, we find a clear example of this idea;

> O woman, it is an adornment for women and especially for maidens
> not to wear their tongues out on useless matters, but to close their mouths
> and not waste time on long and superfluous discussions.[488]

The Fox in the *Synaxarion* is behaving in a manner that was apparently unacceptable to the male-dominated society of Byzantium, and is thus the opposite of the idealised heroine of the Komnenian novels. Her confession stretches to 66 verses, the longest continuous speech in the text, and she speaks alone for an additional 96 verses, as well as sharing 14 verses with the Wolf. In comparison, the Wolf's confession covers only 10 verses, and he speaks alone for an additional 30 verses. The Donkey speaks for a total of 68 verses, of which his confession spans 24 verses. It is the Fox who has a plan to trick the Donkey. She is always the driving force and the Wolf simply follows her lead, or apparently believes her words. When she and the Wolf fall for the Donkey's words, she is still cautious enough to encourage the Wolf to accept the 'gift' rather than placing herself in any danger. When the Wolf brings this up after their defeat, she will not accept the allegation he makes that it is her fault that he is injured (lines 356-358), but places the responsibility for the events with God, who has saved the Donkey from them on account of that animal's humility (lines 360-371). In her long speeches, the Fox describes herself

[487] Jouanno, 'Women in Byzantine Novels', pp. 142-145.
[488] Constantine Manasses, *Aristandros and Kallithea* 107 6.2-4 Hr (1-2 + 177-78 Ma) in *Four Byzantine Novels* ed. E. Jeffreys, p. 315; *Il RomanzoBizantino* ed. Conca, pp 740-741.

as both an ἀστρονόμισσα and a μαντεύτρια, which I translate as astronomer and prophetess. Both these terms associate her with the more dubious aspects of education. While dream interpretation, astrology and astronomy were popular in later Byzantium, they were also looked on with suspicion.[489] Her claims imply a connection with magic and the impious. Her prophetic role aligns her with the 'false prophets' of Matthew 7:15 mentioned above in connection with the Wolf. She claims vast knowledge of all things, and is attributed this also by the Wolf. The Fox *is* by far the more intelligent of the two evil companions, and her knowledge and cunning are continually stated, albeit often by her. The Wolf, as her companion, whose intellect is never mentioned, can blindly follow her, furthering the humour through his deference to his συντέκνισσα, who would normally be portrayed in the submissive role. It seems obvious that some Byzantine women were highly educated, but for them to have been so cannot have been the norm, at least outside of the court. The Fox thus subverts a number of aspects of femininity, and is portrayed negatively on account of this.

In her confession, the Fox states that '(T)he world curses me day and night' on account of the many times she has wronged people.[490] She offers one particular example, in which she imitates a pet cat in order to steal and eat the pet hen of an old, partially-blind woman. Her 'sins are many and doings/actions bad' so she too goes 'up into the mountains' to repent.[491] Here again we find the *topos* of withdrawal from society displayed by the Wolf. The Fox states that she 'wished to cry' for her actions in hopes of salvation. This apparently honest wish is quickly subverted by her inability to do so. Penitent tears, grief on account of sin, usually termed *penthos*, was a highly-regarded act

[489] P. Magdalino, *L'orthodoxie des astrologues: la science entre le dogme et la divination à Byzance, VIIe-XIVe siècle* (Paris, 2006); P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi (eds.) *The occult sciences in Byzantium*, (Geneva, 2006).
[490] *Synaxarion* line 155, 'Ο κόσμος καταρᾶται με ἡμέρας καὶ τὰς νύκτας'.
[491] Ibid., lines 200-201 'τὰς ἁματρίας μου τὰς πολλὰς καὶ <τὰ> κακὰ τὰ ἐποῖκα,/καὶ ἀνεβαίνω εἰς τὸ βουνίν'.

of faith in Byzantium. Numerous Byzantine texts from different time periods attest the importance of penitent tears, and references can be found in the Bible as well.[492] The connection drawn earlier between the Fox, Manasseh and the Ninivites is significant here. Manasseh and the inhabitants of Nineveh were regularly cited as examples of salvation through tears in Byzantine texts ranging in time from the early Church Fathers through to Gregory Palamas. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote that the 'people of Nineve are threatened with an overthrow, but by their tears they redeem their sin. Manasses was the most lawless of Kings, but is the most conspicuous among those who have attained salvation through mourning'.[493] The desire to shed tears was as important as the actual act. Neilos of Sinai, a tenth-century saint, argued that, though the shedding of physical tears was valuable, it was not essential as long as there was a sincere desire through which you imagined your soul weeping and 'shed tears before God in your intention'.[494] Since the author has already made us aware of the Fox's plan through the Wolf's feigned or actual failure to understand it, we know that the Fox had no such sincere desire.[495] Since she cannot produce real tears, crying being a distinctively human act, the Fox resorts to faking them;

> ... I squeeze myself a bit,
> And I piss on my tail, I water my eyes,
> And I knit my brows together,
> And it looks like tears and I have great hope
> That God will hold my tears in high esteem.[496]

[492] For a detail discussion of the role of tears in prayer see H. Hunt, *Joy-Bearing Grief: Tears of Contrition in the Writings of the Early Syrian and Byzantine Fathers* (Leiden, 2004). On tears more generally see M. Hinterberger, "Tränen in der byzantinischen Literatur: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Emotionen", *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 56 (2006) pp. 27-51.
[493] Gregory of Nazianzus, Letter 77, section 9, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7, p. 471.
[494] Hunt, *Joy-bearing Grief* p. 10.
[495] *Synaxarion* lines 112-15.
[496] Ibid., lines 203-207, 'καὶ δάκρυα οὐδὲν ἔχω καὶ σφίγγομαι ὀλίγο,/καὶ τὴν οὐράν μου κατουρῶ, τὰ ὀμμάτιά μου βρέχω,/καὶ εἰς τὰ ματοφρύδια μου κρεμάζονται οἱ κόμποι,/καὶ ὁμοιάζουν δάκρυα καὶ ἔχω μέγα θάρρος,/ὅτι ὁ θεὸς τὰ δάκρυα περὶ πολλοῦ τὰ ἔχει'.

The Fox therefore makes a mockery of a very familiar act of penitence. Not only does she fake tears, but she goes so far as to use urine to do so. Such scatological humour was a frequent feature of Byzantine comedy, and appears regularly in the vernacular beast literature. Here it does not necessarily disparage the actual belief in penitent mourning. It mocks those who fake such emotion for their own ends, dirtying themselves further by such an act, quite literally in this case. That the Wolf praises the Fox so effusively, and that the Fox herself expresses her hope that God will be pleased with her attempt, increases the comedic value. The Fox is attempting to hoodwink God in the same way as she is trying to hoodwink the Donkey.

The *Synaxarion* at its heart seems to be concerned with religion. The whole tale is based around acts of confession and the idea of false sacrifice. If, as has been suggested above, the humour of this text is directed towards false preachers who lead their flocks astray, the Wolf who changes himself into a monk-like figure certainly seems appropriate here. The Fox does not fit this idea so comfortably. While the fable concept of the fox preaching to domestic animals as a means of representing the false vocation of clerics to take advantage of the faithful is a well-known idea, the fox in such stories is always male.[497] The *Synaxarion*'s Fox's femininity is fairly heavily stressed, and female preachers were not a feature of Byzantine Orthodoxy, suggesting something more is going on. The Fox's verbosity, her apparent knowledge, her leadership and role as συντέκνισσα in relation to the monkish Wolf, as well as her comedic display of repentance, present a distinct image of this character.

Taking the religious actions as the lynchpin of this work, and therefore this character, we should refer back to the image of the Fox's false tears. It is possible that there is a direct connection with the heretical Bogomils being presented here.

[497] M.G. Rincon, 'The anticlerical critique in *Apokopos* 217-8,' *Erytheia* 34 (2013) pp. 87-120.

Nikephoros Gregoras, the fourteenth-century historian and polymath describes the Bogomils in his *Antirrhetica* as burning icons and revering the urine of the holy men such that they sprinkle it on their food.[498] It is hard to see where this accusation comes from, as I have found no other reference to this behaviour in discussions on the Bogomils. Certainly there are numerable references to holy men eating vegetables sprinkled with water in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, so it is possible this is a direct parody of such instances. The idea of holiness passing from one person to another through bodily contact is also not unheard of, and is connected with saintly miracles. The act of urinating to achieve some goal is also specifically associated with the fox in the poem on that animal by Manuel Philes. The famous court poet wrote a poem in learned Greek entitled *On the Characteristics of Animals*, dedicated to the description of a wide variety of birds, insects, amphibians, mammals of land and sea, reptiles, fish, molluscs and a few fantastic animals. The classification of the animals can be confused, and the work certainly utilises classical sources, so that, despite its scientific style, it is in no way an empirical text.[499] The verses focus on physical characteristics, such as colours, size and strength, or behavioural issues such as flight, migration, food, sexual habits and the construction of nests, dens and hives. Animal's individual methods of hunting, as well as the causes of death, are regularly recorded. The general symbolism and various magical and medicinal properties of the animals are also explained, including use in divination, cosmetics, and even their use in meteorology. Usually Philes provides some reason as to why the information on the animals is relevant to the emperor to whom he dedicated the work, Michael IX Palaiologos, the eldest son of Andronikos I. In his poem on the fox, Philes states that when the fox is attacking a curled-up hedgehog, she urinates next to its snout so that, in order to breathe properly, the hedgehog must uncurl, allowing her to eat

[498] *Nikephoros Gregoras; Antirrhetika 1*, ed. H.-V. Beyer (Wien, 1976) 131,21-133,1.
[499] Manuele File, *Le Proprietà degli animali II; Introduzione, traduzione e commentario a cura di Anna Caramico* (Accademia Pontaniana, 2006) pp. 19-20.

it.[500] This tale is given as an example of the fox's nature as the most evil of beasts. It seems appropriate that such an evil creature, already associated with clever but disgusting behaviour, should be the one to mock others who are cunning and disgusting in their attempts to deceive God, or unclean in beliefs and behaviour.

If there is such a connection, perhaps we can connect the Fox more generally with Bogomilism. Certainly, women played a prominent role within that heresy, as they could be perfects, ascetic holy leaders. Men and women seem to have attained a certain degree of equality under a religious doctrine that saw the physical world as evil and thus allowed for civil disobedience and the subversion of social norms. The traditional Orthodox role of women as wives and mothers was argued against as 'all sex was evil, marriage an abomination, and the birth of children a victory for the Devil'.[501] Anna Komnene gives us a clear Orthodox view of these heretics, describing female Bogomils as 'wretched women of loose habits and thoroughly bad'.[502] According to St Savas women could preach Bogomilism. They were therefore educated, though mainly, or even only, in the theological and dogmatic thought of the Bogomils.[503] The Fox's behaviour would seem to fit quite neatly with this image of women presented by the Orthodox opponents of the Bogomils. She acts as a spiritual equal to the Wolf, and is the leader of the group, apparently making the decisions and formulating plans. She claims a relatively high level of education, but in fairly specific areas, namely the *nomocanon*. It is possible that the text is not just mocking the vices of churchmen in general, but that it satirises particular heretics, singling them out for comparison with animals. This would not be a new concept; Epiphanios had used animals, particularly poisonous creatures, to describe

[500] Ibid, lines 1148-1156.
[501] E. Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs 900-1700* (1989) p. 70.
[502] *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, trans. E.R.A. Sewter (1969).
[503] M. Angelovska Panova, 'The Role of the Woman in the Bogomil Circles in Comparison with the Traditional Status Established With the Christian Religion,' *Balkanistic Forum* (Балканистичен Форум) 13 (2002) 219-21.

heretics in his *Panarion* in the fourth century. In the Bible too, animals can represent destructive forces, as they do in Revelations, thus they cause harm to the physical body as heretics do to the spiritual, whether as individuals or as symbolised by the Church. In the *Apocrypha* too, we find characters, specifically animals, being connected with pagans wishing to convert to a particular sect of Christianity.[504] The female nature of the Fox, as well as her very animality, may then be closely linked to her religious actions, creating a satirical display of the Bogomils' practices.

This is only one interpretation of the Fox's character. There may be another political or social reading, or the text may be entirely humorous, in which case the feminine imagery is straightforwardly mocking traits considered feminine but undesirable by Byzantine society. Certainly, the Fox is a highly developed character with obviously feminine characteristics who engages in irreverent behaviour.

The Donkey

The religious parody of the *Synaxarion* focuses on the Wolf and Fox and their apparently false penitence. That is not to say that there is no religious humour to be found in connection with the Donkey, but rather that it is more positive, subverting our expectations in different ways to that relating to the Fox and Wolf. The Donkey is the humble, honourable character throughout the text, a joke in itself as this is not the usual stereotype of the stubborn, greedy and foolish beast. The Donkey not only reverses his own stereotype, he also takes on, but reverses the traits of his companions. While cunning, the Fox's main characteristic, in relation to a female character is clearly negative, it is considered positive in relation to the male Donkey. He beats the Wolf and

[504] The leopard in the *Acts of Philip* in particular. See I.S. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans* (London, 2006) p. 253.

Fox at their own game, with πονηρία.[505] The wisdom previously claimed by the Fox is, in the end, attributed by her to the Donkey.[506] The comic aspect of the Fox's negative feminine traits is highlighted by their reversal into the positive features and salvation of the Donkey. The Donkey, as the central character, may then play a particular role as an *exemplum*. He is modest, honest, easily derided, but, in the end, proves himself to be both brave and clever.

Donkeys have some special connections with the Christian religion, having been present at several key events in the life of Jesus - his birth and entry into Jerusalem, for example. More than that, a donkey, or rather a jenny, is one of only two talking animals found in the Bible, though others are present in the *Apocrypha*. The tale of Balaam's ass is found in both the Old and New Testament, in Numbers 22:21-35 and II Peter 2:15ff, and in form resembles a fable. Balaam's ass is, however, essentially used as a tool of God. She is given voice by God to question her master, though it is God who reveals the angel, and the angel who explains the actions of the donkey. In the *Synaxarion*, the Donkey can speak for himself, perhaps because he is speaking to other animals. He does not attempt to save anyone other than himself, but he does share the intelligence and modesty of Balaam's ass, qualities here reserved for a male character.

The positive associations of the donkey prevalent in the Christian religion may have been used in the early period of belief as a means by which Christians were mocked. There is a piece of second- or third-century graffiti in the Paedagogium of the imperial palace on the Palatine which shows a crucified man with the head of a donkey and another man kneeling beneath him, and it is generally accepted that the image is a caricature of Christ and a worshipper.[507] Discussion of such images can be found in the works of two Latin apologists, Tertullian and Minucius Felix, whose discussions

[505] *Synaxarion* lines 286 and 358.
[506]Ibid., lines 384-385.
[507] Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans* p. 231-232.

suggests that such images were intended to show Christ with the head of a donkey and mock the Christian faith.[508] The association between Christians and donkeys seems to have been linked with a failure to discriminate between Christians and Jews, and the story that the Jews worshipped an ass, or the head of one at least, at their temple in Jerusalem. Later, the discussion of this image by Christian writers seems to have turned the image of the crucified donkey-man against their detractors by re-establishing the link to the Jews.[509] The image is a complex one, but, despite its subsequent use by Christians against the Jews, it is the fable stereotype of the donkey, the biblical imagery of that animal and the Byzantines' own knowledge of their beast of burden, that seems to come through in the *Synaxarion*. The Donkey of the *Synaxarion* defeats his enemies, though in an unusual way, but he seems to reflect the positive sides of Christianity and the simple faithful, rather than mocking them.

Although Moennig stresses the comedic nature of the *Synaxarion* he does not fully discuss the humour produced through obscenity, largely connected with the Donkey, though he mentions the 'stick', loud noises and what he terms the thrice-iterated 'Klimax'.[510] To be clear, what I describe as obscenity here includes scatological comedy, but in this text is primarily sexual innuendo. It is always difficult to discuss such humour in medieval texts. Did they find this material amusing or offensive? Carnivalesque comedy is such a prevalent feature of Byzantine material though that it seems hard to suggest it was anything but popular.[511] Here it is found in the euphemistic references to the 'weapon' the Donkey uses to beat the Wolf before kicking him from the boat. We are told that the Donkey appears to have an armoury in his belly in line 337, and that the

[508] Ibid.
[509] Ibid, p. 233.
[510] *Synaxarion* p. 124-5 referencing lines 314, 325-327 and the conversation between the Wolf and Fox in *Synaxarion* lines 334-342.
[511] Baldwin, 'A Talent to Abuse'; Lauxtermann (forthcoming); G. Halsall. (ed.) *Humour, History and Politics*.

weapon is long and thick in line 326 before being given a list of military equipment which it resembles, including clubs, spears and full saddlebags;

> 'She said " if you had seen it, lord companion, it appeared out from his belly
> it looked like his belly had an armoury,
> clubs and spears, thick cudgels
> curved 'σκλοπους', cannon, bullets, full saddlebags;
> powerful trumpet, thick 'ἀπελατίκια'
> 'συρλαδες' and 'μπιφαρα', a mighty military drum"' [512]

Obscenity is the humorous opposite of the innocence and virtue prized as religious attributes. It works to dramatise the events, adding the violence that is a frequent aspect of saint's lives, while destabilising such associations to remain humorous. That such humour is most closely associated with the hero of the work is strange - a beast who violently beats another while urinating and farting does not strike us as a Christian figure worthy of respect.[513]

The animals in this text are familiar and well-known in fable-like situations. Their individual connections with religion, whether humorous or sincere, are also recognisable. They fit well within a text which appears so focused on religious ideas. Although the suggestion that the *Synaxarion* is specifically connected with false preachers may not seem to work with the stressed feminine gender of the Fox, the work may simply be warning against *all* false preachers, whether they profess to be Orthodox or not. Even without the religious aspects, the three animals retain their familiar literary roles and produce popular humour. What they do not do, is present an understanding of these animals as 'real' creatures. Whereas these three animals have personality, the dogs the Donkey refers to seem to be just that, as do Kavaka and the cat whom the Fox describes. In relation to the two humans in the *Synaxarion*, the Fox and the Donkey *are* animals,

[512] *Synaxarion* lines 336-341, '... Ἂν τό ᾽χες δεῖν, κὺρ σύντεκνε, ἐκ τὴν κοιλίαν του ἐξέβην,/ ὁμοιάζει ἡ κοιλία του ἔχει ἀρματοθήκη,/ ματσούκας καὶ κοντάρια, χοντρὰ ἀπελατίκια,/ σκλόπους, λουμπάρδας, βόλια, δισάκια γιομάτα/ ἀνακαράδες βουκινεῖ, χοντρὰ ἀπελατίκια,/ συρλάδες καὶ τὰ μπίφαρα, ἀνακαρὰν τὸν μέγαν'.
[513] Ibid., lines 310-315.

and are treated as such. However, when presented as nothing more than animals, they are stereotyped as cunning and downtrodden respectively, to enhance their fable-like behaviour. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see their take on their treatment by humans, their understanding of themselves as hungry and as obedient, at the same time as conceding that they do fulfil human perceptions.

Beyond humour

While the humour present here, in its satirical take on religious practices, its violence, its scatological and sexual comedy, is familiar from Byzantine texts, there seems to be some kind of point to this laughter. Is this text therefore something more than farce? As with fables, the *Synaxarion* may be using the idea of 'likeness in difference' to present a moral, or political, message.[514] Is there then some more serious depiction of contemporary events behind the humour? If there is, it could simply be the continuing existence of the Bogomils and other heretical sects, or the misbehaviour of Orthodox churchmen. Such ideas are present in the humour itself. Nevertheless, the ending of the *Synaxarion* is not exactly humorous, though it does subvert expectations and is where we find the most consistent use of obscenity. While the defeat of the Fox and the Wolf may reflect the religious theme and the change in preaching of formerly false monks, there are other possibilities. After all, animals are 'good to think with' and the author seems to have played with a number of genres for reasons beyond simple intellectual acrobatics.[515]

The *Synaxarion* may not have been written in Constantinople. It could have been written in one of the other Greek-speaking centres of power such as Thessaloniki, or Latin-held Greek-speaking regions like the Peloponnese. There is nothing to suggest a courtly milieu, though clearly the author and audience were educated. If the *Synaxarion*

[514] N. Friedman, *Form and Meaning in Fiction* (Athens, GA, 1975) p. 289.
[515] As famously stated by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *La pensée sauvage* (Paris, 1962).

is mocking the contemporary situation, then perhaps it is more of a conflict between the centre and the periphery. The possibility that the Fox and Wolf represent internal threats rather than external is certainly feasible, particularly when the internal was so confused in certain areas. The Donkey may then reflect the Greek Orthodox population and its hope for success against external enemies like the Bogomils or the Western Church, signified here by the Fox and the Wolf respectively. In some Greek-held or Greek-speaking regions the presence of Franciscan and Dominican monks was relatively common, and attempts at conversion appear to have been made, leading to at least one incident of Orthodox martyrdom, so religious conflict was not unheard of during this period.[516] But such a serious message may take away from the comedy of the text. The Donkey himself is not mocked, except by those deserving of mockery, so the humour may still deride those who are not Byzantine. The Donkey's method of defeating the other animals is certainly unusual and does not seem to fit the message of religious hope easily. Normally, in fable, donkeys defeat their enemies with a strong kick, which the Donkey certainly uses to remove the Wolf from the boat, but not before heavily beating him with his genitalia. What the exact significance of this is, beyond the suggestion of a very insulting defeat, is harder to see, and it implies less purity on the part of that animal, and thus possibly the Orthodox faithful. That may, though, connect with the renaming of the Donkey and his symbolic spiritual cleansing in the taking of a new name. The Donkey may be sinful in his attempt to defeat the Fox and Wolf, but the success and renaming excuse the methods, as they do for the Byzantines themselves in their attempts to withstand their enemies and achieve salvation.

[516] G. Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge, 2008) p. 199; S.G. Mercati, 'Macaire Caloritès et Constantin Anagnostès', *Revue de L'Orient Chrétien* 22 (1920-21) pp. 162-193; N. Coureas, 'The Latin and Greek Churches in former Byzantine Lands under Latin Rule', in N..I Tsougarakis and P. Lock (eds.) *A Companion to Latin Greece* (Leiden, 2015) pp. 145-185.

It is possible that the conflict between the centre and the periphery is less closely connected with religion, despite the generally religious tone of the work. Subversion and civil disobedience were not uncommon features of society at this time, particularly in Thessaloniki, whose obedience to Constantinople fluctuated not only due to conquest by outside forces, but also through the decisions of internal factions.[517] The Donkey could thus represent the victory of Constantinople over its wayward subjects, or the success of Thessaloniki in the unexpected triumph of the Donkey. There is unfortunately nothing to indicate where the text was written, and the religious humour appears prevalent, so a socio-political interpretation can be little more than a suggestion.

It is accepted that literature can expose ideas of identity, particularly in times of conflict. As indicated in the discussion of weaponry above, there are indications within the text that the *Synaxarion* dates to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. The Byzantine Empire in that period was unstable, and largely at the mercy of outside powers, as is the Donkey. Perhaps the unusual ending, the triumph of the Donkey, reflects a hope that the Empire can do the same. The visualisation of Byzantium as the Donkey certainly seems unusual, but not entirely unfounded, as the creature is presented as humble and pious, and under the sway of a cruel master, as the Byzantines were under the Turks. If the Donkey does represent Byzantium, then the Wolf and Fox must symbolise external forces, most likely the Latin West and the Turkic East. Based on long-standing stereotypes and the depiction in the *Synaxarion* it could be suggested that the Wolf represents the West, the Fox the East. The feminine features of the Fox correspond to the classical stereotype of the effeminate Persian, a stereotype which was arguably transferred on to other Eastern enemies. The Wolf can generally be connected to Rome through the origin myth of that city. However, the image of Turkish peoples as

[517] N. Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, pp. 41-115.

wolves is also found in Byzantine source material. Not only is their behaviour as vicious raiders reminiscent of that animal, during the twelfth century, and the reign of John II Komnenos in particular, this stereotype seems to have been particularly stressed, in the works of Theodore Prodromos among others.[518] The behaviour of the Seljuk Turks in that period, contrasted with that of the Byzantines, makes them barbarous, and therefore makes them animal in an offensive way.[519] The intention in the *Synaxarion* is not so obvious. The Wolf and Fox are clearly enemies of the Donkey, but whether they are external political or religious enemies, or even internal ones, is hard to state. Regardless, in using animals and characteristics familiar in fables from Late Antiquity and even earlier, through to the Palaiologan period, the author employs their stability to contrast both with his development of the genre, and with the instability of the period more broadly, juxtaposing the human situation with that of the animals.[520]

There is also the possibility that the satire here is much more personal, that in some way the Donkey is the author himself and the Wolf and Fox his personal enemies. Perhaps he himself had been called uneducated and boorish as the Donkey is, and in writing this work has attempted to prove himself cleverer than his teachers or patrons. If this is the case, the religious humour implies that the teachers were religious figures of some form, and the insulting and painful defeat they suffer is the result of what can essentially be seen as an intellectual pissing contest. There is the possibility that the text would have been read aloud in a *theatron*, a literary salon, and the defeat of the teachers would take the form of public humiliation. If this is the case then it seems somewhat strange that the text is written in the vernacular, as opposed to the learned Greek, which

[518] A. Papageorgiou, 'οἱ δὲ λῦκοι ὡς Πέρσαι: The image of the "Turks" in the reign of John II Komnenos (1118-1143)', *Byzantinoslavica* 69:1-2 (2011) 149-161.
[519] Behaviour as a factor in the understanding of identity is discussed in Page's *Being Byzantine*, p. 133.
[520] For a discussion of this concept in literature see H. Zapf, 'The State of Ecocriticism and the Function of Literature as Cultural Ecology', in C. Gersdorf and S. Mayer (eds.) *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism* (Amsterdam, 2006) pp. 54-61.

was considered more intellectual, though erudite authors, as we know, used both registers.[521] The use of the vernacular could simply to indicate a lack of pretension, like that of the Donkey, or prove that an author who writes in the vernacular can be just as clever and amusing as one who does not.

While the lack of names and the apparent association of specific individuals with specific animals is a feature we can find elsewhere in Byzantine literature, it is not as obvious in the *Synaxarion* as, say, the *Poulologos*. That said, the Byzantines had no problem insulting people directly and naming names. The lack of direct invective in this text, and in others like the *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds*, may suggest that a more subtle approach had become popular, or even necessary, in the political climate of the last centuries of Byzantium. It is always possible that attempts to read something more into the text than its surface humour and clever use of rhetorical devices is entirely a modern preoccupation. Animals being used a source of insults has never been unusual, and their role as a vehicle for ideas and criticism is also not uncommon.[522] It is possible that no deeper meaning can be read into the text, in which case the animals themselves are purely humorous exaggerations of themselves and the humans they mirror in very general, yet ever-present terms. The use of different genre elements, primarily the religious literary features and the fablesque, allow for multiple interpretations. It raises questions about the story itself by combining and subverting the expected format and content at the same time. As Hubert Zapf puts it, the text, 'appears both as a sensorium for the deficits and imbalances of the larger culture, and as the site of a constant renewal of cultural activity', responding to a situation by adapting familiar modes of expression.[523]

[521] The twelfth-century vernacular texts in particular indicate this with the Ptochoprodomika using linguistic registers for humour and to illicit patronage.
[522] The many examples in Ziolkowski *Talking Animals* attest to this in Latin literature at least.
[523] Zapf, 'The State of Ecocriticism' p. 49.

Conclusion

The Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey is a humorous vernacular text that plays with a number of different genres in presenting its story, what ecological literary criticism would describe as 'evolving' literary style and conventions by doing so. Most of the material it utilises is familiar but is reworked to suit contemporary tastes, though a specific audience remains elusive. While fable elements are certainly present, the form is changed and extended to cover more ground and incorporate a specifically Christian viewpoint. That the main protagonists are animals allows the author not only to play with recognisable imagery, but to effectively deride the characters, whomever they may represent, for these do not seem to be animals for their own sake. In reacting to a time of strife, the author uses humour and nature as weapons to critique. The *Synaxarion* presents nature as a tool, at least within literature, a tool that is used to make political or religious comments, to mock a situation or individuals. As argued by Ziolkowski, the use of animals to do this is safer than doing so as a named author through human characters.[524] Nature is used as a shield, but it also adds to the derision by stressing the animal natures of those mocked. Ecocritically, nature is useful to mankind in this text, providing something like *exempla* which can be twisted to suit human ideology, though the value of nature beyond this is not considered. While the *Synaxarion* uses the animals to tell a story, and possibly to make a comment on Byzantine society or mankind in general, it does not allegorise the animals in the manner of the *Physiologus*. Indeed, there is little similarity between the style and content of the *Physiologus*, or Philes' animal poems, and the *Synaxarion*. However, we are dealing with familiar motifs - the Fox remains cunning, the Wolf, rapacious. These are not 'animals as such', but reasoning, and thus supposedly

[524] Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals*, p. 7.

reasonable, animals.[525]. The *Synaxarion* also appears to have had a didactic aim, similar to, but not the same as, that of Philes' poems, Aesopic fables or the *Physiologus*. It provides a kind of moral, as well as being an *exemplum* of behaviour, though it appears to want to entertain more than educate, since the moral is never made entirely clear, at least not for a modern audience. We could say that, like some of the fables mentioned above, the *Synaxarion* stresses the excessive behaviour of the powerful towards the weak, with the powerful using the act of confession as a pretext and exaggerating a minor sin over a major for their own aims. Whatever the meaning behind the text, assuming there is one, it is adaptive, humorous and a significant part of the Byzantine beast literature that developed during the Palaiologan period. It makes little attempt to represent the natural world it is utilising in realistic terms, controlling it within literary parameters, to present human existence 'through the medium of animal life, as a sur-reality' and comment on the contemporary, human, situation.[526]

[525] A.E. Berger, 'When Sophie Loved Animals,' *Critical Studies* 35 (2011) p. 102.
[526] A. Bleakley *The Animalizing Imagination: Totemism, Textuality and Ecocriticism* (Basingstoke, 2000) p. xii.

5. *An Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds*

The Παιδιόφραστος διήγησις τῶν ζῴων τῶν τετραπόδων or *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds*, as the title of this text has been translated by Nick Nicholas and George Baloglou, is a far longer and more complex poem than the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*.[527] The *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds* survives in five manuscripts, the earliest of which, the Constantinopolitanus gr. Seraglio 35, is dated to 1461 by its scribe, giving us a date *ante quem*.[528] The *Tale*, at the very beginning of its story, dates itself to 1364. The dating of the *Tale* and the interpretations and problems caused by it will be examined later in this chapter but for now it is sufficient to say that the work is of a similar date to the other Byzantine beast literature, most likely having been produced in the fourteenth century. Like the other Byzantine beast literature, the *Tale* is anonymous, written in the vernacular, centres on animal protagonists and, like the *Synaxarion* in particular, it weaves various genres together, while remaining beast literature at its heart. The aims of the *Tale* appear to be quite different from the *Synaxarion* and the central literary theme is no longer fable, though this still has a role to play. The sheer number of animal characters is of interest in this text. Both the associations that can be drawn from the individual animals, and the selection and grouping of these animals, are significant, as is their apparent obsession with mankind. In contrast with the *Synaxarion*, the animals themselves are of interest in the *Tale*, and may be more than simple metaphors. A discussion of the basic information given concerning these animals will be presented, followed by an examination of how the characters and story have been read by other

[527] Nicholas and Baloglou have used the edition by M. Papathomopoulos, *Παιδόφραστος διήγησις τῶν ζώων τῶν τετραπόδων*, (Thessalonica, 2002). Previous editions are W. Wagner, *Carmina Gracea Medii Aevi* (Leipzig, 1874) pp. 141-178 and *Παιδιόφραστος διήγησις τῶν ζώων τῶν τετραπόδων: Critical Edition* ed. V. Tsiouni (Munich, 1972).

[528] *ETQ* pp. 60, 100-101. The four other manuscripts are Parisinus gr. 2911 (fifteenth century), Vindobonensis theol. gr. 244 (sixteenth century), Petropolitanus gr. 721 (seventeenth century, formerly Lesbiacus 92) and Petropolitanus gr. 202 (sixteenth century).

scholars and the difficulties of such readings, before alternative ways of looking at this text, and indeed beast literature more generally, are presented. Once again, the ways in which the animal characters are described, and their actions, will be considered both as a literary device, and a reflection of how the author, and probably the audience, thought about animals.

The Plot

Despite the variation between the manuscripts, the plot of the *Tale* is fairly cohesive and can seem quite simple on first acquaintance.[529] The Emperor Lion decides to send an embassy to what Nicolas and Baloglou term the 'clean and domesticated' (καθαρὰ καὶ εὔχρηστα) animals in order to arrange a peaceful meeting of all the animals, both 'clean' and 'bloody and disgusting'(αἱμόβορα καὶ βδελυκτὰ), where they will 'trade witty words and come to see the merits and the faults of each part'.[530] When an embassy is sent in reply and an agreement reached, the animals all come together and are encouraged by the Emperor Lion to begin to jest in turn. Arguments break out amongst the animals and an ostensibly inevitable battle begins. This summary, however, simplifies in the extreme the nature of this text. The main content of the text does not concern itself with the political events. Instead, these seem to act as a frame for the animals' arguments as to their own, individual and largely economic, worth. From the summary it would also be inferred that the bloody and the clean animals would argue as two distinct sides, whereas it usually happens that animals from within the same group,

[529] Constantinopolitanus gr. Seraglio 35 contains the most complete version of the text. Vindobonensis theol. gr. 244 contains a prose version of the *Tale*, Petropolitanus gr. 202 is missing several passages, largely due to missing leaves from the manuscript, and contains various spelling errors and confusion of words. The language of the version found in Petropolitanus gr. 721 has been heavily modernised.

[530] Ibid., lines 65-66,"λόγους νὰ συνάρωμεν τινὰς ἐκ τῶν ἀστείων/ καί ἴδωμεν τοῦ πασᾶ ἑνὸς τὸν ἔπαινον καὶ ψόγον".

or possibly groups, criticise one another. It would also seem that Emperor Lion and the bloody animals, those usually equated with the rich and powerful, would destroy and eat the 'clean, domestic' animals, but in fact the reverse is true. It is the wild and ferocious animals who are defeated, though not eaten. Such a twist is not unfamiliar, something similar occurs in the *Synaxarion*, but again it leads us to look closer at the protagonists themselves, in an attempt to understand why the author chose to make the 'clean, domestic' animals victorious.

The Animals

The animals as groups

As I have indicated in the brief description of plot above, the animal characters in the *Tale* have generally been thought of as divided into two groups, the clean, domesticated or useful animals, 'καθαρὰ καὶ εὔχρηστα', and the bloody and disgusting animals, 'αἱμόβορα καὶ βδελυκτὰ'. Günter Prinzing has suggested that these should actually be seen as four groups so that the clean and the domesticated are separate, as are the bloody and the disgusting.[531] One problem in deciding whether the animals are divided into four groups or two is that some of the animals do not fit entirely comfortably into the definitions. If we assume that there are two groups only, then animals we may expect to find in one group have been placed in the other, so that the pig, who is so grossly depicted, remains amongst the clean. Even if we see four groups the distinctions are still not entirely clear. That the dog should be connected with the bloody instead of the domestic is presumably due to the connection with hunting, but his closeness with man is what the dog tries to stress in his arguments. To make the situation more confusing, in

[531] G. Prinzing,"Zur byzantinischen Rangstreitliteratur in Prosa und Dichtung", *Römische Historische Mitteilungen* 45 (2003) 241-286.

the final battle of the animals, some of the smaller bloody animals change sides, or are at least accused of this. The confusion is accentuated by the defeat of the bloody and disgusting animals, whether they are one large group or an alliance of two groups. It is the choice of animals, their representation and their juxtaposition which are among the most interesting features of this text. For the moment, in the discussion of the animals themselves, the distinction between the groups need only allow for a division into two, whether that is two clear groups or two alliances. I will therefore use the term clean to describe one faction and bloody for the opposing faction, for ease of reference if nothing else.

Grouped together as the bloody and disgusting animals we find the rat or mouse, cat and monkey of the initial embassy along with the dog, fox, wolf, bear, cheetah, leopard, elephant and lion.[532] Amongst these bloody and loathsome animals are some which may have been unfamiliar as real creatures to a fourteenth-century Byzantine audience. Others are far more everyday and not always ill-thought-of. The lion and cheetah are obviously wild beasts. The dog, despite presumably being used on farms in a similar fashion to today, and being desirable or dear to men, is placed with the bloody animals along with the fox and the wolf even though dogs were 'to fight for their masters against wolves and robbers'.[533] The rat, monkey and cat of the bloody embassy have long been considered ill omens in cultures across the world, although the cat, like the monkey, was also kept as a pet. The elephant seems an unusual addition, but is connected with the lion and warfare. Not all these animals are carnivorous, though most are, and they can all be associated with violence and mischief, if not evil.

[532] "τὸν ποντικόν" is the term used for the rat or mouse. Nicholas and Baloglou translate this as rat, and I have kept their terminology, partly for ease of reference but also as the word rat holds more suitably disgusting connotations than the word mouse.
[533] A. Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium* (Totnes, 2003) p. 102.

The list of clean, useful animals includes the ox, buffalo, donkey, horse, camel, deer, hare, sheep, and goat, all herbivores, as well as the pig, whose omnivorous eating leads him to be accused of cannibalism by the sheep.[534] The deer and hare are not domesticated but were certainly hunted and eaten. The donkey and camel are useful and domesticated, though not generally considered clean, and both appear positively in a religious context. The other animals in this group are mostly farmyard beasts, and consequently all are animals with which the author may well have been directly familiar.

As evidenced by the changing of sides in the final battle, as well as by the arguments that form the main body of the *Tale*, each animal functions very much as an individual within a larger group. It is the individual associations the poem makes for the animals which I will summarise, beginning with the clean, domesticated creatures.

The animals as individuals within their groups

The first of the clean animals to speak is the hare. He begins by praising and thanking the fox for disparaging the dog, depicting himself as often a friend to the fox, before accusing that animal of cunning and deception for attacking him. After this accusation the hare depicts the fox's death before stressing his own positive attributes. He too is hunted, but he is eaten by kings and Emperors, lords and nobles, and all humankind, served on gold and silver and with pepper, an expensive spice.[535] He mentions also his skin and his foot, both of which he again associates with the upper echelons of society.[536] All these arguments are put forward with feigned modesty, the 'limb of slight renown' in particular.[537] The hare's speech is among the most refined of the clean animals, along with those of the deer and, to a degree, the horse. In one of the more learned references

[534] *ETQ*, lines 439-445.
[535] Ibid., lines 297-300; *ODB* 3:1937.
[536] *ETQ*, lines 301-313.
[537] Ibid., line 310 'τὸ εὐτελές μου μέλος'.

within the text, the deer mocks the hare by referring to the derivation of his name from the word fear.[538] The deer also accuses him of being a creature of the night, like 'demons' which will later link the hare with some of the bloody animals such as the wolf.[539] The cowardly nature of the hare is a familiar literary *topos*, and there is a long tradition of supernatural associations for that animal.[540] The classical connection between the hare and Aphrodite and Eros, on account of its perceived fertility and high libido, is not mentioned despite the use of Homeric terminology and the sexual innuendo of the text.[541] Rather, it is the Byzantine practice of hunting hare, along with its use for clothing which are most heavily stressed here. The hare functions as a means of bringing the clean animals into the boasting. He is suitable for this role in being the victim of both dog and fox as well as sometime friend to them in fables. Perhaps this prior association with the bloody animals is why the deer derides him with language that links him to that group.

The deer uses the hare's arguments to criticise that animal and praise himself. Where the hare has praised his own meat, the deer states that hare meat is hard to cook and bad for the stomach, an assertion also made by Agapios Landos in his *Geoponikon* and by Michael Psellos.[542] Venison, he claims, is the best of meats.[543] Whilst venison was certainly eaten, other texts suggest some doctors did not consider it beneficial.[544] The deer, like most of the clean animals, praises his skin for its multiple uses, particularly mentioning tinder pouches as useful to light people's hearths.[545] His speech is not long, and aside from praising his meat, the main boast the deer makes is the use of his horn to

[538] Ibid., line 335 "Πτὼξ γραφικῶς ὁ λαγωός, ὡς πτήσσω τὸ φοβοῦμαι.".
[539] Ibid., line 330 'τὴν νύκταν μόνον περπατεῖς, δαιμόνων τάξιν ἔχεις'.
[540] See for example the various traditions and superstitions examined in G.E. Evans and D. Thomson (eds.) *The Leaping Hare* (London, 1972).
[541] S. Carnell, *Hare* (London, 2010) pp. 60-61.
[542] *ETQ*, lines 338-339 and pp. 300 and 303.
[543] Ibid., lines 340-342.
[544] Ibid., p 300.
[545] Ibid., lines 345-346.

rid a house of snakes.[546] This claim, echoed in the poems of Manual Philes and in the *Physiologus*, is found in Aelian as well. This is one of the more superstitious virtues mentioned in the *Tale* but it has a long tradition and the author may have had no reason to disbelieve it.

The pig, one of the animals listed as unclean by the Bible, is irreverent. The word used to name him, 'χοῖρος', could also mean boar, but pig seems more likely in context. He describes the use of his hair as a sprinkler during *Asperges*, stating that the Western church 'padres', φραγκοπαπαδούρια in the text, do not care that he wallows in mud, a phrase used in more high-brow literature to indicate sinfulness, before going on to indicate that his hair is also used to make the brushes which are used to paint sacred icons.[547] The lists of food products the pig indicates as coming from his meat is reminiscent of a Latin poem, *The Testament of the Piglet*, mentioned by St Jerome in his commentary on Isaiah and the *Contra Rufinum*.[548] This text was apparently popular among school boys during the late fourth and early fifth century, and its humour lies not only in its parody of the legal system but also in the piglet's bequests.[549] Along with various parts of his body for different meat products, that piglet gives his bristles to the cobblers, a use which the pig also mentions in the *Tale*.[550] The pig is the clean animal most heavily criticised for his behaviour. As perhaps the most obviously dirty of the clean animals, even being accused of cannibalism, the choice of this character allows the author to show that not all the clean beasts are innocent.[551] While others are derided for excessively praising their usefulness or for their misuse by humans, the pig is put down

[546] Ibid., lines 347-350.
[547] Ibid., lines 384-398 and p. 304, in particular the connection between wallowing and sin is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria and subsequently repeated by a number of Christian authors.
[548] Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals* p. 299-300; E. Champlin, "The Testament of the Piglet", *Phoenix*, 41, 2 (Summer, 1987) pp. 174-183.
[549] Champlin, 'Testament of the Piglet', pp. 177-179.
[550] *ETQ*, line 389.
[551] Ibid., lines 439 – 445.

in very definite terms as a ‘μιαρὲ σκατόχοιρε, βορβοροκυλισμένε, ποὺ τρώγεις πάντα τὰ κακὰ καὶ ἄχρηστα τοῦ κόσμου’.[552] Thus he upsets the balance of apparently united animals in much the same way as the dog will be seen to amongst the bloody animals, and allows the author to use food for humour in a similar way to *The Testament of the Piglet*.

The sheep is apparently the most humble of the clean animals; the epithet ταπεινὴ is used of her more than once.[553] She speaks ‘ἥμερα καὶ ταπεινὰ’, gently and meekly, and is mockingly called a sophist by the pig.[554] She begins her attack in defence of the hare and the deer. This conceivably indicates an awareness of the merits of others, or possibly of hierarchy, within the group. Given the supernatural associations mentioned of the hare, namely his equality with ghouls, and the deer, with her horn’s magical properties, it can also be read as humorously undermining this sense of unity and respect entirely. The sheep starts the description of her merits with the horn of the ram and speaks at length on the uses of her wool to kings and queens, abbots and sultans, referring briefly to coarse clothing for the common people.[555] She seems largely bereft of traditional religious symbolism, though she particularly stresses the use of her wool for religious garments of various forms. She is humble, down-ward looking but, like the other animals, it is her utility which comes across most strongly. She is insulted for her stupidity by both the boar and the goats, and for apparently stepping above her station to brag. The sheep is one of the most common domestic beasts and the absence of this animal from such a group would be notable, conversely its inclusion may simply indicate the author’s apparent familiarity with domestic animals.

[552] Ibid., lines 436-437 “filthy shitty boar, mire wallower,/who eats all waste and foul things in the world”.
[553] Ibid., lines 421, 524 and 545.
[554] Ibid., lines 421 and 429.
[555] Ibid., lines 497-512.

The goats, both male and female, follow the sheep and stress their milk, wool and skin as being as good as, if not better than, those of the sheep, but speak only briefly and are denounced rudely by the sheep, before being shooed away by the ox and buffalo. When they step up on stage the two are 'to speak and talk as one', but the nanny speaks by herself.[556] Her words to the sheep state that she should not have argued with the boar, which she claims was for the goats to do, telling the sheep she should 'stick to your own kind', like the goats do.[557] She thus amusingly, and presumably unintentionally, links her kind with the disgusting boar. The goats, with one voice, specifically indicate that they do not want to boast, though they do just that. They are not embarrassed off the stage as such, simply being replaced by two larger animals they mention. We are given very little detail on the use of goat skin and hair, except that the skin is thick and useful for anything and their hair makes rope to tie down other animals.[558] This latter boast seems rather odd, especially given the circumstances of the discussion. The phrasing even mirrors that of the initial embassy of the bloody animals to the clean beasts, repeating both τὰ ζῷα and τὰ τετράποδα and the phrase 'μικρά τε καὶ μεγάλα'.[559] The binding of the animals physically could therefore reflect the initial embassy's proposed binding through vows of peace. Alternatively, it could prefigure the clean animals' forthcoming success in defeating the bloody animals. The criticism of the goats is as limited as their own praise such that the author either did not care much for goats or know many posthumous uses for them. The negative associations with the goat in the medieval mind included Satan and paganism, as well as sexual extremes, the latter perhaps being alluded to by the sheep's accusation that the nanny is there to lift her tail and show off her

[556] Ibid., line 456 'οἱ δύο ὁμοθυμαδὸν νὰ ποῦν καὶ νὰ λαλήσουν'.
[557] Ibid., line 460.
[558] Ibid., lines 530-538.
[559] Ibid., lines 533-534 repeating the phrasing in lines 39 and 43.

cunt.[560] The dual aspect and (mostly) united front of the goats is also noteworthy. This duality seems to extend to some of the other animals in that they are male in one passage and then apparently female in another. This could simply be an error on the part of the author or scribes, or it could be related to a lack of interest on the author's, and audience's, part as to the sex of an animal unless that fact is significant either for farming, through milk etc., or for cultural association, such as the connection of cunning with both women and foxes. That said, Greek grammar allows for animals to change gender simply by altering the article and, functioning as a general, collective term, can cover both sexes at once in the same way as in English the term fox indicates both the tod and the vixen.

The ox and the buffalo complain about the boasting of the smaller animals. The Emperor Lion states that all the beasts should have a chance to speak and the ox, having rebuked the smaller animals and chased them from the stage, continues by describing himself as the sun and the buffalo as the moon.[561] This imagery was a familiar one in Byzantium, often used to describe the emperor and the empress respectively.[562] In this text however, imperial imagery is reserved for the lion, and I am not aware of another text which draws a connection between members of the imperial family and draft animals, which would seem dangerously disrespectful. Moennig has suggested that the phrase is simply representative of the late Byzantine romances, which is possible, although here it is certainly subverted as the phrase provokes enmity rather than affection.[563] The buffalo takes umbrage at being second-fiddle and describes himself as the equal if not the better of the ox in all things including carting, ploughing and

[560] D. P. Miquel, *Dictionare Symbolique des Animaux*, (Paris 1991) p.61; *ETQ*, line 467.
[561] *ETQ*, lines 571-575.
[562] H.C. Evans and W.D. Wixom (eds.) *The Glory of Byzantium: art and culture of the Middle Byzantine era, A.D. 843-1261* (New York, 1997) p. 191.
[563] U. Moennig, 'Literary Genres and Mixture of Generic Features in Late Byzantine Fictional Writing', in Roilos (ed.) *Medieval Greek Storytelling*, p. 177.

threshing. The buffalo does not appear in Byzantine reference works as a farm animal but is attested as such by Manuel Philes and in some monastic texts.[564] The buffalo stresses the quality of his milk, apparently speaking on behalf of both sexes of his species, stating that not only is it better than the ox's, but also better than that of goats or sheep. He then summarises the use of his horn as a bugle for hunting and battles before stating that 'verbosity betokens foolishness'.[565] This sentiment, previously stated by the goats, is a recurring theme within the text. The ox responds by describing the buffalo as 'βορβοροπηλοκύλιστε' and 'φλυαροκοπρολόγε' thus echoing the muddy, or sinful, wallowing of the pig and the continued derision of verbosity.[566] Ironically, the ox goes on to speak at length of his virtues, including the various uses of his sinews, horn, tail and skin. He also praises his penis, saying '῎Εχω καὶ νεῦρον δυνατόν', which lowers the tone and angers the donkey.[567] The ox's contribution to the discussion is fairly limited, though longer than that of the buffalo. Their discussion lowers the tone when they claim to have set out to raise it and reiterates that boasting is aberrant, verbosity foolish.

The donkey, unclean and vulgar as he is presented in this text, can only boast of his genitals. Indeed, throughout the text he is described in terms of his physiognomy and his farting. Despite his usefulness in life, he is mocked by the horse for being overloaded with burdens, maltreated and mutilated. Unusually for a member of this group, the donkey has no posthumous value to speak of. The horse speaks about him at great length though, mentioning numerous loads donkeys are used to carry, as well as legal punishments to be given out if a donkey is caught in another man's crops.[568] The horse tells an Aesopic tale of the suffering and attempted reprieve of the donkeys, lost due to

[564] *ETQ* lines 594-596 and pp. 327-328.
[565] Ibid., line 610 'πολυλογία γὰρ ἐστιν τεκμήριον ζαβίας'.
[566] Ibid., lines 612-612a.
[567] Ibid., line 635.
[568] Ibid., lines 665-688.

foolish braying, again a reference to the babbling that pervades the text.[569] When the donkey tries to defend himself, saying he is treated like the conceited horse, he is quickly cut off and the horse extols his own virtues, stressing his connection with the nobility. However, although the horse talks for 114 lines, he uses the majority of them to insult others rather than praise himself. As we have seen, the donkey can be presented positively, and has many biblical associations which the author could have mentioned. The horse, though less religiously significant, was nevertheless a favoured animal in Byzantium, used less for draught work than in western Europe, but still a feature of warfare and an important means of transport, for the wealthy at least.

The camel, another animal considered unclean in the Bible, does not get a chance to extol her virtues but only to say a few words against the horse, the most verbose of the clean beasts, who tells satiric stories not only of the donkey, but also of the camel, based on Aesopic fable.[570] She presents the horse as being maltreated in much the same way as the horse has described for the donkey. The horse links her with the donkey as a beast of burden, describing both as freaks and outcasts, fodder for the wolves. This reference to wolves then allows the return of the bloody animals to the debate.

Overall, with the exception of the donkey and the camel who barely get to open their mouths, the clean animals talk at greater length than the bloody animals. They also criticise each other for doing so. These animals appear excessively interested in their posthumous value, their usefulness while alive largely being secondary. Additionally, while they mention their uses for a broad cross-section of society, it is the upper echelons that they mention most often, with religious status coming a close second. This stress on their posthumous value may be one reason why they do not wish to be eaten by the bloody animals, as it wastes their apparent reasons for existence. Other than the hare and

[569] Ibid., lines 689-739.
[570] Ibid., p. 353.

the deer, who are presented as being of a higher standing, both in speech and by the sheep, all these animals are used domestically. Hares and deer were often kept in hunting parks as well though, and therefore were 'farmed' in some sense.[571] Most appear regularly in fable, religious literature and satire thus in this it seems the author is following something of a literary tradition. Their repetitive boasts do not only reflect a preoccupation with food, clothing and military equipment, but also link the animals together, as do the insults they use of each other.

The bloody animals, as mentioned, also argue in terms of their usefulness to humans but to a far lesser degree. Their faults are often all we are given and they share the consistent humorous references to shit and farting that pervade this text. Among them there is also much more physical hostility, with the cat threatening the first violence of the *Tale* in verses 141 to 149 but holding back due to the animals' pledge of peace.

After Emperor Lion has instructed the animals to jest in turn the rat, one of the initial embassy, steps forth and opens the proceedings. The cat immediately joins him and sets the tone for what is to follow, insulting the rat as a fool who defiles food. The rat responds that even if what the cat says is true it is right that he should take food in such a way as 'ζῷον γὰρ ἄγριόν εἰμι, ἀνήμερον παντάπαν, ἀκμὴν καὶ ἀκολάκευτον ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου'.[572] With this statement the rat distances himself from the central argument of usefulness but suggests that his lack of use, his detriment to man, is natural. He also separates himself from the clean beasts and some of his bloody colleagues through not being 'cajoled' by men. The rat criticises the cat for defiling food in the same manner as himself, but doing so whilst being a pet of men.[573] He mentions the cat being chased by hunting dogs and the dog then enters the discussion. The cat therefore does not get to

[571] N.P. Ševčenko, 'Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park', in Littlewood, Maguire and Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.) *Byzantine Garden Culture*, pp. 69-75.
[572] *ETQ*, lines 157-158 "for I am wild and thoroughly untamed, and never have I been cajoled by Man.".
[573] Ibid., lines 159-164.

boast as such, her comments as to how quickly she could catch and kill the rat but for the animals' pledge are as close as she gets before being scared away.[574] The cat is described as 'ash-wallowing', which Nicholas and Baloglou do not gloss, but the imagery of wallowing and its connotations with sinfulness in high-brow literature are also highlighted for the pig.[575] Ash rather than mud is the substance here, which could have many reasons ranging from the cat being at man's hearth to a symbol of mortality or repentance. The significance is unclear but the connection with sin continues the imagery of the cat as evil, a connotation present in a variety of Byzantine texts.[576]

The dog can be seen as an interloper in this group. He extols his virtues, stressing his closeness with men through his presence in palaces and the accoutrements they give him, much the same as the horse describes himself.[577] His speech of self-praise is second in length amongst the bloody animals. Despite his self-praises, he enters threatening violence, placing himself firmly within the bloody group. Nevertheless, his role within the arguments and the final battle, in which he changes sides while denouncing the fox for doing the same, is very ambiguous. Dogs in the Byzantine world are signs of fierce loyalty and were often highly valued.[578] In Byzantine literature we find many references to the dog as a loyal companion, as in Tzetzes' *Histories*, or the fables of *Syntipas*, but we also find him as a symbol of evil and representative of the devil in some hagiographical works, a fact which may, along with his hunting, justify his inclusion in this group.[579]

[574] Ibid., lines 141-149.
[575] Ibid., line 155 'στατκτοκυλισμένε'.
[576] E. Kislinger, 'Byzantine Cats', in I. Anagnostakis, T.G., Kolias and E. Papadopoulou (eds.) *Animals and Environment in Byzantium (7th-12th c.)* (Athens, 2011) pp. 165-178.
[577] *ETQ*, lines 249-259 and lines 753-767.
[578] K. Walker-Meikle, *Medieval Dogs* (London, 2013).
[579] *Ioannis Tzetzae Historiae* (ed.) P.L. Leone (Naples, 1968) 4:131, 152; In *Syntipas* see the story of the dog, the baby and the soldier, *Novelle Bizantine*, ed. Conca pp. 92-95.

The fox enters next, 'ἐν ταπεινῷ τῷ σχήματι', translated as 'low-profile' by the editors, and speaks 'πονηρὰ καὶ τροπικὰ', cunningly and metaphorically.[580] A very similar description of the fox is found in many other texts including the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey,* the stereotype of this animal regularly including her cunning and skulking nature. Another familiar motif may also be present here. The terms μικρὸν σχῆμα and μέγα σχῆμα were regularly used in Byzantium to denote monastic garb of different ranks, and are close enough to this description of the fox's entrance to suggest a possible play on words.[581] The connection between false monks and foxes has been highlighted in the previous chapter on the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, and it was certainly a familiar motif, highlighting the greed of some churchmen and their ability to lead other astray for their own gains.[582] If such wordplay can indeed be identified, it adds to the satire of the 'humble' fox and her rebuke of the dog. The fox is described as a sophist for her rhetoric, the same insult used, more ironically, of the sheep. The word ταπεινὰ is also used of the sheep so possibly the author is trying to create a connection here, one which would continue the imagery of the fox-monk deceiving her flock. The fox is 'κάκιστος', most evil, and is accused of committing 'infinite injustice to the poor', a reflection of the damage foxes could do to farmed animals like chickens and sheep, and the impact this must have had on subsistence farming.[583] The fox's connection with justice or injustice has a very long tradition, evidenced by its complaint to Zeus in Callimachus' second *Iamb* among other texts.[584] Her cunning, deceitful nature mirrors that of the more famous Reynard, as does her supposed philosophising. Her 'use' or

[580] *ETQ*, lines 197-198.
[581] See for example the reference to μέγα σχῆμα in, John VI Kantakouzenos, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, pars XX, Cantacuzenos, volumen II,* ed. B.G. Niebuhr (Bonn, 1831) *Historiarum* III. 50, p. 299.
[582] See the discussion on p. 140 of this thesis.
[583] *ETQ*, line 193 'ἀδικίαν ἄπληστον εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἀνθρώπους'. This is one of the most overt of the possibly political references in the *Tale.*
[584] D. Steiner, 'Framing the Fox: Callimachus' second Iamb and Its Predecessors', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 130 (2010) 97−107.

'virtue' is to the tanner and furrier, but this is indicated in a threat from the dog rather than as a boast. The fox is the last of the bloody animals to speak before the clean make their entrance to the stage and thus acts as a link in the structure. This animal is widely known in literature with the cunning of the fox often used as a negative epithet when describing people. Her portrayal here is certainly traditional, although with the added vulgarity of the death throes of her species and with the unusual addition of her material use.

The wolf does not get the opportunity to boast, presumably because he has no value to humanity. Instead he also serves to switch the speakers, this time from the clean to the bloody beasts, ostensibly in defence of the donkey and camel who have been abused by the horse. The wolf insults the horse as mangy before having this insult turned on himself by the bear. In his own defence, and as an apparent threat, the wolf clearly states that he eats all other animals, not just donkeys, but indicates that he'd rather 'pick on someone my own size'.[585] The concept of gluttony displayed here is one conventionally connected with the wolf, and his counterpart in the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey* also confesses to eating many other animals in obscene quantities.[586] Unlike that text nothing is made of the 'wolf in sheep's clothing' motif.

The bear, like the fox, is described in similar terms to the sheep, being downward looking, though the terms used differ.[587] She is also depicted as vegetarian, eating fruit, nuts and plants. Her virtue is the quality of her fat for ointments, a long attested use for both medicinal and cosmetic purposes.[588] The bear, like the dog, appears somewhat misplaced here, at least in terms of her arguments. Conceivably her association with

[585] *ETQ*, lines 816-822 and line 823 'Όμως νὰ δικολογηθῶ μὲ ὅμοιόν μου ζῷον'. The threat of size and preference for fighting someone of similar strength could indicate a concept of status reflected in Byzantine society or simply be linked to gluttony.
[586] *Synaxarion* lines 126-129.
[587] Compare "ποὺ βλέπεις πάντα κάτω", line 524, with "χαμηλοβλεποῦσα" line 845 in *ETQ*.
[588] S. Stewart, 'Cosmetics and Perfumes in the Roman World; A Glossary' in M. Harlow (ed.) *Dress and Identity* (Oxford, 2012) p. 110.

gypsies is enough for her to be 'unclean', and she can certainly be seen as bloody. On the other hand, it is possible that the author was aware that bears are omnivorous but chose to depict her as an herbivore to balance the pig, who also eats what he should not, though in far more unpleasant terms.

The cheetah and the leopard are as much a pair as the two goats. The name πάρδος could indicate any of the big cats, here possibly indicating something more like a cougar than a cheetah.[589] The terminology for big cats is not much clearer today, with panther, puma and mountain lion all also meaning cougar. The term pard is generic and the description of the animal, limited as it is, does not offer much help in identifying what specific type of big cat is being referred to. The leopard refers to his companion as a 'motley, short-tailed beast', but this is as much an insult as anything else.[590] The so-called cheetah brags of his ability to chase and overpower any beast, and also mentions the use of his pelt on furnishings to keep flies away, a reference untraced by Nicholas and Baloglou and for which I have yet to find an origin. The πάρδος derides the leopard for his mixed parentage of lion and pard and the leopard responds simply that he shares the merits of the πάρδος. The author appears unaware of, or uninterested in, the use of these animals for hunting, and even as imperial 'pets', or guard dogs, at various point in Byzantine history.[591] This may be because the dog has already been derided in connection with his human relationships, so the author would have had to repeat the same uses for the pards. The two only receive 28 lines before Emperor Lion tells them off for using his name, alludes to the coming strife and summons the elephant to the stage.[592]

The elephant is the most problematic of the bloody animals for a modern reader. Here he is described as a close adviser, or seatmate, of Emperor Lion, plausibly because

[589] *ETQ*, pp. 48-51; Nicholas, N., 'A Conundrum of Cats: Pards and their Relatives in Byzantium', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 40 (1999) pp. 253-98.
[590] *ETQ*, line 884 'παρδαλὲ καὶ κοντοουπαδᾶτε'.
[591] Ševčenko, 'Wild Animals', p. 71 and p. 79.
[592] *ETQ*, lines 891-903.

of his size. This is not wholly unusual, ruling lions often being depicted with large animals as their close advisors in beast literature.[593] He is depicted as a carnivore, perhaps, as Nicholas and Baloglou suggest, simply because the author did not know any better and followed the author of the *Physiologus*.[594] Most of the information given regarding this animal comes from other written sources as opposed to the apparent observation present in descriptions of the more familiar animals. It was not an animal commonly seen in fourteenth-century Constantinople, though at least one had been kept in a menagerie in the eleventh century and artistic representations still existed.[595] Its sheer size and mystique may well have been enough reason to include it although it is strange that the elephant makes no appearance in the final battle, possibly because the author felt the clean beasts could not plausibly defeat it. The elephant may simply have been an animal that intrigued the author in his reading of the *Physiologus* and the *Alexander Romance*.[596] The author is clearly familiar with ivory and aware that this luxury object comes from elephants but the animal's military use seems to directly reflect the *Alexander Romance*, though it could also have come from classical sources.[597] It is a very complicated member of this group, and has a very limited role in the story overall. It has been suggested that this is due to its role in representing a particular historical figure though, as we shall see, this is problematic.

The elephant should be the pinnacle of the discussions, to be followed only by the Emperor, having allowed animals of all sizes, and arguably levels of importance, from the rat up to him to speak. However, the monkey 'being more cunning than the fox by

[593] In the tales of *Kalilah wa Dimnah* the Lion's favourite companion is the Ox.
[594] *ETQ*, pp. 96-97.
[595] K.N. Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople: The West and Byzantium, 962-1204: Cultural and Political Relations* (Leiden, 1996) p. 60.
[596] *ETQ*, pp. 38-40.
[597] The most famous use of elephants in warfare today is obviously Hannibal crossing the Alps but the connection would have been widely familiar from the text of the *Alexander Romance*, as well as from artistic depictions like the medallions discussed in F.L. Holt, *Alexander the Great and the Mystery of the Elephant Medallions* (Berkeley, Calif., 2003).

far', had hidden herself and now takes her turn to speak.[598] She does not boast at all, but mocks the elephant for his shape, his trunk, his lack of joints, repeating the *Physiologus*' tale of how the elephant is captured. She states that the elephant's bones are his only real merits. By so angering the elephant, and thus the seatmate the Emperor, the monkey sets the final spark that begins the battle. She seems to be one of the bloody animals, having formed part of their original embassy, but her role is wholly unclear, except as a figure of mischief. Having begun the battle she takes no further part in it and sneaks into a hole to hide. Monkeys tend to have negative connotations in Christian culture, partly due to their human-like features, but they can equally be simple, if subversive, figures of fun, as appears to be the case here.[599]

As a result of the monkey's interference, Emperor Lion does not boast at all, although he had earlier indicated that he too would speak.[600] Instead he loses his temper, declares that enough is enough and announces that the peace is over and battle shall commence.[601] His role in the text is very much that of judge and adjudicator, functions traditionally associated with the Emperor, and a common attribute of the noble lion of western court culture and Arabic literature.[602] He sets out the form of the 'jesting', and intervenes to reprimand the leopard and to inform the ox and the buffalo that the small animals are as entitled to talk as their larger companions.[603] The imperial nature of the Lion and his role in the text will be discussed in more detail in connection with the political interpretations below.

The bloody animals are described as loving the dark and as thieves, regularly wasting that which they have taken or killed. Nonetheless, several are insulted or

[598] *ETQ*, line 933a 'πολλὰ γὰρ ἔνι πονηρὴ πλέον τῆς ἀλωπούτζας'.
[599] H.W. Janson, *Apes and ape lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1952).
[600] *ETQ*, line 566-567.
[601] Ibid., lines 981-991.
[602] See for example the fables of Marie de France, the *Reynard* cycle, and the fables of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*.
[603] *ETQ*, lines 890-897 and lines 554-568.

described in ways that mimic the clean animals, and the dog, bear, cheetah, leopard and elephant are allowed to boast of certain useful qualities. The violence that some of these animals threaten is aimed at other members of their own group rather than against the clean beasts, who are several times referred to as prey but in a detached fashion, until the Emperor Lion loses patience and attacks the buffalo, using 'long-standing custom' as his excuse.[604]

The above is a brief summary of the repeated virtues and faults of various animals, their roles in this text, and some of the cultural background that informed the stereotypes used. Defining these animals in detail through their descriptions and the associations made with them in a dictionary-like way indicates that certain stereotypes have a long, shared history but is not the most constructive way of looking at these animals. This is especially true as these animals do not fit the older stereotypical portrayal, in which one trait is stressed for each beast but have more complex characters.[605] Instead it is the specific choices, speeches and juxtapositions of animals that have merit in this text. The animals chosen specifically argue for their usefulness to humans and mock those who lack any such use. In ancient Greek literature, specifically tragedy, we find a similar way of looking at animals:

> While modern observers indeed consider animals *per se*, as objects of scientific inquiry, animals in tragedy are reified as ancillary and functional to human existence, only acknowledged by virtue of their usefulness, threat, analogy, significance or opposition to humans.[606]

Euripides, among other classical authors, was studied as part of the Byzantine education system, hence this idea of functionality would not be unfamiliar to a Palaiologan audience. However, in the *Tale* the animals argue for their usefulness

[604] Ibid., line 991 'εἰθισμένον'.
[605] For the more traditional portrayal see for example St. Basil *Letters and select works* Homily 9 section 3, p. 103 and page 26 of this thesis.
[606] Thumiger, 'Greek tragedy between human and animal', p. 5.

without the direct presence of humans. They argue in ways which subvert each other and constantly ridicule the verbosity of their companions. The clean animals in particular refer to their domestic uses with the sheep, ox, buffalo and goat arguing for their meat, milk and wool as we would expect. The other clean animals also stress their meat or fur and mention their uses in gold-work, icon painting and bookbinding, as well as some more unusual practices such as the use of deer horn to ward off snakes, an attribute presumably taken from the *Physiologus*' depiction of the deer as enemy to snakes.[607] The pig gives us immense detail about his own meat, as well as types of bread and vegetables in the Byzantine diet.[608] Even some of the bloody animals are presented in this way, their posthumous uses outweighing their lack of value in life. A central theme in this text then is the animal's obsession with their use to humans, and their own economic value. Presumably therefore, this reflects a contemporary view of animals as subservient to mankind, and only of value in relation to humanity. The speeches of the animals and their attitudes to each other maintain an anthropocentric view of the world, with humanity being central to the debates, though never physically present. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the arguments for value come directly from the animals themselves. Though the hexaemeral ideal of animals as precious creations of God, who can be valuable without being useful to humans appears to have secondary value, there does seem to be an acknowledgement that humanity relies on animals for many things.

Structural features of the *Tale*

The structure of the *Tale*, like its plot, is far more complex than it first appears. As has been mentioned, the main content of the story differs from the more recognisably human sections at the beginning and end of the work. This has led to some discussion as to the

[607] *Physiologus*, ed. Sbordone, pp. 97-100.
[608] *ETQ*, lines 360-383.

authenticity of the various parts, and to what exactly could be going on in the *Tale*. It is therefore useful to look at the three main sections of the *Tale*, the prologue, the main body of the poem, and the conclusion, and the arguments around them, before looking at previous interpretations of the poem.

The Prologue

The poem proper is preceded by a prologue of around 10 lines, which gives a level of detail regarding the intentions of the text but which is not always considered original to the poem.[609] Roderick Beaton has previously suggested that prologues are not a feature of Byzantine vernacular works, and, where present, are latter interpolations.[610] This he connects to the 'popular' nature of the texts. Still, as I do not believe the authors of vernacular and learned texts to be different, I would suggest that the introduction of a prologue to some vernacular works and not others reflects the experimentation that produced them in the first place.

While the actual contents of the *Tale*'s prologue, focused on 'false peace', education and humour, will be of interest to us later, here I will outline the arguments concerning its authenticity. The main argument presented is that the prologue, and the conclusion for the poem which is also disputed, is of a different genre from the main body of the *Tale*, and is concerned with different topics.[611] As we have seen in the previous chapter on the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, the mixing of genres is not so unusual in Byzantium, and particularly, it would seem, not in this period.[612] There are discrepancies between the versions of the prologue preserved in the manuscripts, particularly between the attestation that the text is for learning and/or for

[609] See the discussion in *ETQ*, pp. 449-452.
[610] Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, p. 269.
[611] *ETQ*, pp. 450-451.
[612] Moennig, 'Literary Genres' p. 163-182.

entertainment.[613] Verse 10a presents the text as being told to a friend, 'φίλε μου', not to an audience of 'youngsters, students, and young men' indicated in lines 2-4. The reference to the treachery of other nations is also not obviously continued in the main body of the poem. The mention of relations with other nations will be looked at in more detail below, in the discussion of socio-political interpretations so I will do no more than note it here. Regarding the other two factors, let us deal first with the manuscript discrepancies. It was not unusual at all for scribes to alter texts as they copied them, intentionally or otherwise; in fact, one manuscript version of the *Tale* was even written as prose, without line breaks.[614] In my opinion, the discrepancies are minor enough to not affect the authenticity of the prologue, especially as some form of it is present in all the manuscripts except A, which is missing the first sheet of its quire and may well have once also featured this short prologue.[615] As for the argument that the discrepancies place the stress on either fun or learning depending on the manuscript, the arguments surrounding this generally relate to whether or not a scholar sees an educational value in the *Tale* or not.[616] This factor too will be discussed later, in connection with the possible audience and authorship for the *Tale*, where I will indicate some reasons why I believe that it is possible to read the text pedagogically, which would nullify the complaints that the prologue suggests a role for the poem which the text itself does not fulfil. The reference in verse 10a to 'φίλε μου', which Nicholas and Baloglou observe is missing from one family of the manuscripts and may therefore be a later addition, is also not an unknown feature of later Byzantine texts.[617] Audiences and friends, are mentioned at the beginning texts of different genres too, sometimes being reintroduced in the author's

[613] The problem is largely created by the terms 'παιδιόφραστος' and 'εὐγνωστίαν' which have been variously interpreted, *ETQ*, pp. 253-254 and 449-451.
[614] The version in Vindobonensis theol. gr. 244.
[615] *ETQ*, p. 451.
[616] Ibid. pp. 450-51.
[617] Ibid., p. 452.

concluding remarks, or else apparently forgotten by the author, and not mentioned outside the prologue.[618]

The Poem Proper

The animals' debates form the main body of this text. As indicated, certain animals enter the discussion in response to references to them made by others, direct insults or in apparent defence of other animals. The structure of this section is relatively complex, which, in combination with the disjointed frame of the prologue and conclusion, led Vasiliou to suggest that the poem is poorly thought out and arranged.[619] Certainly, there are some verses which seem to be in the wrong place, so that an animal is rebuked before it has caused direct insult, as in verse 458.[620] However, attempts to rearrange the text to take such things into account are not always successful.[621] Simply, this text is a narrative and does not follow a strict pattern of dialogue in which each animal is treated equally in terms of stage time. Generally the arguments in the *Tale* are between pairs, though a third animal may get involved in another's dispute, but in doing so he or she moves the argument on and replaces an earlier combatant. Prinzing has examined this structure in detail.[622] His analysis indicates that the structure of the *Tale*, though following a traditional turnabout pattern, allows for genuine debate, as each animal picks up on the contents of the arguments of another and responds directly to insults. There are few repeated phrases or introductions and the speeches vary in length so that the audience is

[618] An audience appears, for example, at the beginning of *Velthandros and Chrysandza* when the author invites young people to listen to his story (lines 1-5) and in a more complex form at the beginning of *Livistros and Rodamni*, in which the audience are both external and part of the story (lines 3-24).
[619] P. Vasiliou, 'Κριτικές Παρατηρήσεις στην <<Παιδιόφραστο Διήγηση>>', *Ελληνικά* 46 (1996) pp. 59-82.
[620] Here the goat tells the sheep she shouldn't have offended them before the sheep appears to do so. Nicholas and Baloglou suggest this is because she speaks for them in her defence against the boar, linking herself with them perhaps more strongly than they would like. *ETQ*, pp. 464.
[621] Ibid., pp. 463-464.
[622] Prinzing, "Zur byzantinischen Rangstreitliteratur") 273-280.

given little help in following the arguments, though the narrator does indicate when the individual animals enter or leave the central space from which they speak. The basic form of debate was definitely not unfamiliar to a Byzantine audience, as it appears in agonal fables and, to an extent, in texts presenting the *progymnasmata* exercises of *anaskeue* and *kataskeue*, as well as the *Poulologos*, which I will discuss later. In the *Tale* this familiar style is introduced by a narrative frame in which embassies are formed, the various animals travel to meet together and the basic form of the assembly is outlined by Emperor Lion to ensure that each animal gets a turn to speak.

The Conclusion

The final section of the text features a battle and a quote from the Psalms, which acts as something of a moral, present in verses 1003 to 1079. Like the prologue, this closing portion has been thought to be an interpolation.[623] It follows the end of the peace and the Emperor Lion's invocation of 'εἰθισμένον', custom. Verses 992 to 1002 give a brief summary of a fight between the animals, giving no details beyond the general lamentation, violence and the involvement of many animals. P. Vasiliou suggests that this short battle summary implies the victory of the carnivores and therefore sees the next 77 verses as contradictory and inauthentic.[624] As Nicholas and Baloglou point out however, nothing in the previous verses clearly indicates who wins the battle, and there is no reason, therefore, to suppose that the subversive ending, with its victory of the herbivores over their carnivorous foes, is not original to the poem.[625] The other inconsistencies perceived by Vasiliou may not be inconsistencies at all, as they presume a reading of the poem which is arguably either too naturalistic, refusing to allow the

[623] Vasiliou, 'Κριτικές Παρατηρήσεις' pp. 62-68 for the interpolation of the prologue, and pp. 72-77 on the conclusion.
[624] Ibid., p. 76.
[625] *ETQ*, p. 455.

victory of the clean beast over the bloody, or too political, being primarily or solely concerned with animals changing sides or accusing others of doing so, as well as the sudden unity between groups who previously argued amongst themselves.[626] This presupposes certain intentions on the part of the author, and given what we know of later Byzantine politics, none of the accusations or actions would have been beyond the realms of imagination for the original audience. One further issue is that, while this section invites the most plausible socio-political interpretations, the ones it suggests appear different from those mentioned in the prologue, namely the false peace drawn by other nations. That said, both draw heavily on the concept of oaths as a means of salvation and, when broken, as the cause of violence, and this will be a feature of the discussion below.[627]

The structure of the *Tale* has invited more criticism than it perhaps deserves. The perceived inconsistencies of the text have been discussed in detail by the poem's editors and others; some are put down to authorial or scribal error and others more positively interpreted as clever use of language and syntax in ways not always expected by Byzantinists. Fundamentally, these perceived issues with the work, while difficult from an editing perspective, do not change the central nature of the work. There seems to be little reason not to accept the prologue and conclusion of the *Tale* as authentic, and even if one retains the belief that one or both of these were added later, they must have been added early enough in the life of the *Tale*, based on their presence in all the manuscripts, to have been a Byzantine addition. They function as a frame for the main action and, at the very least, they reflect a Byzantine perception of this poem.

[626] See Vasiliou, 'Κριτικές Παρατηρήσεις', pp. 72-77 and *ETQ*, pp. 452-460.
[627] Contrast *ETQ* prologue's 'yet are saved by just, inviolate oaths' (ζῴζει δ'ἡμᾶς τὸ δίκαιον, τό ἀψευδὲς τοῦ ὅρκου) line 9, with line 1010 in which King Lion is described as 'an untrustworthy oath-breaking fiend' (τὸν πανάπιστον, τὸν ὁρκοκαταλύτην).

Possible interpretations of the *Entertaining Tale*

Having discussed the fundamental content of the *Tale*, as well as its structure, we must now move on to possible interpretations of this work. Previous studies of the poem discuss the composition of the text, its form and sources and the connections that can be drawn between it and other Byzantine beast literature.[628] In the introduction to their edition, Nicholas and Baloglou devote thirty-two pages to studying the zoology of the *Tale*, primarily looking for the sources of unusual information given about the animals.[629] Stories that do not come from direct observation they identify as coming from the *Physiologus*, the poems of Manuel Philes, and Aesopic fables, among other sources. Their attention to such stories leads them to suggest that the author was poorly educated and thus unfamiliar with more accurate works like those of Aristotle or Aelian, but that he did at least use a number of written sources.[630] While the author's apparent interest in zoological material is significant, the editors of the text focus on it more as a means of discussing sources than as a point of value in itself. That said, although the *Tale* is full of zoological information, it is always secondary to the practical uses of the animals. The zoology of the *Tale* is therefore not generally the main point of interest for scholars analysing this text, partly as much of the zoology is well-known information, taken directly from observation or other sources, or is simply wrong. Instead, the most common feature in studies of the *Tale* is the assumption that the poem is concerned with actual political events, or a social critique.[631] Whereas in the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, with its fable-like form, the audience were overtly encouraged to read the animal

[628] See for example the examination of structure by Vasiliou in 'Κριτικές Παρατηρήσεις', the analysis of genre by Moennig 'Literary Genres', the discussion in *ETQ*, pp. 13-18 and 87-97 and G. Makris, 'Zum literarischen Genus des Pulologos' in N. Panagiotakis (ed.) *Αρχές της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας* 1 (Venice, 1993) pp. 391-412.
[629] *ETQ*, pp. 19-51.
[630] Ibid., p. 20 and p. 42.
[631] Even Moennig in his excellent discussion of generic mixing states that the *Tale* 'presumably represents political quarrels in contemporary Byzantine empire satirically.' Moennig, 'Literary Genres' p. 176.

protagonists as reflections of themselves or of familiar religious and political enemies, the animals in the *Tale* offer a less immediate human mirror. At a basic level, the animals can be seen to reflect human flaws, like verbosity and pride, but such aspects appear almost secondary to the mortality and material nature they highlight. This need not preclude socio-political readings of the text, but it should prevent automatic assumptions about the nature of the text. In order to better understand the *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds* it is necessary to look at the socio-political interpretations previously suggested for this work, and to compare its presentation of the animal protagonists with other Byzantine beast literature. I will then consider some other possible interpretations and offer select comparisons with western and eastern presentations of animals in related texts. It will then be possible to re-examine the *Tale* and its potential interpretations, considering how such interpretations complicate, and are complicated by, the author's method of portraying his characters.

Previous interpretations

Once again, animals are clearly considered 'good to think with', and in the case of the *Tale* this seems particularly true for its modern readers who see Palaiologan political and social concerns as being the main features of the work. Nicholas and Baloglou posit a number of possible interpretations for the *Tale*, namely that it may have been written to sympathise with the poor, or as a version of the civil war between John Kantakouzenos and John V Palaiologos, or even as a discussion of the debate on Church Union.[632] They nevertheless admit that a political reading is not possible with any degree of certainty, particularly as Emperor Lion remains unidentifiable.[633] Even so, the inclination to read this text as having a socio-political meaning is a common response to it, though it is by

[632] *ETQ*, pp. 431-447.
[633] Ibid., p. 432.

no means the only possible reading. In part this is because historians inevitably ask literature to tell them something of its context, but it also reflects ideas about what beast literature is, as well as following certain hints in the text itself.

These hints begin with the prologue and the date it gives for the text:

> Τῷ ἑξάκις χιλιοστῷ ὀκτακοσιοστῷ τε
> καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἑβδομήκοντα καὶ ἄλλῳ τρίτῳ ἔτει,
> μηνὸς τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου τε τῆς πέντε καὶ δεκάτης.[634]

The very specificity of the date 15th September 1364 has led historians to hunt for an event which the text is fictionalising. Unfortunately, the date of 1364 does not correspond to any particular occasion in Byzantine history. Accordingly, there is no identifiable, historical event that the text is parodying. That the author chose to be so specific is interesting; the date lends the work an air of accuracy and reliability it may otherwise lack. While it is possible the author is in fact referring to a small-scale event which has escaped the historians notice, or one which has been lost to us, it may equally be that the author chose a year in which he was not aware of any major conflict, in order to prevent too obvious a satire and risk repercussions.

The prologue to the *Tale* refers to a situation in which 'all nations draw false peace with us (Byzantium)' and this is highlighted by Nicholas and Baloglou as fitting the period before Byzantine vassalage to the Ottomans, meaning pre-1372.[635] That said, this line in the prologue hints at a conflict between nations, whereas the ending battle arguably highlights social conflict, namely in the cheetah's statement 'How can the Emperor and nobles make ends meet,/ if not by eating you and all the others?'.[636] This

[634] "It was in thirteen hundred and sixty-four,/ and on the fifteenth of the month of September," Ibid., lines 11-12/13. The Greek actually translates as "On the six thousandth and eight hundredth, and toward seventy and another three years", giving the date from the creation of the world in 5508B.C. but it is usually put into Anno Domini for convenience as 1364.
[635] Ibid., line 7 'Ὅταν τὰ ἔθνη μεθ'ἡμῶν ποιοῦσιν ψευδαγάπην' and p. 61.
[636] Ibid., lines 1025-1026 '«Πόθεν νὰ ζῇ ὁ βασιλεύ;, πόθεν οἱ ἄρχοντές του,/ἐάν οὐ φάγῃ ἀπὸ σὲν καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἑτέρους;»'.

social element has been raised by the *Tale*'s editors, but quickly dismissed as they are unsure whether the conclusion can be considered authentic to the poem.[637] Nevertheless, it is worth considering. A text of a similar date, which arguably contains a comparable depiction of social tension is Alexios Makrembolites' *Dialogue between the Rich and the Poor*.[638] That text directly castigates the rich on religious and moral grounds for their treatment of the poor. However, it is overt in its complaints about society, and while it does not call for revolutionary change, it does suggest a solution.[639] The comments in the *Tale* are few and far more general, offering no call to arms or proposed solution. The obsession with food, though arguably reflecting a time of plenty, may just as easily be a pleasant memory during a time of famine, such as those experienced by the Byzantines due to poor weather and warfare. The different types of bread and qualities of meat available to different purses read as an acknowledgment of social levels, though they do not seem to suggest disapproval of them. The uses to which the animals can be put are reflective of all levels of society too, with the animals often choosing to stress their relations with the upper strata, naming emperors and kings as users of their material products, while remaining firmly connected to the lower levels of trade and craftsmanship. Other than the defeat of the animals normally associated with the rich, through their use in hunting, their strength and their traditional associations, there is however no obvious indication of actual discontent with the social status quo.

If both the prologue and conclusion are original to the poem, they do not seem to make the socio-political interpretation much clearer. Even if they were added by a later author, they confuse rather than elucidate that author's purpose as well. Though both present the importance of oaths, their assertions are not particularly visible in the main

[637] Ibid, pp. 434- 435.
[638] *Alexios Makrembolites and his 'Dialogue between the rich and poor'* trans. I. Ševčenko, (Beogard, 1960) pp.187-220.
[639] *ODB* 2:1272.

body of the text; nevertheless the author presumably had a reason to include them. It is possible they are simply hooks for the audience, or indicate secondary concerns which could have been understood more clearly by those involved in the situation being referenced. Either way, neither section offers much in the way of clarity for modern historians with regard to the author's possible socio-political aims.

The basic plot of the *Tale* provides a little more support for the various socio-political interpretations. Whilst the main bulk of the text is formed by the arguments of the various animals, which as noted focus on material uses of animal bodies, humorous bodily functions and death, the plot begins with the embassies for the suggested peace. This provides a political context for the subsequent events. The concept of a peace agreement between animals is a common motif, appearing in a number of fables, as is the animal court with Emperor Lion at its head as ruler of all animals.[640] The embassies offer a more complex way of bringing all the animals together in one place, maintaining the sense of conflict despite the apparent deference to the lion. Nicholas and Baloglou, as well as other scholars, have highlighted the imperial nature of the lion as a reason to see him as representative of the Byzantine emperor, and specifically Kantakouzenos, with the elephant possibly representing John V Palaiologos, and the fleeing carnivores being the nobles who fled the cities during the war.[641] Alternatively they suggest that the lion could represent the Pope as ruler of all Christians, the elephant remaining as John V and the two sides represented in the embassies reflecting the Catholics and the Orthodox faithful.[642] Both are possible, which makes neither one entirely convincing.

Within the animals' individual arguments it is possible to see motifs from other forms of dialogue literature which might offer some further hints. These, though, relate to more broad topics of the day, such as whether or not pork should be eaten, reflected in

[640] A number of examples can be found in Adrados *Graeco-Latin Fable* vol. 3.
[641] *ETQ*, pp. 436-442.
[642] Ibid., pp. 442 – 446.

the pig's own eating habits in the poem.[643] Such elements, although they are of note, do not provide a socio-political interpretation as such. They are points of interest in the use of animals, and the opinions of others on that topic within the Byzantine sphere. Certainly there are a number of treatises at this time in which a discussion on the eating of pork may be found, so it was clearly an argument of interest, in as much as the differences between peoples were.[644] The inclusion of such ideas in the content of the arguments reflects contemporary thought but offers no clear opinion. It does however, add to the depiction of animals and their produce as being important to humanity, though here, it is the differences in uses of animal products which act as social markers.[645]

The battle between the animals has two important features; the death of Emperor Lion, and the overall defeat of the 'bloody' animals. As Nicholas and Baloglou state, no known historical figure of the period important enough to be associated with Emperor Lion was killed.[646] They propose two possibilities to deal with this problem and retain a political reading. One is that the ending of the *Tale* is not original and that Emperor Lion is not actually killed.[647] Overall this argument can be discounted on the grounds that there is little reason to believe the final battle is a later addition to the poem, and because all five manuscripts feature the death of Emperor Lion. The second explanation for the untraceable death of Emperor Lion which Nicholas and Baloglou suggest is that the death is a metaphor for a political fall or for the imagined defeat of an enemy.[648] The issue is made more complicated by the fact that, despite the imperial title and imagery, it is hard to identify Emperor Lion with any particular individual, in part as he gets very little

[643] Moennig, 'Literary Genres' p. 177.
[644] For example dialogue 15 in Manuel II Palaiologos, *Dialoge mit einem "Perser"*, ed. E. Trapp (Vienna, 1966) p. 190.
[645] Food as a social, and a religious, marker is discussed in Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists* pp. 145-161
[646] *ETQ*, p. 432.
[647] Ibid.
[648] Ibid.

opportunity to speak. It remains possible that the lion does not actually represent an emperor, but a regional lord of some kind.

The landscape of the *Tale*

The setting for the *Tale* adds a further dimension to the interpretation, even though the landscape description is fairly simple and repetitive. The first landscape reference we have simply explains that the 'clean, domestic beasts' are in one place and the 'bloody and loathsome' are in a different plain, 'πεδιάδα'.[649] Arguably, the author doesn't care where the animals are before the main part of his story begins, but he may also have understood that a simple, undefined landscape would suit all the various animals he places into the two groups, despite the varied natural environments from which they come. While the landscape may be of secondary, maybe even limited, importance to the author, it nevertheless comes across as deliberately vague, an all-encompassing setting. It is a space in which no animal can apparently ambush another, it is large enough for such an assembly and it appears to function well as a theatre, a plain within a valley presumably providing a clear view and reasonable acoustics. That the assembly takes place outdoors adds to the 'realism' of the *Tale.* Animals talking is one thing, but animals doing so within an actual palace or courtroom would stretch the imagination, and possibly the political metaphor, rather far. It would also be an unusual step for a genre in which the court setting is an outdoor event, as it is in the fables of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, although the setting is generally less clear in the Byzantine beast literature.[650] It thus allows for the action, and for the depiction of either social or political unrest, without providing any clear hints one way or the other.

[649] Ibid., pp. 160-161.
[650] For example, the guests in the *Πουλολόγος* sit around a table, which birds sometimes do, but is nevertheless an unusual idea.

Indications of Authorship

Neither the authorship nor the audience for this text is entirely apparent, though both could help identify the socio-political implications of the text, if any are present. Ševčenko uses the *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds* as an example of the education of those writing 'popular' literature stating that the author 'shows familiarity with scribal practices, and with a grammarian's classroom.' [651] He also mentions the use of the Homeric term for a hare and thus the evident use of a lexicon by the author, as well as the animals' boasts of their use in bookmaking and the detailed knowledge of Patriarchal garments to conclude that the author is 'as likely to have been a scribe in an office of some prelate, perhaps even the Patriarch, in the early period of the Turcocracy as to have been an unlearned "bourgeois" writing in the year 1364.' [652] Makris and the *Tale*'s editors' have stressed the possibility that the author was a monk, the latter suggesting he may have been an aristocrat who retired to a monastery, possibly even John Kantakouzenos himself.[653] Several of the reasons put forward by Makris for assigning the author a monastic role are dismissed by Nicholas and Baloglou as the verses he highlighted are not exclusively monastic in any sense, though they do show familiarity with Christian belief, accoutrements and practices.[654] Nicholas and Baloglou do, though, consider the absence of references to parish priests to suggest a monastic, rather than lay, sphere and explore the lack of references to family affairs, marriage or any kind of romance, as reflecting a monastic author. [655]

[651] Ševčenko, *Society and Intellectual Life*, section I, p 78.
[652] Ibid.
[653] Makris, 'Zum literarischen Genus des Pulologos' p. 411; *ETQ*, pp. 70-71.
[654] Ibid.
[655] Ibid.

Arguably, the first nine verses of the prologue contain an acrostic, spelling out ΔΙΟΓΕΝΟΥΣ 'of Diogenes', at least in the Parisian manuscript.[656] Nicholas and Baloglou have suggested that the acrostic may be a reference to the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope who criticised institutions and social values partly by living in poverty himself.[657] It has also been suggested that the name could belong to a scribe rather than the original author, and a scribe of that name is attested in Aetolia in the fifteenth century.[658] Whatever the case, if an acrostic is present, it arguably helps indicate the level of learning of someone directly connected with this text, whether or not they were the author. Acrostics are a common feature of hymns and other religious writings, though they do not necessarily place a text in a religious context. In the case of the *Tale*, it should be remembered that Diogenes is not, after all, a monastic name. There are limited attestations for the name in this period and, aside from the scribe mentioned above, none are monks.[659] Moreover, on the surface at least, the text seems more interested in the more practical affairs of men, as opposed to the spiritual. Whether the author is a monk or not, Nicholas and Baloglou consider that his use of language and the types of sources he draws on, namely the *Physiologus*, *Alexander Romance*, Aesopic fables and the Psalms, places him at the lower level of the Byzantine literati. I do not believe that the use of such texts indicates anything other than a familiarity with the basic texts of the Byzantine school system, and it should not exclude the possibility of the author's knowledge of more advanced texts. What does seem clear is that we are dealing with a metropolitan author, though whether the city he inhabited was Constantinople or

[656] Ibid., p. 468-470.
[657] Ibid. p. 472.
[658] Ibid., p. 468.
[659] *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, ed. E. Trapp (Wien, 1976-1991) nos. 5423, 11703, 91792 and 91793.

not is ambiguous.[660] Whichever city it was, it was clearly a busy place with tanning, dying, bookmaking, butchery and many other trades occurring, or at least having been present within living memory, as the author shows a strong degree of familiarity with them, without necessarily the specialised interest of a tradesman.[661] This overt attentiveness to trade has been said to imply a prosperity, or recent prosperity, more suited to the early or mid-fourteenth, than to a later period, though the obsession with food products could equal indicate a rose-tinted memory in a time of famine. The types of garments, material goods and consumers mentioned throughout the text also indicate an aristocratic milieu functioning alongside Christian religious communities of different types, particular in the sheep's speech concerning the uses of her wool.[662] Any or all of the people mentioned in the arguments of the animals may have formed an audience for the text. However, we remain without a definitive answer as to the origins, social status and profession of our author.

The audience of the *Tale*

Aside from making an allusion to a possible political interpretation, the prologue to the *Tale* describes the text and its intended audience as follows:

> 'An entertaining tale of quadrupeds,
> for youngsters, students and young men to read
> and to employ for all of its good knowledge,
> as written to draw out and stir up learning.
> Yet note that it has meaning, too, and depth.[663]

[660] Other Greek-speaking cities such as Thessalonica were at times more prosperous than the capital and also had a thriving intellectual milieu.
[661] Similar references appear in the twelfth-century Ptochoprodromos poems, often attributed to Theodore Prodromos and certainly a product of the Constantinopolitan literati, though obviously of an earlier date..
[662] *ETQ*, lines 497-512.
[663] Ibid., lines 1-6. 'Διήγησις παιδιόφραστος περὶ τῶν τετραπόδων/ Ἵνα ἀναγινώσκωνται καὶ χρῶνται ταῦτα παῖδες,/ Οἱ φοιτηταὶ καὶ νεαροὶ διὰ τὴν εὐγνωστίαν·/ Γέγραπται γὰρ εἰς ἔλκυσιν μαθήσεως καὶ πόθον,/ Ἔχουσιν δ'ὅμως ἔννοιαν καὶ βάθος τὰ τοιαῦτα'.

Even if the prologue may be a later addition to the text, as discussed earlier, the level and style of the rest of the work does seem to support the didactic assertion it makes.[664] If it is an addition then we can argue that at least the author of the prologue felt the text could be used for such educational purposes. As indicated above, some scholars have looked at the sources used by the author as reflecting his own limited education. However, it may be more helpful to consider the use of such texts to be appropriate for the students for whom the work was produced.[665] All the sources mentioned in connection with authorship above are works which would be familiar to students, and, which often had a didactic element. Even the *Alexander Romance* could be used as a source of gnomic sayings. This possibility does not remove the text from a learned circle or even necessarily a courtly one. The young men of the prologue could easily have been connected to the courtly milieu, and it can equally be argued that their teacher was. Such a supposition can be supported further by the use of fable and other rhetorical *progymnasmata* in the *Tale*, a feature which has recently been highlighted by Ulrich Moennig.[666] Moennig also sees the *Tale* as primarily an educational, rhetorical exercise, rather than as a straightforwardly political text.[667] This educational aspect is certainly an important feature of the *Tale*, but is still only one interpretation. Most works of poetry were probably performed in Byzantium. One of the main venues for such performances would have been *theatra*.[668] Educational *theatra* in which opposing students or schools orated were designed to show the skills of both teachers and students, and though it is not a piece of rhetoric in the manner of an admired classical author, the *Tale* has merits to it

[664] For the debate surrounding the authenticity of the prologue see pp. 181-182 of this chapter.
[665] *ETQ*, p. 68.
[666] U. Moennig, "Ρητορική και Διήγησις των τετραπόδων ζώων", in: G. Mauromates and N. Agiotes (eds.) *Πρώιμη Νεοελληνική Δημώδης Γραμματεία; Γλώσσα, παράδοση και ποιητική* (Heraklion, 2012) pp. 573-590.
[667] Ibid., pp. 587-588.
[668] See I. Toth, 'Rhetorical *theatron* in Byzantium: the example of Palaiologan imperial orations', in M. Grünbart (ed.) *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2007) pp. 429–48 and N. Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die spätbyzantinische Sophistik: Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten der frühen Palaiologenzeit* (Wiesbaden, 2011) pp. 22-50.

that may have been better appreciated by such an audience.[669] The simple, though varied language used, the compound words, and the political verse, as well as the humorous content would also suggest that the *Tale* would have been an enjoyable text to listen to. It is not as lengthy as some Byzantine orations, but its structure, with its changes of speaker and three plot sections would also have held the attention of any listeners, as perhaps would its commentary on contemporary events, if one was discernible to its audience. It is conceivable that the *Tale* would simply have been individually read, but it is generally held that most texts in Byzantium would have been read aloud. The *Tale*'s self-confessed educational purpose does lend itself to that idea, particularly at a *theatron*. This educational purpose is not necessarily at odds with the idea that the work contains some socio-political message, but neither does it strengthen the suggestion.

So far the text offers us reason to see a political and a separate social meaning buried within it, as well as undermining these interpretations. The lack of an obvious inspiration for the death of the lion, the disappearance of the elephant after his speech and the assertions in the prologue and the concluding section, that is the false peace with external nations and internal social conflict, combined with their stress on oath making and breaking, could all indicate that a socio-political reading is either present but beyond our reach, or that one may not have been originally intended.[670] The arguments of the animals are primarily among their own groups, and do not form a coherent line of conflict between the clean and the bloody. Neither are the concepts of external or internal conflicts, suggested by the prologue and conclusion, carried on in these arguments. The authorship and audience for the text provide little further clarification. While we may

[669] The existence of such educational *theatre*, as opposed to official gatherings, or groups of literary friends are attested by two eleventh-century scholars, John Mauropous and Chritopher Mitylenaios as discussed by P. Magdalino, 'Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos' in F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds.) *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium* (Farnham, 2012) p. 35, and by Michael Psellos as discussed by F. Bernard *Writing and reading Byzantine secular poetry, 1025-1081* (Oxford, 2014) pp. 255-256.
[670] *ETQ*, pp. 435-436.

therefore try to employ a socio-political reading of the text, it is possible that more than one reading was intended by the author.

The *Entertaining Tale* as Byzantine Beast Literature

As the *Tale* is a piece of Byzantine, or better Palaiologan, beast literature, scholars often associate it with a number of similar texts. Further analysis of the texts the *Tale* can be grouped with may shed some additional light on how we may interpret it, and the genre more broadly.

As shown in the previous chapter on the *Synaxarion*, 'beast literature' is very much an umbrella term covering all manner of sins. This does not mean it is irrelevant, it remains a useful term if only as it indicates that animals are the central characters and that there is likely to be some fable elements to the text. The *Tale* is associated with three other texts collectively referred to as the Byzantine beast poems based on similarities of content and style. The three other works in this group are the *Book of Birds* (Πουλολόγος), the *Book of Fish* (Ὀψαρολόγος) and the *Book of Fruit* (Πωρικολόγος).[671] While the last cannot be described as beast literature *per se*, it is very much part of the group. The *Book of Fish* and the *Book of Fruit* have received less attention than the *Book of Birds*, partly as they are less complex. The *Book of Fruit* is a satirical take on Byzantine court ceremony but also of Byzantine legal practice. It may also be a tract against drunkenness or mock particular individuals represented by the fruits involved.[672] The text is written in prose and, like the other 'beast literature' it is connected with, it is

[671] *Ο Πουλολόγος: κριτική έκδοση με εισαγωγή, σχόλια και λεξιλόγιο*, ed. I. Tsavare (Athens, 1987); *Porikologos: Einleitung, kritische Ausgabe aller Versionen, Übersetzung, Textvergleiche, Glossar, kurze Betrachtungen zu den fremdsprachlichen Versionen des Werks sowie zum Opsarologos*, ed. H. Winterwerb (Köln, 1992).

[672] *ODB* 3:1700. It is found in the following manuscripts; Vindobonensis theol. gr. 244, Parisinus gr. 2316, Petropolitanus gr. 488, Bodleianus Seld. supra 15, Ambrosianus O 1175 supra, and Μετεώρων Βαρλαάμ 195. A few verses are also preserved in Petropolitanus 202.

anonymous. It follows the story of a central character, Grape, who is denounced before Emperor Quince, found guilty and sentenced to be beaten till all his blood is gone and drunk by man. The *Book of Fish* shares many features with the *Book of Fruit*, as it again mocks Byzantine legal practice and is in prose.[673] This time the denounced character is Mackerel, who is accused before Emperor Whale. He is also found guilty but in a less brutal conclusion is shorn of his beard. Neither text is easily dateable, though they are generally placed during the last centuries of Byzantium.[674] While these two works are similar to the *Tale* on a basic level, they are far shorter, less complex and are identifiably focused primarily on the Byzantine legal system. Despite the obvious satire of bureaucracy, it is hard to identify any further social critic within either the *Book of Fish* or the *Book of Fruit*. Neither text gives us a high level of information about its characters. Certain familiar associations are drawn, physical features, like Mackerel's beard, are used for effect, and may play on social practices, most men aside from youths and eunuchs sporting beards in Byzantium. Despite regularly being grouped together the similarities between these two texts and the *Tale* are minimal, primarily being the use of the vernacular, anonymity of the author and the perceptibly satirical nature. These two works clearly do comment on aspects of the society in which they were produced, but they are different enough from the *Tale* to suggest that we do not have to follow the same line of enquiry.

The connection between the *Poulologos* or *Book of Birds*, and the *Entertaining Tale* is more obvious.[675] Like the *Tale*, the *Book of Birds* is written in verse and arguably

[673] The *Book of Fish* is found in one manuscript, χφ Escoraliensis Ψ IV 22.
[674] M. Bartusis, 'The Fruit Book: A Translation of the *Porikologos*: translated from Byzantine Greek with an Introduction' *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 4 (1988) pp. 205-6. Bartusis argues that since no court titles or functions which are exclusive to the twelfth century or earlier are found in any of the manuscripts it is likely that the text is Palaiologan.
[675] The text is preserved in Constantinopolitanus gr. Seraglio 35, Petropolitanus gr. 202, Vindobonensis theol. gr. 244, Petropolitanus gr. 721 (formely Lesbiacus 92), Escorialensis gr. 496, Αθηναϊκό χφ αρ. 701 της Εθνικής Βιβλιοθήκης της Αθήνας and χφ ιδιωτικής συλλογής Ζώρα (Ζ).

both use the genre of *Streitdichtung*, debate poetry. In the case of the *Book of Birds* the argument has been identified as a *Rangstreitdichtung*, a debate over precedence.[676] In this work the Eagle, Emperor of the Birds, invites all the birds to his son's wedding. No pretext beyond this is given for the story and the debates simply begin as the abuse of one guest by another. While this work has often been thought of as a more carefully written and advanced version of the action of the *Tale*, it is actually considerably simpler in some ways. For example, there is little actual debate, as generally no rebuttal is given, simply an exchange of insults, and the frame story of the wedding is far less developed than the peace process of the *Tale*. In part this is because the *Book of Birds* is primarily written as a dialogue rather than a narration like the *Tale*.[677] The structure is more obviously formulaic than that of the *Tale*, with each argument following the same pattern.[678] As with the *Tale*, the more virtuous of the creatures are those most influenced by humans, and generally thought of as tamed. The tame birds are pitted against birds considered useless or with traditionally poor connotations. The focus of the arguments themselves is more on appearance, ideas of ancestry and concepts of nobility than on the individual uses of the birds, though these are sometimes mentioned. The concentration on appearance and status satirises the conscious and visible depiction of status in Byzantine court ceremonial and the regalia connected with it.[679] It has been possible, through the use of this imagery, to identify at least the titles or roles referred to in this text, even if it is not necessarily referring to the particular individuals who held the positions when the text was produced. Some individuals or groups do seem identifiable, as discussed by Nicholas and Baloglou who compare the *Book of Birds* with texts like John

[676] Prinzing, 'Zur byzantinischen Rangstreitliteratur', pp. 246-248.
[677] Moennig, 'Ρητορική και Διήγησις' p. 589.
[678] *Ὁ Πουλολόγος*, ed. Tsavare p. 175.There is a two line introduction, followed by a strophe of variable length, then two lines to swap the focus to the second bird, followed by an antistrophe which is always longer as it is given to the more virtuous of the speakers.
[679] N. Gaul, 'The Partridge's Purple Stockings: Observations on the Historical, Literary, and Manuscript Context of Pseudo-Kodinos' Handbook on Court Ceremonial' in Grünbart (ed.) *Theatron*, pp. 69–103.

Kantakouzenos' *Historiae*.[680] It is relatively easy to see the birds' attempts at social-climbing while undermining each other as reflecting the confusion of the period generally. Makris has seen it as reflecting the civil war of the 1340s specifically.[681] Human flaws are highlighted, for example in the greed for titles and extravagant clothing so that the bird characters in this work often reflect human behaviour more prominently than in the *Tale*. However, like the *Book of Fish* and the *Book of Fruit*, the *Book of Birds* uses well-known practices and institutions to signpost this critique.

The *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, like the *Tale*, claims a didactic purpose for itself, an assertion missing from the *Book of Birds*, though didacticism is arguably a feature of most Byzantine animal poetry. I have noted above a number of parallels in the depiction of the fox in the *Synaxarion* and the *Tale*, as well as highlighting the fable structure of one and the use of fable stories and some Aesopic associations in the other. The combination of generic elements links the *Synaxarion* and the *Tale*. Moennig, for example, has described the *Tale* as being composed of 'multi-layered combinations' in which 'no underlying "dominant and defining" genre can be discerned'.[682] I pointed out that literary ecology could be applied to this generic play, indicating that the 'evolution' of genre can be seen as a naturalistic development in itself.[683] The poem's translators see five genres in the *Tale*, with those of fable, didactic poetry and satirical allegory being observable in both.[684] Additional to the *Tale* are bestiaries and the conference of animals. The combination of these different elements is to some extent visible in all the Byzantine beast literature, but that of the *Synaxarion* and the *Tale* is the most developed. The *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, like the other beast literature, makes use of contemporary practices, in its case religious practices.

[680] *ETQ*, pp. 413-430.
[681] Makris, 'Zum literarischen Genus des Pulologos', pp. 391-412.
[682] Moennig, 'Literary Genres', p. 177.
[683] See p. 156 of this thesis and Zapf, 'The State of Ecocriticism', pp. 54-61.
[684] *ETQ*, pp. 14-19.

Where the *Tale* primarily differs from the *Synaxarion* then is in its portrayal of contemporary produce, material goods and primarily artisanal trades, with only brief mentions of the religious and very little that is obviously political. A social reading based in the hierarchy of goods is not easy either as one animal, for example the sheep, can produce goods for the whole spectrum of society. Certainly, the role of the animals in the *Tale,* as seems true for the other examples of Byzantine beast literature, rarely is that of 'animals'. That said in the *Tale* we find something closer to real animals, though still very much as subservient tools to mankind, in practical as well as literary terms. The physicality of the *Synaxarion,* in particular the imagery of the Donkey's penis, is very visible in the *Tale*, as is the same combination of violent and sexual comedy. As indicated in the previous chapter, the humour of the *Synaxarion* is strongly religious, although exactly what the aim of the poem is remains debatable. It is this sense of humour on which I will now focus.

Humour and the *Tale*

The *Tale* does not fit comfortably with the methods used to analyse other beast literature from Byzantium. Its generic structure, while similar to the *Rangstreitdichtung* of the *Book of Birds* and having fable elements in common with the *Synaxarion*, does not provide the same signposts for reading the work as a commentary of its times, and neither do the characters themselves. Nevertheless socio-political interpretations, didacticism and the depiction of human flaws are common features of Palaiologan beast literature which can be suggested for the *Tale*. The content of the poem is strongly focused on the value of animals, as real animals, to humans, but a second key feature can be seen in their insults to each other, and occasionally in their boasts, that is, the strong

sense of humour. The humour of the *Tale* is somewhat different from the satire of the *Πουλολόγος*, the *Ὀψαρολόγος* and the *Πωρικολόγος*, having more in common with the more visceral humour of the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*. Like that text, in which the Donkey farts often and resoundingly beats the Wolf with his penis, the *Tale* uses bodily functions for comic effect. Extreme violence, sexual humour, and the parody of the familiar saturate the *Tale*. To give an example, 'ἀλευροκαταχέστη', translated by the editors as 'flour-shitter', is a typical insult in this poem, combining food and bodily functions in a way that is both disgusting and realistic.[685] The clean beast in the *Tale* generally offer insults based on verbosity. The ox and buffalo accuse all those who have spoken before them of talking and boasting beyond measure.[686] The nanny goat is derided in sexual terms, the donkey for the violence with which he is treated by his master, and the pig for his eating habits.[687] The ox even warns the audience before he discusses the size and uses of his genitals, saying:

> indeed, if women happen to be present
> And hear the following remark and statement
> They tend to giggle and to be amused [688]

All of these animals are therefore insulted for their perceived behaviour and treatment by humans while alive. Whilst it is said of the donkey that he is sometimes so mistreated as to die from the beatings, such a demise never seems to be presented as a deliberate or satisfactory end. In contrast, the bloody animals appear to take great joy in depicting each other's physical defects and deaths. The wolf is mocked by the bear for being mangy and food for insects.[689] The monkey tells the same story as the *Physiologus* regarding the death of the elephant, stressing his lack of knee joints, the trick used by

[685] Ibid., line 159.
[686] Ibid., lines 550-553.
[687] Ibid., lines 467-468, 682-688 and 436-445.
[688] Ibid., lines 632-634 'πολλάκις γὰρ ἄν εὑρεθοῦν καὶ γύναια ἐκεῖσε/καὶ νὰ ἀκούσουν τὸ παρὸν ἀπόφθεγμα καὶ ῥῆμα,/ἄν τύχῃ νὰ γελάσουσιν καὶ νὰ ἐμνοστευθοῦσιν.'
[689] Ibid., lines 838-842.

men to trap him and his subsequent inability to help himself, and repeating verbs for hunting and destruction.[690] The death of the cat as described by the rat is perhaps the most gruesome:

> … When people find
> that you have been committing these misdeeds,
> then you'll see sticks and clubs fall on your ribs!
> And when they beat you, then you'll get the squirts,
> and you'll start farting farts like walnuts rattling!
> They'll hit you many times around the head;
> and when you've croaked it, miserable bastard,
> they'll throw you onto the dung, poor dear,
> where pigs will eat you [691]

A very similar portrayal can be found in the description of the fox's hypothetical death which again involves beatings, excrement and abandonment of the body to scavengers.[692] The very practicality of the descriptions and arguments adds to the humour. Such a strong awareness of being cared for simply to be killed and turned into some material goods for the wealthy should after all result in something other than feelings of pride. This humour adds a further element to the interpretation of the text, though it also raises more questions.

It is worth highlighting that the humour found in the *Tale* is not reserved for beast literature alone. *The Mass of the Beardless Man* or *Spanos*, a text probably written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, also features many obscenities and sexual humour, while utilising the structure of an *akolouthia*, liturgical rite, and employing hagiographical tropes to mock aspects of the Orthodox faith.[693] The Ptochoprodromos

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[690] Ibid., lines 942-957.
[691] Ibid., lines 168-174 'ὅταν ταῦτα σὲ εὕρωσιν ποιοῦντα οἱ ἀνθρῶποι,/νὰ εἶδες ῥαβδὲς καὶ ματζουκιὲς ἀπάνω στὰ πλευρά σου,/ καὶ νὰ σὲ κροῦν καὶ νὰ τζιλᾷς, νὰκλάνῃς καρυδᾶτα./Πολλάκις εἰς τὴν κεφαλὴν νὰ τύχῃ νὰ σὲ δώσουν/καὶ νὰ ψοφήσῃς, ἄθλιε, καὶ νὰ σὲ ῥίψουν ἔξω/ εἰς τὴν κοπρέαν, ἄτυχε, καὶ νὰ σὲ φᾶν οἱ χοῖροι᾽. A comparable punishment for a cat caught eating meat is mentioned in Ptochoprodromos Poem IV.
[692] Ibid., lines 289-295.
[693] *Spanos*, ed. H. Eideneier (Athens, 1990) and B. Merry, *Encyclopedia of Modern Greek Literature* (Westport, Conn., 2004) p. 382. A late fifteenth century date has also been suggested for this text by T. A. Karanastasis, *Ακολουθία του ανοσίου τραγογένη Σπανού: χαρακτήρας και χρονολόγηση, μια ερμηνευτική προσέγγιση* (Thessaloniki, 2010).

poems, written in the twelfth century, can also be connected with the *Tale* on the grounds of humour. These four poems play with food, sex and violence in varying degrees, though they do so in order to critique social practices. Poem IV in particular combines food and sex to humorous affect, with the yoghurt seller 'calling out something like "Take a pot of frothy white stuff, ladies"' and the suggestive flattery used by the narrator to try and win some food from the butcher's wife, only to receive belly-meat stuffed with shit.[694] Many of the trades-people who appear in this poem have long been associated with tropes of animal-like behaviour, sex and ugliness.[695] Combined with the use of the vernacular and what modern audiences would probably consider rather crude humour, there is an overt attempt to show off literary skills and entertain in order to gain patronage and the rewards that came with it.[696]

Most Byzantine texts which feature such humour therefore seem to have some form of socio-political commentary behind them. The *Tale* is not an obvious satire or parody of particular people or institutions, though elements in it mock aspects of society, the use of the mud-wallowing pig's hair for the aspergillum used to sprinkle holy water during *Asperges* in the Latin Church being one example.[697] Humour in literature can do many things though. It can be used as a tool for 'reaffirming intimacy or attempting to establish a relationship, as a means of diffusing anger or frustration, or of displaying contempt – as well as a way of negotiating complex or difficult social moments'.[698] Humour does not need to directly parody or satirise in order to achieve any of these things. While elements of the humour in the *Tale* are directed beyond the animals

[694] M. Alexiou, 'Ploys of Performance: Games and Play in the Ptochoprodromic Poems', *DOP* 53 (1999) pp. 9-10 and p. 12.
[695] See for example the discussion in J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: obscene language in Attic comedy* (Yale, 1975) pp. 66-70.
[696] As it clearly is in the Ptochoprodromos poems discussed in Alexiou, 'Ploys of Performance', pp. 91-109.
[697] *ETQ*, lines 384-388.
[698] Haldon, 'Humour and the everyday in Byzantium', p. 55.

themselves to critique human society more broadly, the slapstick nature and clever mockery function comedically in their own right. As discussed earlier, this relates to Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque as a restorative critique of society.[699] It is worth noting that novels in which literary scholars have identified the carnivalesque tend to have several characters with different opinions and a number of layers so that no single view is privileged.[700]

The type of humour displayed in the *Tale* presents a modern audience with a degree of unease at its sheer brutality. There is no reason to suppose that such a response was not to be found amongst a Byzantine audience as well. The physical violence described is fairly extreme, and remains unnerving despite the humour. These animals are material, corporal beings like their human audience, so that the rendering of animal flesh is uncomfortably close, especially as these animals have talked and behaved in quite human ways. Additionally, the very manuscript on which the text has been recorded would be made from flayed animal skins.[701] This comic violence is entertaining, because laughter, as Bergson suggests, is often accompanied by an 'absence of feeling', and through laughter we can remove our sense of pity long enough to find entertainment in such danger.[702] Nevertheless, the potential sense of discomfort allows an audience to question that emotion, and therefore the content of the poem and its related associations. It is this combination of questioning and regeneration which I would like to suggest is present in the *Tale*. No particular aspect of society appears to have been singled out for ridicule by the *Tale* in the manner of the court ceremonial in the *Poulologos* or the judicial system in the *Porikologos*. However, the humour is fairly similar and the author may easily be expressing a general sense of frustration, fear and fatigue caused by the

[699] See p. 137 of this thesis.
[700] B. Shaw, *The Animal Fable in Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Jefferson, N.C., 2010) p. 35.
[701] S. Kay, 'Legible skins', pp. 13-32.
[702] Ibid., p. 38 and H. Bergson, 'Laughter' in W. Sypher (ed.) *Comedy* (Garden City, N.Y., 1956) p. 63.

struggles of the period. Arguably, the obsession with food that pervades the text and its humour could reflect a time of hunger as much as a time of plenty, and the infighting between the animals can be read as a reflection of the civil wars or the debates on the Union of the Churches, without needing to comment directly on either of them. The focus on the animals themselves does bring their 'social status' into question, so that while they are anthropomorphised, and concerned with humanity as the source of their value, their own importance from a human perspective is humorously highlighted. Humans cause the violence which forms so much of the humour in this text, but at times it seems to be to our own detriment, as much as to that of the animal. The specific animals, and the comments made about them and by them, are familiar, keeping the laughter at once at a distance and close to home so that it is both escapism and an uncomfortable reminder of reality.

Beast Literature as didactic poetry

Another aspect of beast literature which has already been highlighted is its use in education. As has been highlighted before, animals can act as a blank canvas for the projection of ideas, at least in part due to the lack of a voice with which to express their own ideas. Animals, being familiar points of reference, have always been useful for educating the young. Not only did fables have a place in the schoolroom, the *Physiologus* was also present, and we have seen a Latin example too, in *The Testament of the Piglet*. In the case of the *Tale*, the author mentions its educational role in his prologue and, like the humour, it is a clearly observable feature. As the poem is written in vernacular Greek, it has not been widely considered to be of a didactic nature, classical Greek being the pinnacle of learning. I have mentioned above that studies of the poem have sometimes used the language and the texts referenced within the *Tale* as a reason to see the author as

being of a lower social status and level of education. The texts used by the *Entertaining Tale*, as previously mentioned, include the *Physiologus*, the *Alexander Romance*, Aesopic fables and the Psalms, all of which also have a didactic element. The specific type of didactic text visible in the *Tale* is best illustrated in relation to Emperor Lion. The lion's role in the text is that of judge, a traditional kingly role. The lion lays out the form of the 'jesting' or arguments, and intervenes to reprimand the leopard and to inform the ox and the buffalo that the small animals are as entitled to talk as their larger companions. The monkey's rudeness to the elephant, and impertinence in speaking out of turn, anger the lion enough that he loses his temper, declares that enough is enough and announces that the peace is over and battle shall commence. Neither his right to rule nor his inherent authority is ever questioned, until the battle starts. Then he is denounced by the ox, who encourages all to attack him. In this way the text present an acceptable image of rulership, in which the lion allows all animals the right to be heard, acting as mediator, and an unacceptable image, in which the emperor attacks his own people. In short, the text, to an extent, is like a mirror for princes, a didactic guide to behaviour, stressing the functional importance of each section of society, even allowing a place for those with apparently no clear usefulness. The use of animal stories as mirrors of princes are not unusual; the fables of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, for example, are a serious of animal fables set within a frame story to indicate how a ruler should behave. These were translated from Arabic into Greek as *Stephanites and Ichnelates* in the eleventh century. The story presents the animals as caricatures of human behaviour, models to be followed, and occasionally as interacting with people directly. Aesopic fables also continued to be popular throughout the Byzantine period, and provided clear morals to be learned. The *Tale*, despite its possible use of such a moral and role as a mirror for princes, seems to have other educational aims in mind. That said, it is unlikely the text was teaching

vocabulary, unless it was rude compound insults. However, there is a reason so many children's stories have animal protagonists, they allow us to understand the unknown through the known, and ourselves through that which we can easily anthropomorphise.

In the case of the *Tale*, like a number of Palaiologan texts, the author is using a variety of different genres to tell his story. This has created a slightly disjointed nature, which has caused some scholars to perceive the text as ill-thought out, untidy, or full of interpolations. The *Tale* utilises fable, as evidenced in its moralistic epilogue, but also inserts a fable into the body of the text. The fable tells how a representative of all donkeys was sent to ask the king to stop humans overloading them with burdens and was given a document to that affect by the king, which he accidentally swallowed in his joy. The horse claims this explains why donkeys sniff their urine, hoping they have pissed out the royal writ. Other generic styles that can be noted are, like fable, found among the rhetorical *progymnasmata* that formed the basis of the Byzantine school system, including *diegema* or narrative, ἀνασκευή, κατασκευή and *synkrisis*, as well as other devices such as *epainos* (praise) and *psogos.* The author uses his story, which itself is in the familiar form of an argument between two sides, to display these various rhetorical forms in a manner that is both accessible and fun. The text itself belongs to all and none of these genres or exercise, and displays a level of skill in uniting these elements. Something similar can again be seen in the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, which also uses multiple genres, primarily fable, but which is shorter and less complex. Overall, combined with the humour already discussed, the *Tale* fits well with other educational works with a sense of humour and political satire, though it has other possible interpretations.

Animals in their own right?

Before moving on to look at texts from other cultures which may shed light on the *Tale*, it is worth considering that these animals, in their socio-political frame story, with the didactic and humorous elements of beast literature, and their obsession with humanity, are commenting as much on themselves as on any human event.

As discussed, the animals' arguments all relate strongly to their economic value and to their corporeal natures. These are animals common to urban and suburban spaces, wild, domesticated and somewhere in between, the type of animals 'often overlooked despite how they pervade human dwellings'.[703] The author of the *Tale* has chosen to make them his focus, and not simply present them in their fable-like, anthropomorphic stereotypes. In doing so, the author perhaps raises questions about his society's reliance on creatures whom they often treated poorly. That is not to say that there is a direct call to change the treatment of animals from within this text. If there was, we would expect the violence to be less humorous. However, in connecting the animals' behaviour strongly with that of Byzantine society, and the court in particular, the author stresses the many ways in which animals allow culture and daily life to function, through food, fashion, religion and art. In reading the *Tale* with a focus on the animals, rather than on what the animals may represent beyond themselves, it is possible to look at the poem from a perspective that is not exclusively anthropocentric. The poem is not necessarily an 'expression of the "human condition" but an expression of something *in*human as well: the permutations of necessity and materiality that condition and shape human life'.[704] Arguably, a focus on the material needs of humanity has been brought to the fore by the limitations on goods in a period of strife. However, the luxury items mentioned, such as the 'armchairs and seats, chess sets, backgammon boards', and 'the saffron and the scarlet cloth', allow for the poem to have been written in a time of relative prosperity

[703] A.M. Moe, *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry* (Lanham, 2014) p. 124.
[704] A. Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, p. 5.

during the Palaiologan period. We know educated Byzantines involved in, or at least familiar with, trade practices, not least through the Ptochoprodromika with its references to luxury goods, so a text focused on the material uses of animals, and those animals which harm them and humans, would simply being drawing on personal experience. That there is a strain of sympathy in the poem is interesting to note, and perhaps, through the humour and didacticism, aimed at encouraging the audience to see their own connection with animals, not simply as literary mirrors for themselves, but as a relationship of reliance which should be acknowledged.

Beyond Byzantium

Beast literature is not restricted to Byzantium, and a number of texts from beyond the borders of Byzantium can be usefully compared with the *Tale* to highlight cultural parallels at the same time as stressing the individuality and locality of the work.

Western beast literature

Western beast literature of a type comparable to the *Tale* is fairly easy to identify. Animal courts are a common feature, Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* being a frequently cited example. For comparison with a story of quadrupeds though, the *Reynard* cycle seems more appropriate. This work appears in a number of versions, with around twenty-eight being written in France alone between 1174 and 1250.[705] The stories travelled across Europe and were adapted to different audiences and situations while retaining very similar features. Here again we have a lion as ruler, animals both domestic and wild, and infighting between them, though the focus is on the ongoing disputes between Reynard the Fox and his uncle, Ysingrimus the Wolf. Much of the content of these stories, and

[705] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 122.

their predecessor *Ysengrimus*, was inspired by short fables. Indeed, it is largely structured in fable-like episodes and the opening and closing lines of the story offer reminders to the reader that moral lessons can be drawn from these stories.[706] The work is often termed a beast epic, and like the *Tale* it is longer and more complex than simple beast fable. In contrast to the *Tale*, the *Reynard* stories are very formulaic and many can stand alone, outside of the framing dispute between Reynard and the animals he has wronged. Humans also appear in the text and interact, often violently, with the animals themselves. The relationship between humans and animals is not discussed in terms of use as it is in the *Tale*, and the animals themselves are highly anthropomorphised, even having names. As such these animals are more obvious vehicles for political or social commentary. This is a key difference between Western animal stories and Byzantine ones and one reason scholars of Byzantine beast literature have been so determined to see such aims in the Greek texts. Western beast literature *does* usually attempt to make a political or social point, reinforced with the kind of carnivalesque humour the *Tale* excels at. Even where it sympathises with the poor or downtrodden, as in the twelfth-century fables of Marie de France, it always reasserts the status quo. The *Entertaining Tale* gives us no such obvious reading or moral.

Oriental beast literature

If we look eastwards for a more analogous presentation of animals, we can again find settings reminiscent of human courts, for example in *Kalilah wa Dimnah.*[707] Its presentation of animals is very similar to that of the *Reynard* cycle, displaying them as caricatures of human behaviour, models to be followed, and occasionally as interacting

[706] Ibid., p. 123.
[707] *ODB* 3:1882-1883; *The Fables of Kalilah and Dimnah: adapted and translated from the Sanskrit through the Palavi into Arabic by ʿAbdullah ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, AD 750*, trans. S.S. Jallad (London, 2002).

with people directly. They therefore follow the basic style of animals in fable and add little more to our understanding of the *Tale*, though its author may have been familiar with the text. An earlier work, written in the tenth century and translated as *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*, may offer us something more.[708] Certainly this text places animals and man in a relationship more akin to what we find in the *Tale*. This text stresses the use of animals by mankind, referencing beasts of burden, wild animals, and those who only create difficulties for mankind, such as the wolf. Here too we find embassies, with representatives of different types of animals being sent to a court presided over by the King of the Jinn. However, this text presents the arguments for the use of animals entirely differently from the *Tale*. In this work, animals and humans are in dispute as to whether or not animals should be slaves to mankind.[709] The seventy representatives of the different peoples of the world are very aware of their reliance on animals, and though they confidently present their right to control and hunt all animals based on 'both traditional religious arguments and rational proof', they fear that the Jinn may yet find in favour of the animals.[710] Upon the suggestion that the Jinn may judge it right to 'sell' the animals and make humans take compensation in the form of money, initially the town dwellers believe this to be an acceptable possible outcome, but they are quickly corrected by their pastoral companions who exclaim:

> … if we did this, we'd be left with no milk to drink or meat to eat, no woollen clothes or blankets, no furnishings of hair or fleece, no shoes or sandals, no water skins, rugs, bedding or covers. We'd be naked, barefoot, miserable, and sick. Death would be better for us than such a life. And the people of the cities would suffer the same fate. Don't sell them or free them,

[708] *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn; A translation from the Epistle of the Brethren of Purity*, trans. L.E. Goodman and R. McGregor (Oxford, 2012); Previous editions include *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'*, ed. B. Bustani (Beirut, 1957) and *Mensch und Tier vor dem König der Dschinnen: aus den Schriften der Lauteren Brüder von Basra*, ed. A. Giese (Hamburg, 1990). The text survives in a large number of manuscripts, of which the edition used here focuses on 10. See the discussion in *The Case of the Animalsi*, trans. L.E. Goodman and R. McGregor, pp. 57-59.
[709] Ibid., p. 102.
[710] Ibid., p. 103.

> don't even consider it, and don't accept any judgement except to better their lives, lighten their load, and show some kindness, sympathy, and pity.[711]

Materiality and the usefulness of animals to humans in all aspects of life are of central important to this text, as they are in the *Tale*. In the *Case* the animals themselves present their attributes in the same manner as we saw in the Greek hexaemeral literature. Some of them have talons, others thick hides, some live in hard to reach places, all of which are natural characteristics given to them by Allah to protect themselves. When the animals are selecting representatives for the debate, they also mention their traditional behavioural traits such as the 'wiles and ruses, sly tricks and dodges, twists and deceptions' of the fox.[712] A discussion of the beauty and uses of horses takes up half a chapter, though it is also worth noting that the rabbit appears in that section to note the faults of horses and compare them with those of mankind.[713] This presentation is comparable with the *Tale*, in that some of the animals in that text are also depicted in a naturalistic fashion. For example, the rat presents his theft of food as 'δίκαιον' as he is a wild animal and not under the control of mankind. Physical appearance is also a prominent feature of the *Tale*, though it is usually presented as an attribute to laugh at rather than one that has been divinely ordained for a reason. Though the animals in the *Case* do not argue with each other, they do point out each other's limitations at times as well. Nevertheless, the presentation of the animals and of human society is again very different from what we find in the *Tale*. The *Case of the Animals* contains a clear moral, even if the hinted-at revolution in the treatment of animals is diluted at the end. The animals are presented as beings with their own lives and deserving of compassion in a manner completely absent from the *Tale* which prefers a more abstract, violent, and somewhat more anthropomorphic, portrayal.

[711] Ibid., p. 148.
[712] Ibid., p.154.
[713] Ibid., pp. 122-123.

The discussion of human superiority over animals is common in Islamic texts of the late medieval period. Another example can be found in Anselm Turmeda, a converted Muslim who had originally practised as a friar in Mallorca. He wrote a discussion between a friar and a donkey in which the wise donkey uses scripture, among other arguments to claim that animals are allowed into the afterlife and are therefore not lesser than mankind.[714] Such ideas were not unknown in Byzantium either. Manuel II Palaiologos discusses such concepts as animal reason and spirituality in his twenty-six dialogues with a Muslim.[715] He considered animals as trainable, with no free will, no knowledge of death and thus no knowledge of God. The animals of the *Tale* clearly are aware of death though they also do not phrase it in religious terms. It would seem that the universal use of animals to tell stories nevertheless reflects the ideology of individual societies.

Conclusion

What this chapter has attempted to do in relation to the *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds* is to suggest that 'there is more than one way to skin a cat'. That is to say, this text, and beast literature in general, can be read in multiple different ways and indeed should be. The *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds* and other works of Byzantine beast literature clearly could have political and social meanings, or at least draw on the socio-political situation of the day, but that need not be their sole reason for existence. The humour involved, though it may raise question of its own, is nevertheless also just humour, creating laughter for its own sake. Animals are the perfect characters for both comedy and possible critique, as they essentially formed blank anthropomorphic

[714] S.A. Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature* (Cambridge 2012) p. 43.
[715] Manuel II Palaiologos, *Dialoge mit einem Muslim*, trans. K. Förstel, vol. 1 (1993) pp. 112-129.

canvases at the same time as having familiar associations which an author could manipulate. The Byzantine understanding of animals that comes across most clearly in this text is of their value to humans, but in the zoologically accurate portrayal, it is still possible to see a genuine interest in the animals themselves. Arguably, the author of the *Tale* is focused on humanity from its 'splendid isolation' and showing it 'embedded within and reliant upon the natural order'.[716] The similarities and differences between the texts commonly grouped together as Byzantine beast literature have also been highlighted, as well as those with beast literature in other parts of the medieval world. This has indicated the communality of beast literature and particular features of the genre, as well as the vastly different perceptions of the natural world and its perceived importance to mankind. Through these comparisons it has been shown that the author of the *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds*, like the author of the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*, combined nature and literary genres in various subtle ways to undermine expectations, discuss difficult contemporary topics, and, fundamentally, to entertain the audience. Nature could play many roles, and that, it seems, is its true value to the Byzantines.

[716] E. Fudge, 'A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals' in N. Rothfels (ed.) *Representing Animals* (Bloomington, 2002) p. 15.

6. Conclusion

The Palaiologan period was a time of particular uncertainty for the Byzantines, a time full of extremes. Abject poverty for most went hand in hand with decadent living by a few. Political affiliations were based as much on trade connections and perceived necessity as they were on genuine political ideas or religious beliefs. Even the strength of Orthodoxy was brought into question, with some people converting to Catholicism or Islam, and internal rifts caused by the rise of hesychasm. Outside influences on the Empire had risen to become overlords of it, or people to whom cities might be ceded in attempts to save them from destruction. Contact between the various populations, though obviously fraught, seems to have been very fluid. Ideologically the authors of the period appear to have perceived a decline, not only in the political and economic fortunes of the empire, but in their own field as well. Thus, the scholar Theodore Metochites states in his writings that he and his contemporaries:

> '… nowadays are truly living in the dregs of human history'.[717]

Indeed, Metochites apparently felt that anything worth saying had already been said by those who came before.[718] Rather than simply accepting his own statement, Metochites responds to the situation by writing, after all, even if he is inherently repeating the work of earlier scholars, 'there is nothing to prevent it from being expressed in novel ways'.[719] This literary standpoint can be paralleled with the realities of the time, when Byzantium was;

> 'in a state of shock and bewilderment. It was as if the normal rules of the world had been suspended and the old distinction and hierarchies were overturned'.[720]

[717] *Theodore Metochites on ancient authors and philosophy: Sameioseis gnomikai 1-26 & 71, a critical edition with introduction, translation, notes, and indexes*, ed. K. Hult (Göteborg, 2002) proem.
[718] Ibid., p. 23.
[719] Ibid., p. 260.
[720] A. Kaldellis, *Ethnography after antiquity: foreign lands and peoples in Byzantine literature* (Philadelphia, 2013) p. 142.

I would suggest that this is the context in which to consider the texts discussed in this thesis and their narrative of the natural world. The authors of these works clearly are familiar with the literary output of their predecessors, and use the familiar as their starting point. Unlike the suggestion in Metochites, the authors of these works are not simply reusing traditional ideas and tropes, but instead develop and adapt them. Whereas Metochites seems more inclined to critique established ideas and insert his personality into his work, the authors of the Palaiologan romances, and at least some of the beast literature, make more sweeping changes to the symbolism of the environment, the manner in which it is presented, and the genre they choose to present it in.

The aim of this study has been to attempt what Douglass calls 'the first stage' of ecocriticism, that is, to 'look at how Nature is represented in a given text, at how the land and its inhabitants are portrayed', and show how ecocriticism may be applied to Byzantine literature.[721] The texts chosen share several characteristics which make grouping them together a useful exercise in terms of studying nature within Palaiologan literature. Although they come from different genres, all are part of the increase in vernacular writing which developed over the period. They also display a degree of experimentalism and an interest in the natural world, though nature itself is not the central focus for any of them. The analysis of the texts has highlighted certain characteristics in an attempt to present the associations Byzantine authors made with different parts of the natural world, and how they used these, consciously or not, within their writings.

The first chapter of this thesis outlined ways in which the natural world had featured in Byzantine literature prior to the Palaiologan period. It endeavoured to show that a wide range of material existed in Greek that would have been familiar to the literati of the last centuries of Byzantium. It highlighted three possible ways of presenting and using nature in literature; a theological approach, primarily presented through hexaemeral

[721] Douglass, 'Ecocriticism and Middle English Literature', p. 139

literature, which valued nature for its own sake as a creation of God, as well as seeing in it exempla to be followed;[722] a pseudo-scientific or allegorical style, which presented observable information and interpreted it along religious lines as is the case for the *Physiologos* and the *Symbolic Garden*;[723] and finally, the Aesopic, anthropomorphic attitude which used the natural world, and animals in particular, as a vehicle for social and moral messages.[724] These three perspectives conveniently display a range of textual material and the methods of depicting the natural world used within that material. They also emphasize key ideas, without wholly excluding other possibilities, such as the common use of nature similes and metaphors within chronicles, letters and other works.[725] Each of these perspectives can be traced to some extent within the Palaiologan material. However, in setting out the more traditional approaches, they also allow the observation of the differences in the Palaiologan portrayal of the natural world, in terms of genre, attitude and technique.

The vernacular romances, produced sometime between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, demonstrably have an interest in landscapes, and the garden in particular. Again, by looking at the methods of presentation in earlier texts, it has been possible to show how the image of the garden within the romance genre changed over the Byzantine period into the feminine, multi-layered depiction we find in *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, *Livistros and Rodamni*, *Velthandros and Chrysandza* and the *Achilleid*.[726] These romances continue to use aspects of the learned literature that came before them, namely the novels of the Second Sophistic and the Komnenian period, though they transpose features and ideas of the genre into an entirely different register. They also alter the essential settings of their tales so that the works no longer feature classicising,

[722] See pp. 23-36.
[723] See pp. 36-47.
[724] See pp. 47-53.
[725] Littlewood, 'Vegetal and Animal Imagery', pp. 223-258.
[726] See pp. 73-106.

historical landscapes, but a combination of the familiar and the fantastical. The portrayal of the garden remains very much part of a tradition in being enclosed, containing roses and lilies, and artistic objects, especially fountains. The ecofeminist starting point for the chapter was the conflict between two ecofeminist ideas, that gendered landscapes can be positive and empowering, and that they are always negative, making nature and women subservient to men.[727] The Palaiologan romances use long-established floral imagery to develop the connection between the garden and the heroine. This emphasis highlights the beauty of nature, displaying the aesthetic pleasure the Byzantines derived from their gardens, and using it to augment the beauty of the heroines. While exploiting the sensual imagery and making the hero a subservient character in that space, the authors of the romances allow for a degree of female autonomy and youthful indiscretion. The connection with Eros is maintained, and alongside the apparent eroticism of the garden, religious imagery is also pervasive. The presentation of nature and women is positive, and not limited to the display of fertility, though this remains a factor. The women found outside the garden are perceived as dangerous, as are the landscapes in which they exist. The romances therefore balance the positive and negative ecofeminist interpretations, allowing the heroines and gardens to be of interest in their own right, and not just secondary characters. Comparison with romantic gardens from western courtly romances and the Perso-Arabic tradition indicates that there is a shared ideal of the garden, but that it can be used and interpreted in very different ways. Thus in the western texts studied show the garden as a feminine space, but one strongly connected with the male sphere in which women are an added pleasure or adornment. When this is not the case, the garden becomes a dangerous, subversive place. It is usually a peripheral feature, forming a place of rest and enjoyment, unless outside male-dominated society or overtly sensual, in

[727] Discussion on these two points of view can be found in Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, pp. 23-27.

which case it can be the site of danger and adventure. In the Perso-Arabic tradition, the allegorical combination of love and religion is clearer than in the Byzantine texts, but the role of women in the garden is very similar, with a degree of feminine control being granted. Parallels can be drawn between the employment of the literary garden in all three regions, but each has its own twist in interpretation or presentation.

The Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey is studied in this thesis as a text apart, not because it is particularly dissimilar to the other Byzantine beast literature in its content, but because its structure is unusual and its' presentation of nature notably different from the *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds*.[728] The *Synaxarion* clearly utilises the popular genre of fable. However, it is not a short text, and neither does it have a clear moral for a modern audience. Instead, it extends the fable structure to include elements of a number of other genres. The text contains distinctly religious content, but it is also strongly humorous. The animals retain certain stereotypical features, such as cunning, greed and humbleness or stupidity, but only behave as animals in their sinful actions; killing excessively, using trickery to eat a chicken, and stealing part of their burden out of hunger. Otherwise, the story removes the animals from their normal context at the beginning of the poem. For the majority of the work they communicate, trick one another, and generally mimic humanity in a way that, combined with the fable aspects of the work, encourages the audience to see a deeper meaning beyond the entertainment value of the story. I have presented a number of possible interpretations for the *Synaxarion* based on its style and content. These suggestions have placed the work within its social and historical context, but the poem does not allow for one unambiguous interpretation, at least not outside of its contemporary audience. It is possible to suggest that the work is a satirical take on the religious situation of the period, a discussion of the

[728] See pp. 115-159.

political circumstances the empire faced and an expression of hope for their outcome, or an internal conflict of some form. The animals' rationality makes them unnatural, despite the reasonably naturalistic portrayal, so that nature is here used only for its associations, to present an idea, partially hidden so that analysis is required on the part of the audience.

The *Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds* forms the basis of the last chapter, drawing on many of the ideas raised in relation to the *Synaxarion of the Honourable Donkey*.[729] In previous studies, the meaning of the text has been assumed to be similar to that of the *Book of Birds*, satirising particular people, or, in the case of the *Tale*, a particular event. This thesis has attempted to reconsider the *Entertaining Tale* by focusing on the arguments made by the animals themselves, as well as the features of the work which may suggest socio-political meanings, its general structure, and its humour. By placing the *Entertaining Tale* in the context of the other beast literature with which it is normally connected in the secondary literature, it has been possible to show that the depiction of the animals, while realistic in its understanding of their uses, is largely concerned with them as tools for mankind. Nature may be an important vehicle for communicating opinions, ideas or events, but here it is not entirely secondary to them. At the very least, the way in which nature is viewed and presented in this work adds an additional layer of meaning to the text, and arguably changes the perceptible aim of the author. Regardless of whether the work is a socio-political commentary, or designed to educate and entertain as it claims in the prologue, it brings the animal world into sharp focus, presenting its audience with their own similarities to the creatures described, and their unquestionable reliance upon such creatures for their own existence. While the *Tale* does not go as far as the Arabic text with which it was compared, *The Case of the Animals before the Jinn*, in that it does not seem to call for a reconsideration of the way in which animals are treated,

[729] See pp. 160-216.

the author does seem openly concerned with them, their corporeal natures, and their economic value.

Each of these chapters thus shows a slightly different method of portraying nature in the Palaiologan period. They indicate that nature could be utilised to express a number of different ideas, in a variety of genres. Each work is grounded in its own historical, social and cultural context, and therefore each work draws on slightly different associations and language when describing nature. In doing so, they are able to leave the familiar and step into the realm of the fantastic, extending the role of nature beyond the observable environment into symbolism and dream-like situations. These works do not overtly state what their interpretation should be. They often appear to have multiple possible meanings buried in the presentation of nature, so that they consider the religious, politics and gender as well as contemporary events. Their whimsical or fantastical depictions of nature provide a degree of escapism, the heroine and her garden form an ideal which, being both religious and erotic, becomes an acceptable form of distraction. The animals in the beast literature are vehicles of humour too, partially drawing the audience away from the uncomfortable material apparently being discussed, releasing tensions at the same time as critiquing their cause. Nature is in these works valued as a means of entertaining an audience with something that can be both familiar and extraordinary. It portrays an ideal of beauty, a far-fetched world of talking animals, and at the same time can discuss difficult issues. Rarely do the authors allow nature to simply be nature; they use it to extend their plots, their symbolism and the aims contained within each work, as well as to experiment with new writing styles. Anything can be possible within the bounds of God's creation, nature itself is always changing yet familiar.

In comparing the different portrayals of nature within these texts with others from beyond the boundaries of the empire, a viable outline of a particularly Palaiologan

perspective on nature emerges. For the depiction of gardens and the plants within them, there is a greater stress on the relation with the feminine in terms of allowable social control than is visible in western material. There is also more of a direct concern with ideas of fertility. Gardens are not places of danger in the Palaiologan romances, though meadows and other landscapes clearly are. It is only upon leaving the garden that the hero and heroine risk capture. The depictions of landscapes draw on classical material and are idealised versions of the observable, but do not differ considerably from those recorded in letters and chronicles. Landscapes, and the garden in particular, are thus places of safety, culture and pleasure, for their owners and their audience. As far as the animal kingdom is concerned, animals are primarily displayed as subject to mankind, and useful. They are presented with stereotypical behaviour familiar from classical fable and elsewhere, which does translate between cultures. However, the animals in Byzantine beast literature, although they argue with one another and on occasion can be considered to act like people, are generally far less anthropomorphised than their western counterparts. In addition, there is less of a concern for animals as thinking, feeling beings than is evident in at least some Perso-Arabic literature. The creatures of the *Entertaining Tale*, while clearly aware that humans would be bereft of many things without them, nevertheless present their value purely in terms of their usefulness to humans, not as creatures in their own right. The Fox, Wolf and Donkey of the *Synaxarion* refer to mankind as masters, as well as people to be tricked, but despite their mimicry of religion, they do not directly enter the world of men, so that any humans referred to are never actually present, maintaining the boundaries between them. While all these animals can arguably stand for individuals or sections of society, there is less implication of the animality of mankind than we find in western material too.

I hope that in analysing these vernacular texts, I have been able to highlight the use of nature as a literary tool which can provide a perspective on how the natural world was understood by the Byzantines during the Palaiologan period. In doing so I intend to have shown that the use of nature as a symbol, and the depictions of physical animals and landscapes, drew on earlier Greek material as well as possibly being influenced by external stimuli and that 'the culture of the late Middle Ages was capable of speaking with more than one voice when it came to debating humanity's place within the wider world of nature' and nature's place within literature.[730]

[730] D. Salter *Holy and Noble Beasts: encounters with animals in medieval literature* (Woodbridge, 2001) p. 147.

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